

Council boots Warren from meeting

Outspoken resident ejected for violating rules of decorum.

By MORGAN MCMULLEN

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Monday's Lake City Council meeting saw a few items get passed, mostly resolutions on continuing or entering into contracts with different engineering firms for city projects.

However, other discussions and votes unrelated to the council's posted agenda forced their way into the conversation.

At the top of the meeting, Councilman Ricky Jernigan asked Mayor Stephen Witt what happens to individuals making public comments at the dais who break the rules of decorum for council meetings. Witt responded that that person could be removed from the meeting.

Sylvester Warren, an outspoken city resident who said he was "retired as an activist," asked for the reason behind Jernigan's question, which was also asked at the previous meeting.

Warren said he'd tried to work with the councilors in the past but was trying to lighten up from activism.

"But don't egg me on," Warren said, repeating the line. "I am not to be played with in no shape, form or fashion, period. And just like I told a particular council member, when I say that you cannot come back to the hood, I meant what I said. So if you're talking about me being a man, then deal with me as a man. But 10, District 10, where you were born and raised, where your mama lived at, there you cannot come."



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Lake City Councilwoman Chevella Young said the city has the right person in Interim City Manager Dee Johnson to lead them forward as she looked Monday to extend his stay in that position.

Jernigan took exception with Warren's comments and immediately made the motion to have Warren removed from the meeting. Councilman Todd Sampson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

However, former city councilman Glenel Bowden said voting on an item not in the meeting agenda shouldn't be allowed.

"If y'all are going to vote to remove Sylvester Warren, that's up to you all," he said. "But you voted on something outside of the public comments. I expect my public comments to take place before anything else takes place that's on the agenda... I did not hear anything that would justify Mr. Warren being removed from this meeting."

City Attorney Todd Kennon said in his opinion the council voted within its rights based on "boisterous" or "personal or slanderous remarks."

After Warren and Witt argued over the matter, Warren got up to leave before speaking again.

"I'll leave, but guess what? F*** each and every one of y'all," Warren said. "I'll make sure I f*** each and every one of you over. You think you're going to vote against me and then think y'all are going to survive."

"By the way," Warren continued on his way out the door, "there's a federal prison cell for each one of y'all."

Warren also cursed at a Lake City police officer directed to escort him from the council chambers.

NO ACTION TAKEN ON INTERIM

Also on Monday's agenda was an item brought by Councilwoman Chevella Young that would make Interim City Manager Dee Johnson a more permanent addition to the council.

Young's motion called for

Johnson to receive an 18-month period to serve in the same role.

"The first thing I want to point out is this is how we know we have the right man in this seat: There have been many achievements accomplished in the short length of time that he has been fulfilling this seat," she said.

However, Kennon warned that any time period put onto Johnson's employment could put the city in legal jeopardy.

"You may want to consider a motion, if you think you need one, a motion that says that Mr. Johnson will remain the interim city manager until a city manager is otherwise appointed and retained and hired by the city council," Kennon said. "And then that process takes the period of time."

Witt said he felt the motion was "redundant" anyway since Johnson is already serving for an indefinite amount of time in his current role. The motion was then abandoned.