

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2021
7:00 PM
MINUTES**

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Mayor Pro Tem	Jesse McQueen
Council Member	Maurice Stuart
Council Member	Oscar Sellers

Staff Present:

City Attorney	TC Morphis
City Manager	Matthew Christian
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
Finance Officer	Jill Dickens
Police Chief	Dennis Brown
Fire Chief	Trey Goodwin

Others Present: Bernice Owens, Kendale Robinson, Amy Guinn, Gavin Stone, Ken Anderson, Margaret Williams and Howard Wallace

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 McQueen motioned to adopt the Agenda, tabling Item Number 10, Discussion of Police Department Compensation, until the next meeting. The second was offered by Council Member Sellers. The vote was 3-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the October 12, 2021 Regular and Closed Session Meetings were approved by motions of Council Members Sellers and Stuart. The vote was 3-0.

5. Comments from Attendees

Mayor Bayless announced Members of the Hamlet Business Association had requested to make a presentation. Newly elected President Kendale Robinson introduced Martha Strong, Bernice Owens and Amy Guinn. The Mission Statement for the organization was read. Mrs. Owens provided information on the December 11th Old Fashion Christmas. Events at the Depot were given by Mrs. Guinn. The Group requested an update on the light poles. The City Manager will provide an update when he receives a response from his Duke Energy contact. The plant beds and need for trees were discussed. Mr. Christian responded the Tree Board was given

permission to plant the trees. He will have Staff look at the flower beds. Council suggested the HBDA develop a plan for cleaning the sidewalks and present it at the next meeting. The Board thanked them for their efforts. They discussed adding the Façade Grant back to the Budget to assist with small business owners in Hamlet.

Mr. Howard Wallace announced he participated in the Seaboard 5k race and came in 3rd place in the over 70 age group. He committed to doing better next year.

New Business

6. Audit Report from Ken Anderson

Mr. Anderson reviewed the Audit Summary Sheet in Council's packets. He advised the City had a good year in both the General Fund and Water and Sewer Fund, even with the loss of sales tax from Richmond County. He attributes that to the City raising taxes, cutting expenditures in Capital Outlay and an overall increase in sales taxes collected. Mr. Anderson gave the tax collection rate as 94.75%, but when the collections for subsequent years is factored in, the collection rate is near 99%. The City received an unmodified opinion, meaning the City had a good report. The General Fund revenues exceeded the expenditures by \$1,023,491.00. The report shows that the expenditures exceeded the revenues by \$419,769.00 in the Water and Sewer Fund. The Auditor explained the number was skewed. The modified accrual basis shows an increase of \$306,395.00. The audit has been sent to the LGC, accepted and approved. He noted Jill Dickens does a very good job as well as the City Manager. Mr. Anderson reported when he spoke with Cathy Howe, with the LGC, she reviewed the audit and does not think the City needs to be on the Unit Assisted List. He will forward the information the Manager needs to submit to the LGC and there is a good possibility the City will get off the list.

Council commended Mr. Anderson for his assisting the City and providing good advice. Council Member McQueen read a list of items the City was not able to purchase due to the change in sales tax by Richmond County. The list included: a fire truck, garbage truck, 6-8 vehicles and a street sweeper. The Downtown Business Grant and Contributions to non-profits were removed from the budget. He added the City is 5-8% behind in salaries and needs to invest in the employees to keep them. Hamlet has not given raises in 2 years while the County has given yearly raises to their employees. Mr. McQueen stated the City needs \$2 - \$3 million to continue to operate the City. The City has to develop a way to convince Richmond County to change the sales tax distribution back. He said the City is investing in the WWTP and needs to hold Richmond County accountable; no option should come off the table for Richmond County paying the City for services the City provides to County residents. He ended by saying the City had a good audit, not because we had money, but due to the management of the money.

7. Public Hearing -- Update to Code of Ordinances

Mayor Bill Bayless opened the floor to the Public Hearing. Mr. Morphis explained the change is a technical correction with recent 160D Statute changes. The current Ordinance lists appeals for minimum housing go to Council; the State Statute requires the appeals go to the Board of Adjustment. No one came forward to speak. The Public Hearing was closed. Council Member McQueen motioned to adopt the updates. The second was offered by Council Member Sellers. The vote was 3-0.

8. Hospice Month Proclamation

Mayor Bayless read the Proclamation.

9. Veterans Day Proclamation

Mayor Bayless read the Proclamation.

