

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2024
6:00 PM
MINUTES**

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Amy Guinn
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Oscar Sellers
Council Member	Abbie Covington
Council Member	Maurice Stuart

Staff Present:

City Manager	Matthew Christian
City Clerk	Heather Hawks
City Attorney	TC Morphis

Others Present: Steve Crews, Harold Wallace, Denise Cozart and Sean Smith.

1. Call to Order

Mayor Guinn called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Invocation

Pastor Steve Crews of Hamlet Church of God Prophecy offered the invocation.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

Council Member Covington motioned to adopt the agenda. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Consent Agenda

Council Member Martin made a motion to adopt the minutes with an amendment to the April 30th minutes where he suggested a tax rate of 70 cents. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Comments from Attendees

Denise Cozart expressed her gratitude to Mayor Guinn and Council Member Stuart on behalf of Doc Hills Family Care Home for attending their Open House on April 20th. She thanked them for their leadership in our city and thanked the Fire Department, the Sanitation Department, and the Police Department for their involvement. She had three requests for Council:

- a. She would like the Police Department to slow traffic down between 7-10 am and stop the 18-wheelers from using that road as a cut through. She asked if the Police could give out warning tickets. She stated there is a sign posted for trucks not to use the road.
- b. She also requested the speed limit be reduced from 35 mph to 20 mph.
- c. She gave Council members a map and asked for a road blockage for August 31, 2024, from 9am-9pm for Doc Hills First Annual Community Cookout on High Street. Stating she had already contacted surrounding community members for their support. She requested a police car and fire truck to be present at the event for the kids to see them.

City Manager Christian stated she will need to fill out a special events application that he would email her.

Council Member Stuart thanked Ms. Cozart for bringing her business to Hamlet.

New Business

6. Public Hearing for FY24-25 Annual Budget

Mayor Guinn asked if there were any comments about the Annual Budget. There were no comments from the public.

City Manager Christian gave an overview of the budget stating it is balanced and was presented earlier this month. The budget includes a 4% cost of living adjustment for staff along with various capital improvements and equipment for the staff to provide quality service to residents. City Manager Christian stated decisions were made at our Work Session to offset some of our requested capital by using our American Rescue Plan Act funds. He mentioned several of our large projects that will be significant for the community, such as the City Lake Project and the Stormwater Assessment to name a few. These projects are currently not in the operating budget that has been presented today, because they have their own capital project ordinances. He also stated it is a reevaluation year for Richmond County. He gave a brief history of our tax rate stating it was 66 cents for many years and has now increased to 76 cents following the sales tax distribution method in Richmond County. He stated based on the new values; the revenue neutral rate would be 64.8 cents. The budget is balanced using a 66-cent tax rate per \$100 evaluation. There is currently no increase in garbage and utility rates at this point. We are having additional meetings on May 21st and May 28th to finalize the budget, taxes, fees, and utility rates. He thanked Edna Miles and Benita Mullis for helping him finalize the budget and the Department Heads for being responsible with the city's tax dollars. He thanked the City Council for supporting efforts to move the city forward.

Council Member Covington asked if a firm decision on the tax rate could be made during the May 21st meeting. She doesn't want us to underestimate the rate which could put us in a bind.

City Manager Christian stated it would depend on the timeline for evaluations being finalized with the County Tax office.

Mayor Guinn closed the Public Hearing.

Other Business

7. City Manager's Report

City Manager Christian announced upcoming events in Hamlet including Food Truck Friday, Yoga by the Tracks, and the Boxcar Series concerts. He also stated the Downtown Streetscape Plan is underway and a draft would be available for consideration soon. City Manager Christian and Mayor Guinn walked the area that has been cleared for the future Disc Golf site. He thanked Ben Moss for his phone call recently. He ended by saying it was one of his last meetings as City Manager and wanted to thank the staff for making the vision for the community possible, the Council for their support and the public for being engaged in the community.

8. Comments of Council

Council Member Martin wished City Manager Christian the best as he starts his new job. He reminded everyone about opening day May 31st for Legion Baseball in Hamlet.

Council Member Stuart thanked the citizens for coming to the City Council meetings. He reminded everyone about his community walk that he started last year. The walk is every Thursday at 6pm in front of City Hall.

Council Member Sellers stated some of our athletic fields need attention and we have streets that need to be cleared from recent storms.

Council Member Covington stated she is excited about the American Legion season starting soon. She thanked City Manager Christian for him seeing us through one of the toughest times the city has seen. She stated he leads the way to do what is right and she wished him the best with his new job.

9. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Guinn congratulated Dobbins Heights on their 40th Anniversary and for the grant they received to build new apartments. She thanked City Manager Christian for his time here stating he would be missed.

Council Member Stuart asked if a final decision was made on the Fourth of July fireworks. City Manager Christian stated they would be on July 5th this year according to Mechelle.

10. Closed Session per NCGS § 143-318.11 (a)(3)(6) for attorney-client privilege and personnel.

At 6:30 pm, Council Member Stuart motioned, seconded by Council Member Covington to go into closed session for attorney-client privilege and personnel. The motion passed unanimously.

Return to Open Session

At 6:54 pm, Council Member Stuart motioned to return to Open Session, seconded by Council Member Covington. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Motion to Adjourn

Council Member Stuart motioned, seconded by Council Member Covington, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously at 6:55.