

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2021
7:00 PM
MINUTES**

Governing Body Present:

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

Staff Present:

City Attorney	TC Morphis
City Manager	Matthew Christian
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
IT	Zach Garner

Others Present: Andy Grooms, Jean Douglas, Gavin Stone and James Wall

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the Meeting to Order at 7:00 pm.

2. Moment of Silence

A Moment of Silence was observed.

3. Adoption of Agenda

Council Member Covington motioned to adopt the Agenda. The second was offered by Council Member Sellers. The vote was 5-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the August 10, 2021 Regular Meeting were approved by motions of Council Members Sellers and Covington. The vote was 5-0.

5. Comments from Attendees

Ms. Jean Douglas who resides at 404 Pine St. spoke with Council to voice concerns of dangerous activity at the West Hamlet Grocery and Monroe Avenue area. She asked what Council could do to make the residents feel safe. Mayor Bayless responded the police department is patrolling the area but they are short 6 officers. City Manager Matt Christian added the officers are also using security cameras and following up the investigations with charges. Council Member Sellers suggested the citizens report the activity to the police department. Both Council Members Stuart and Sellers advised they have spoken with the Police Chief and City Manager about the issues in the area. Council Member McQueen stated the Police Department has leverage with the store and apartment complex. Mayor Bayless suggested the police check the ALE license. Council and the Manager assured Ms. Douglas the City is working on the matter.

Mr. Gerard Morrison spoke to Council by phone. He invited Council to the Oct 2nd – 13th Annual John Coltrane Edu-tainment Event which will be virtual, featuring local talent. Mr. Morrison provided contact information and thanked Council for the 30th anniversary recognition of the Imperial Foods Fire. He expressed his appreciation to retired Fire Chief Calvin White

Mr. James Wall joined the meeting at this time and spoke with Council. He stated he has purchased property at 702 Washington St. He discussed 2 shootings near his residence and expressed concern of activity at the complex across the street, noting the infested drug area. Council explained they discussed the matter prior to his arrival at the meeting. They advised they have increased patrol and are working on the problem. The City Manager thanked Mr. Wall for bringing it to the City's attention. He asked Mr. Wall to contact the police or call him. Mayor Bayless suggested the citizens in the area form a community watch.

New Business

6. Consideration of Updated Flower Policy

Mayor Bayless advised Council has a copy of the updated Flower Policy in their packet. Council Member Sellers motioned to adopt the Flower Policy. The second was offered by Council Member Martin. The vote was 5-0.

7. Consideration of Re-appointment to Planning Board

Mayor Bayless reported Ms. Belinda Whitley has served as an ETJ Member of the Planning Board for 3 years. Her term expires October 8, 2021. ETJ Members are appointed by the County Commissioners. Council Member Sellers motioned that the County Commissioners re-appoint Ms. Whitley as an ETJ Representative on the Planning Board. The second was offered by Council Member Stuart. The vote was 5-0.

8. Consideration of COVID Vaccine Initiative Policy

Mayor Bayless informed Council a copy of the Policy was in their packet. The City Manager reported the Policy has been well received by staff; half of the employees are vaccinated at this time and he hopes the policy will increase the numbers. Council Member Sellers motioned to adopt the Vaccine Policy. The second was offered by Council Member Covington. The vote was 5-0.

9. Consideration of 1st Quarter Budget Amendments

Council Member Sellers motioned to approve the Budget Amendments. The second was offered by Council Member Covington. The vote was 5-0.

10. Consideration of Engineering Services Agreement – LKC Engineering, PLLC – WWTP Expansion

The Mayor advised the Engineering Services Agreement for the WWTP upgrade has been approved by USDA. He asked the Manager for a time frame for construction to begin. Mr. Christian reported approximately 18 months. Council Member Covington motioned to approve the Agreement. The second was offered by Council Member Sellers. The vote was 5-0.

11. Approval of Tax Releases

Council Member Covington motioned to approve the Tax Releases. The second was offered by Council Member Sellers. The vote was 5-0.