10. Discussion of Police Department Compensation

Item was tabled to next month's meeting.

11. Consideration of Extension of COVID Vaccine Incentive Policy.

Mr. Christian explained Council adopted the policy to encourage employees to get vaccinated. Over 75% have received the vaccination and incentive. Since that time, other employees have been vaccinated. He asked Council to re-open the policy until December 15th. Council Member Sellers motioned to re-open the policy until December 15, 2021. The second was given by Council Member Stuart. Council Member McQueen suggested leaving the date open. After discussing, Council Member Sellers amended his motion to re-open the policy until January 15, 2022. Council Member McQueen gave the second. The vote was 3-0.

12. Resolution 2021-06: Approval of Records Retention Dispositions and Schedules.

The City Manager explained the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and Records, has provided updates to the General Records Schedule and created a new Program Records Schedule in accordance with Chapters 121 and 132 of the North Carolina General Statutes. Council Member McQueen motioned to adopt the Resolution. Council Member Sellers gave the second. The vote was 3-0.

13. Approval of Tax Releases

Council Member McQueen motioned to approve the Tax Releases. The second was offered by Council Member Sellers. The vote was 3-0.

Other Business

14. City Manager's Report

City Manager Matthew Christian thanked the Seaboard Festival Committee and attendees that participated in the event. He announced the Tree Lighting is scheduled for November 29th at 5:30 pm, the Christmas Parade December 9th at 6:00 pm and Old Fashion Christmas December 11th from 4 pm – 7 pm. He gave the holiday garbage schedule and advised it is available on the City's website. The Manager announced the Hamlet Senior Center now has in-person activities, being held responsibly. He reported the Employee Appreciation Meal will be December 6th and asked Council to consider giving employees the rest of the day off. Council Member Sellers motioned to close at noon the day of the meal. The second was given by Council Member Stuart. The vote was 3-0.

Council Member McQueen inquired if Council was discussing employee hazard pay at the meeting. Mr. Christian explained he has a draft policy. He and Jill Dickens have taken training; he has a training scheduled for the next day, specifically for the hazard pay portion. They are on pace to present the policy to Council next month.

15. Comments of Council

Council Member Stuart thanked Council for allowing employees to have the luncheon and the afternoon off. He thanked the citizens and the HBDA for their new ideas. Mr. Stuart reported the Food Truck Friday Event has been well attended and he has received positive comments on it.

Council Member Sellers gave thanks to the HBDA Members, visitors, Police Department and Veterans. He wished all a Happy Thanksgiving.

Council Member McQueen thanked the Seaboard Festival Committee and all employees that assisted. He asked the Manager to check on trees that were cut down between the 300 and 500 block of Henderson Street, to make sure the trees were planted or planters addressed on Hamlet Avenue and Main Street, and check on a section of Hwy 74, near Raleigh Street. He stated there is a hole in the road and the sidewalk is completely covered, making walking traffic have to go into the road. Mr. Christian responded that he had walked the area that afternoon. He said a major issue is a dead tree that is hazardous and there are 3 holes in the road. He took pictures to email to NCDOT. He emphasized to the Public Works Director to address the issue as much as the City could. They will stay on top of those that are responsible.

16. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Bayless stated he was glad to hear the auditor's report; the City is keeping its head above water. He added the City has equipment and vehicles that need to be replaced and the City has not recovered from the County taking the sales tax. He said the employees have done an excellent job in keeping the City going. He wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and invited everyone to the City's Christmas events. The Mayor commented, if you have a problem, call Council before you post on Facebook. He said it is regrettable that Council does not have an opportunity to address issues before incorrect information is placed on social media.

17. Motion to go into Closed Session per NCGS § 143-318.11 (a)(3) (6) for attorney-client privilege and personnel.

At 7:59 pm, Mayor Bayless asked for a motion to go into Closed Session and read the Statute. Council Member Stuart provided the motion. The second was given by Council Member McQueen. The vote was 3-0.

Return to Open Session

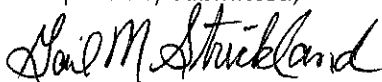
At 9:01 pm, Council Member McQueen provided the motion to return to Open Session and Council Member Sellers provided the second. The vote was 3-0.

Mayor Bayless reported no votes were taken in Closed Session.

18. Motion to Adjourn

At 9:02 pm, Council Members Stuart and Sellers provided the motion and second to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,


Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

