

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2022
4:00 PM
MINUTES**

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Mayor Pro Tem	Jesse McQueen
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Maurice Stuart
Council Member	Abbie Covington
Council Member	Oscar Sellers

Staff Present:

City Manager	Matthew Christian
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
Police Chief	Dennis Brown
Fire Chief	Trey Goodwin

Others Present:

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

2. Adoption of Agenda

City Manager Matt Christian requested the addition of Discussion of Code Enforcement to the Agenda. Council Member Sellers motioned to adopt the Agenda with the addition. Council Member Covington provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

3. Approval of Minutes for May 10, 2022 Regular Meeting

Council Member Sellers motioned to adopt the Minutes. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

4. Work Session

• FY2022-2023 Draft Budget

City Manager Matt Christian gave a brief overview of the 2 memos Council was provided. The total budget as presented is \$10,328,750.00. He reminded Council in previous meetings, their priorities were people, equipment, and infrastructure. To address Council's concerns, he is proposing to implement a Market Pay Plan for employees and purchase needed equipment requested by Staff. The Manager explained the methodology used to determine the market rates, and minimum and maximum salaries for each job class. Using the North Carolina League of Municipalities' Pay Study Survey and Job Classifications, he, along with staff, took each employee individually, considered in terms of what they do, their level of responsibility and years of service to obtain their market pay. The goal is to recruit and retain employees by having them at 90 -95% of the market. The Plan will allow Staff to track its progress. Currently, the salaries as related to the market are at 84%; if implemented they would be at 93%. Salary increases, across the board, will average 10-10 ½ % for the organization as a whole. Mr. Christian advised the plan is affordable; a cost-of-living-adjustment ranges from \$200,000.00 - \$400,00.00. This plan is in the same window but addresses individual job classifications.

Council Member Covington reported that she has reviewed the detailed Plan and she feels it will solve some of the issues of inequity with the employees. Council Member Stuart offered his support of the Market Plan. Council Member McQueen expressed concern of employees that have several jobs receiving the correct job classification and salary. He advised he would like to review the breakdown of the individual employees at a later date. Mr. McQueen stated it was important to know the Plan is needed, but Council will need to address it yearly. The City Manager addressed Council Member McQueen's concerns. He advised having the structure, using the League's Pay Study Survey, will allow the City to adapt overtime, as needed. He wants to offer a Plan where employees know where they stand and have an opportunity to grow in their position. Council Members Sellers and Martin offered remarks of support of the Pay Plan. Mr. Christian advised the Market Pay Plan salaries are included in the proposed budget.

The City Manager reminded Council they discussed an increase in garbage rates at a previous work session. He discussed upcoming debt with the sewer plant expansion and other utility needs. Mr. Christian suggested a \$2.00 increase in the base rates and a small increase in water consumption over 10,000 gallons. He requested Council's feedback. After discussion of the current healthy Fund Balance, increase in water rates a few years ago, and the 10-cent tax increase of 2021, it was consensus of Council to not make any increases in water and garbage rates this year. They will look at the issue again next year, after the Manager has moved employees into their correct positions. Mr. Christian inquired if Council wished to make a Fund Balance Allocation or make cuts in the proposed budget to cover the \$165,000.00 of revenue from the proposed rate increases. He reported the Fund Balance Appropriation is now \$1,269,000.00; adding the \$165,000.00 would bring it to \$1.4 million. Council discussed that the Fund Balance was healthy enough to sustain the increase.

Code Enforcement Issues

The City Manager reported he has been meeting with the Police Chief on resolving code enforcement issues. The Police Department is ready to get to work. They will target 3 areas: overgrown grass, junk yards and junk vehicles and inventory abandoned and burned houses. Chief Brown explained he has officers on light duty that will be utilized to address the code complaints. He explained the Police Department has developed a complaint form that goes to the Manager, code enforcement officer and himself. They also have an interactive map that will show the areas and progress of the complaints; it will be citywide. The Chief asked Council for their support when they receive calls that the police are addressing the issues. Mayor Bayless notified the Chief of issues with skateboards on City sidewalks. Council discussed issues of contractors placing building debris at the street for the City to pick up. Mr. Christian reported he will have Public Works Director Billy Stubbs attend the next meeting to discuss.

