

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 2023
6:00 PM
MINUTES**

Governing Body Present:

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

Staff Present:

City Attorney	TC Morphis
City Manager	Matthew Christian
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
Police Chief	Dennis Brown

Others Present: Chris McDonald, Howard Wallace, Rasheed Hansford, Eloise Pace, Rashaun Hansford and Don Norton

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

2. Invocation

Pastor Linda Ross of Faith Assembly Outreach Ministry offered the Invocation.

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. Adoption of Consent Agenda

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

5. Comments from Attendees

No one presented to address Council.

New Business

6. Public Hearing – Rezoning Parcel 730 King Street

The Mayor announced Mr. Rasheed Hansford has filed a rezoning petition for property he owns at 730 King St.; more specifically, Parcel ID 749105272740. The property is currently zoned Residential 6. Mr. Hansford is requesting a change to B-2 General Business. The Planning Board met on February 20, 2023 to consider the rezoning. The vote was 3-2 to recommend the rezoning. The Mayor opened the Public

Hearing. Mr. Hansford distributed a hand-drawn diagram of the property to Council. He requested the rezoning to B-2 to open a vending area. He gave background information on his visits to Hamlet as a child and his current business, Candilicious, that sells icees and frozen treats in the area and at City events. Mr. Hansford explained he would like to expand his business at the 730 King St. location to also sell fruits and vegetables. His vision is to have a vending area that allows traffic to enter on one end of the property and exit on the opposite end. The property owner said he was given information on parking and screening. Mayor Bayless expressed concern of children crossing Hwy 177 to get to the location. With no further comments, the Mayor closed the Public Hearing.

7. Consistency Statement & Decision of Rezoning Parcel 730 King St.

Mayor Bayless asked for a motion on the Consistency Statement. Council Member McQueen asked the Attorney if the rezoning would be legal or if it would be considered spot zoning. Mr. Morphis explained spot zoning is complicated. Spot zoning is legal if it can be determined that it is lawful. The minutes need to reflect why Council voted for the rezoning. The Mayor stated there are other commercial properties in the area. Council Member Sellers inquired if there were any property owners against the rezoning. Mr. Hansford stated he has received positive comments and 2 surrounding property owners have offered to sell their properties to him. Council Member Stuart asked for more information on spot zoning. The Attorney said the law is not clear on what constitutes spot zoning. He does not have an issue with the rezoning if Council articulates in the minutes their reasons to support the rezoning. Mr. McQueen inquired if there are houses on the surrounding lots and the plans for parking. Mr. Hansford answered the houses on the surrounding lots were removed. He advised if he builds a 30' x 35' building with a driveway, he can have 12 spaces. Council Member McQueen asked if the plans were for food trucks or a building. Mr. Hansford explained he plans to start as food trucks and then a building. Mr. McQueen expressed concern of traffic causing accidents and asked how the City would control parking for food trucks. The City Manager advised the first step is determining the use which in this case would be challenging. The City is updating the Zoning Ordinance; he said he was not sure what use category this would fall into, but the City would follow the parking, buffer and setbacks prescribed in that use. The City has not had that conversation or received the information to make the determination about what use it would be. He reminded Council that if rezoned, the City would have to consider all permissible uses. Council Member Covington stated that is what dictates the future use of the land. She asked what kind of food truck Mr. Hansford had in mind. He answered something similar to the Berry Patch, selling vegetables and frozen desserts under the Department of Agriculture guidelines. Mr. Christian located and provided parking information. The current Zoning Ordinance requires 4 spaces for stacking for a drive thru, and for retail sales 1 space for every 200 square feet of floor space. Once the applicant and Staff get to the Zoning Application process, there will be more discussion of requirements. Council Member Martin stated the question today is to determine the rezoning. He motioned the rezoning is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. Council Member Sellers provided the second. The vote was 4-1 with Council Member Covington voting in opposition.