Other Business

12. City Manager's Report

City Manager Matthew Christian thanked the community for attending the Imperial Foods 30th Anniversary Memorial. He advised Council the Vaccine Incentive has been well received and hopes to get more employees vaccinated. Mr. Christian reported he will be attending the Seaboard Festival Committee Meeting. They are monitoring the COVID situation and he will bring any information to the public. The City, at this time, is planning for the Tree Lighting on November 29th and Christmas Parade December 9th.

13. Comments of Council

Council Member Martin inquired if the Seaboard Festival was cancelled, if the City would cancel the parade. The Manager responded the decision would be up to Council, but he has not heard of the Seaboard Festival cancelling at this time. He stated the City may have to adapt and have alternatives to the traditional, but the events are outdoors. Council Member McQueen added the Seaboard Festival will only cancel if there is a government mandate. Mayor Bayless inquired on the Senior Center activities. Mr. Christian advised they are currently serving as a meal site and offer events that do not require contact.

Council Member Sellers thanked the attendees for coming to the meeting with their concerns. He asked them to form a group and invite him to attend to help resolve the problem.

Council Member Stuart thanked the City for hosting the Imperial Foods Ceremony. He thanked the visitors and asked to be invited to their meeting, saying the City needs to be proactive, not reactive. Mr. Stuart thanked the City for their participation in Sheriff Clemmon's service and offered condolences to the Smart family. He thanked the City employees for their continued efforts.

Council Member Covington commended the residents that voiced concerns of safety in their neighborhood. She suggested they encourage their neighbors to participate in voicing their complaints and to stand up and do the right thing. Mrs. Covington expressed her appreciation to retired Fire Chief Calvin White and commended him for his service to the Hamlet Fire Department and for his moving speech at the Imperial Foods Memorial. She applauded City Manager Matt Christian for the implementation of the Vaccination Policy. Mrs. Covington inquired on the date Halloween would be observed, noting it is on Sunday and the Saturday is Seaboard Festival. In the past, if Halloween was on Sunday, it was observed on Saturday. The City Manager responded last year Halloween was the same day as the Seaboard Festival and they incorporated it into their events. He believes they intend to do the same this year. The City has not planned anything.

Council Member McQueen thanked the attendees for their attendance and stated it is time for aggressive action to stop the problems in the Washington Street community. It has been a problem for years but not through a fault of the police department. He suggested the City has leverage to correct the problems by shutting down the businesses. Mr. McQueen commended the Manager on the start of the Vaccine Incentive Program adding it does not cost the City anything. He asked Council to consider re-instating COVID Paid Sick Leave.

COVID Paid Sick Leave

Council Member McQueen discussed current employees with COVID having to use their time if they are in quarantine. The City Manager explained the City participated in the CARES Act that required employers to offer 80 hours of paid sick leave for employees in quarantine. The CARES Act ended at the

end of the calendar year, but Council extended it through June 30th. Council discussed the need to reimplement the program so sick people will stay at home. Council Member Sellers provided a motion to implement the program. Council discussed the need to incorporate the new CDC quarantine guidelines and require testing. Council Member Covington provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

Mr. McQueen expressed sympathy to the Clemmons and Smart families and any other families that have experienced difficult times

14. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Bayless discussed the success of a Community Watch Program in Briarwood. He encouraged the citizens to call 911 if they see something. He stated Chief Calvin White will be missed. The Mayor discussed the Imperial Foods Ceremony and stated we need to remember it every year. He offered condolences to the Jim Smart and Bob Wright families and expressed his appreciation to the City employees.

15. Motion to go into Closed Session per NCGS §143-318.11 (a)(3)(6) for Attorney-Client Privilege and Personnel

At 7:44 pm, Mayor Bayless asked for the motion to go into Closed Session and read the Statute. Council Member Covington provided the motion. The second was offered by Council Member McQueen. The vote was 5-0.

Return to Open Session

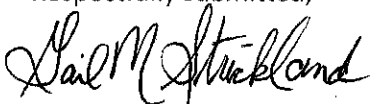
At 8:29 pm, Council Members Sellers and Covington motioned to return to Open Session. The vote was 5-0.

Mayor Bayless reported no action was taken in Closed Session.

16. Motion to Adjourn

At 8:29 pm, Council Members Covington and McQueen provided the motion and second to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