- Rezoning Issues /Comprehensive Plan

The City Manager recalled Council's recent experience with issues of rezonings. Our policies are not supporting us; they allow things we feel should not be allowed. Mr. Christian said the City needs to look at our policies as our foundation; the Comp Plan is the start, and then rewriting the Zoning Ordinance. He explained the Comprehensive Plan is not as far along as he would like for it to be. He recommended a 6-month moratorium on rezonings to allow the City to get someone in to help with the Comp Plan and re-write the Zoning Ordinance, so we are open to development and businesses. He said the required Consistency Statement is supposed to be consistent with the City's Plan, but we do not have one in place. The Manager discussed the required advertisements for the moratorium can be completed to have the Public Hearing at the June Meeting. A moratorium cannot be put on a single-family subdivision but if the moratorium is put in place, the City can deny without prejudice, informing any applicants the City is working on its policies. The moratorium will give the City time to develop a

plan and allows the City to pause rezonings, which could be challenged, and the City possibly lose. Also discussed was the process and need to obtain a consultant to write the plan.

Council Member Stuart inquired on the plans for the hospital building. The City Manager reported he has a meeting scheduled with Mr. Peterkin on Wednesday. If they get the paperwork in prior to the moratorium, they can proceed. He has talked with them openly about the situation and thinks they are looking at a proposed text amendment. Mr. Stuart expressed his confidence in the Manager but does not want to miss out on the opportunity of the business. Mayor Bayless asked about the law enforcement issues with the opening of the hospital. Mr. Christian responded, he and the Chief, will meet with them. He will have more information after the meeting. Council Member McQueen inquired on other people that may want to apply for rezonings; he does not want them to miss out. The Manager answered the City will advertise the Public Hearing. Council gave consensus to proceed with a Public Hearing for the moratorium.

EMS Services

The City Manager reported as soon as he was made aware of upcoming EMS changes with the County and FirstHealth, he met with Fire Chief Trey Goodwin and Assistant Fire Chief Richard Lassiter. The Richmond County Commissioners have made no contact with any City Staff; the Fire Chief did receive a visit from EMS Director Bob Smith. Mr. Christian contacted First Health CEO Mickey Foster, the First Health EMS Administrator Barry Britt, and Montgomery County EMS Director Mike Dutton. They confirmed the changes in First Health's EMS Services; they are reducing their ambulance coverage. The change will require Hamlet to transport more patients which will put the City in a bind if transferring a patient to Moore Regional and they receive a fire call. The City Manager learned the negotiations have been on-going for several months. Council Member Covington informed the Board First Health's coverage was reduced and they received an increase in funding. The Fire Chief advised he first learned of the changes on Facebook. He does not know all the details but was told First Health is reducing the 3 Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances in Rockingham and 1 in Ellerbe to 2 ALS ambulances in Rockingham, 1 in Ellerbe and 1 Basic Life Support (BLS) for 12 hours. The Chief advised Hamlet EMS receives the same amount as other EMS agencies in the County, \$12,000.00, but run an estimated 3,000 calls each year. Hoffman transported zero patients last year. FirstHealth receives \$1,200,000.00. The new contract amount for FirstHealth is unknown. Chief Goodwin stated he will not leave the Fire Department uncovered, but the City may incur more costs in doing so. Council discussed possible action to request Hamlet's fair share for the service they provide. The City Manager inquired what Council wanted him to do. They advised him to send a letter to the County Commissioners, tying it back to the FirstHealth contract, informing them that Hamlet needs to know the status of the contract negotiations, that Hamlet needs to be included in the future negotiations and that Hamlet needs to be fairly compensated for its EMS services. Mr. Christian responded that he would consult with Attorney Morphis and Chief Goodwin to draft a letter. Council wanted the letter delivered to County Manager Bryan Land and a copy to Chairman Jeff Smart. The City Manager will provide Council with a draft of the letter.

5. Motion to Adjourn

At 6:14 pm, Council Members Sellers and Covington provided the motion and second to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