Rezoning Decision

Council Member Martin stated the rezoning was approved by the Planning Board, no one in the community was in opposition, and the City Attorney was comfortable with any decision the Board made. He motioned to approve the Rezoning from R-6 to B-2. Council Member Sellers provided the second. The vote was 4-1 with Council Member Covington voting in opposition.

8. Consideration of Resolution 2023-04 Donation of Personal Property

Mayor Bayless read the Resolution. Council Member Sellers motioned to approve the Resolution. The second was provided by Council Member Covington. The vote was 5-0.

9. Consideration of Draft Off-Street and Back-Door Garbage Pick-up Policy

Robert Brown, Interim Public Works Director, discussed issues with off-street and back-door garbage pick-up. He explained the Public Works Department has over 100 names for the service. The Administrative Assistant has found many of the customers are deceased and others do not have Dr.'s notes stating they need the service. After discussing the matter with the City Manager, letters were mailed to the residents advising documentation from the Doctor is needed. Also discussed was the need for a policy. Mr. Brown stated the request must be renewed each year. The policy will be beneficial to both the residents and employees. Council Member McQueen announced he did not like sending the letters that stated the service was ending; the residents should have been given an opportunity to provide the documentation. The City Manager agreed. The Interim Director stated Public Works will place the cans where it is convenient for the resident, unless it is a safety issue for the employees. He also advised he has implemented a plan for the Public Works employees to make notes of issues they see as they are out on their routes. Council and Mr. Brown discussed issues with garbage cans; Mr. Brown is trying to purchase parts for the repairs. Council Member Covington motioned to approve the policy. The second was given by Council Member Stuart. The vote was 5-0. Council Member McQueen asked Mr. Brown to check on trash not being collected on Myrtle Avenue, specifically 309 Myrtle Avenue.

Other Business

10. City Manager's Report

City Manager Matthew Christian announced upcoming events in Hamlet. Baseball Sign-ups are on-going until March 24th. An Open-house for the City's development of the Comprehensive Plan will be held March 29, 2023 from 4 pm – 7 pm. There is an on-line survey for residents to participate in. Council Member McQueen inquired if this would be considered a meeting and require notice. The Attorney suggested providing notice of the meeting, but no minutes would be required. Also announced were free line dancing classes at the Senior Center on Mondays at 7 pm and Yoga by the Tracks will restart on March 23rd at 6 pm. The Food Trucks and Box Car Concerts will restart for April – June. Mr. Christian reported the City has been awarded a \$5,000.00 grant from the Richmond County Tourism Development Authority to assist with paying for the bands. The TDA will also market the events. The Manager said the City has received inquiries regarding the water being taken down at City Lake. He reported the purpose is to do an inspection of the dam. The dam is considered high hazard due to the location to the highway; some repairs are needed. The inspection will make sure the foundation is not in need of repairs. Mr. Christian reported the City received a grant for a little more than \$10 million for work at the Water Plant, as well as in the water system. Over 4,000 feet of water lines and mains will be replaced, over 200 lead service connections will be replaced, and site work will be completed at the Water Plant. The investment in the future will be significant and transformational for the people that make the water available. He announced City offices will be closed April 7th for Good Friday.

Council Member McQueen complimented the employees that are maintaining the Facebook page. Council Member Stuart added the Police Department is doing a phenomenal job on their FB page as well. Mayor Bayless inquired on the camera program. Chief Brown reported it is doing well, and dispatchers are now monitoring them. The new cameras have shipped and will be installed at South Hamlet Park, Convenience Corner Park, the Senior Center and 2 more on the current system at Wiregrass Rd. and Hamlet Avenue.

Council Member McQueen thanked Mr. Morphis for his information on the rezoning, saying it helped Council make their decision.

11. Comments of Council

Council Member Martin inquired if the equipment for South Hamlet Park has been ordered. The Manager confirmed. Mr. Martin said progress is being made on Memorial Park. He announced the American Legion games will start the end of May.

Council Member Sellers thanked the attendees for coming. He also thanked Robert Brown for his presentation and Dennis Brown for keeping Council updated. Mr. Sellers complimented Mr. Hansford for his endeavor. He expressed appreciation to Mechelle Preslar for her work at the Depot Complex and thanked his Colleagues and the Manager for their well-done jobs.

Council Member Covington recognized the \$10 million grant and the tremendous work that can be accomplished with it. She added the development of the Comprehensive Plan will give continuity and direction. Mrs. Covington applauded the City for giving every citizen the opportunity for input. She also discussed as a Public Service Announcement that residents are receiving letters concerning quality of life policing. The letters state they are fund raisers for the police department. Mrs. Covington reported the letters are not coming on behalf of the City of Hamlet or Rockingham. She encouraged anyone receiving the letters to speak with someone at City Hall and cautioned people to investigate anyone before making contributions.

Council Member Stuart expressed his excitement for the \$10 million grant. He thanked Robert Brown and Dennis Brown for their comments during the meeting. Mr. Stuart thanked the City Manager for ordering the South Hamlet Playground Equipment. He inquired when it will be received; the Manager will check on the delivery date and report back. Recognizing March as Women's History Month, he thanked Council Member Covington for her many years of service and Gail Strickland for her time with the City.

Mayor Bayless recognized that Chris McDonald with the Richmond Observer was in attendance covering the meeting.

Council Member McQueen discussed an issue a citizen was having with a tree that was cut down in her yard. He has spoken with the resident and received a letter from her addressed to all of Council. The Manager has emailed the letter to all of Council. Mr. McQueen stated he did not see anything in the policy that would stop the City from picking it up. He said in the past the City did not pick up if a paid contractor cut the tree, but he believes someone did it as a favor to her. Interim Public Works Director Robert Brown responded it has been the City's practice that if the work was done by a contractor or put at the road by a piece of equipment, the City did not pick it up. He said every citizen has the ability to get a trailer that saves the employees time and labor. Mr. Brown added the City's landfill for yard debris is almost full; once it is, the City will have to carry it to the County. He added, the City's equipment cannot handle the size of this tree, the base of the tree is 2 ft. in diameter. Mr. Brown stated the pick up has been done by some individuals in the past or when Council impressed on employees to pick it up. He said the City needs to have a clear policy. Both Council Members McQueen and Martin agreed a policy is needed. Mr. Martin added citizens need to know the policy. In this case, he did not feel the resident knew the policy, and regardless, the City needs to help a citizen if the circumstances warrant helping them. The City Manager stated he and Mr. Brown will develop a policy for Council's consideration. Council Member Covington suggested putting an insert in the water bills that gives guidelines. It was consensus of Council to have City employees pick up the tree. Council Member Stuart asked Mr. Brown if he felt forced. He replied he did not, but he and the employees need the guidance of a policy.

Council Member McQueen stated he has received calls from 3-4 people that the Pickle Ball Group was not able to use the gym with the new floor. The Manager answered they can use the gym; the City has ordered the nets and striping needed for the game. He thinks there was miscommunication between players; he will contact them.

Mr. McQueen asked Robert Brown to have a missing cover replaced on a water meter on Axle Lane. He also expressed appreciation to all that helped with the new ladder truck, saying it looks great. He mentioned the passing of Tommy Thompson and Carroll Garner, both had association with the Hamlet Fire Department.

12. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Bayless said the grant for water repairs was much needed as was the inspection of the City Lake dam. He encouraged the residents to complete the online survey for the Comprehensive Plan and attend the meeting. He recognized the Planning Board for their years of service and thanked the employees for doing a great job.

13. Motion to go into Closed Session per NC General Statute §143-318-11(a) (3)(6) Personnel and Attorney Client Privilege

At 7:33 pm, Mayor Bayless asked for a motion to go into Closed Session and read the Statutes. Council Member Covington made the motion. The second was offered by Council Member McQueen. The vote was 5-0.

Return to Open Session

At 8:24 pm, Council Member Sellers made the motion to return to Open Session. The second was given by Council Member Martin. The vote was 5-0.

14. Adjourn

At 8:25 pm, Council Members Sellers and Martin provided the motion and second to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

