

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
February 18, 2020

The members of the City Council of the City of Phenix City, Alabama met at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time for the regularly scheduled work session on Tuesday, February 18, 2020, in the third floor conference room of the Municipal Building located at 601 12th Street, Phenix City, Alabama. Upon roll call, the following members were present: Councilmember Arthur L. Day, Jr., Councilmember Vickey Carter Johnson, Councilmember Steve Bailey, Councilmember R. Griff Gordy, and Mayor Eddie N. Lowe. Also present were City Manager Wallace B. Hunter, City Clerk Melony Lee, and City Attorney Jimmy Graham. Department Heads in attendance were: Building Official Gil Griffith, Economic Development Manager Shaun Culligan, City Engineer Angel Moore, Utilities Director Stephen Smith, Finance Director Labrita King Copeland, IT Manager Mike Bauer, Fire Chief Kris Kennedy, Golf Course Director Mike Barber, Library Director Michele Kilday, Municipal Court Clerk Ruby White, Parks & Recreation Director Todd Hughes, Human Resources Director Stephanie Chastain, Assistant Police Chief Gail Green Gilliam, Graduate Engineer John Spraggins, and Superintendent of Waste Water Treatment Plant Charles Woody.

Upon a quorum being established, Mayor Lowe called the meeting to order.

The invocation was led by Councilmember Johnson.

Mayor Lowe called upon Dennis Beson to address council, as listed on the agenda. Mr. Beson came forward to address Council. Mr. Beson stated that he is the President and CEO of the East Alabama Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Beson reviewed the activities and events of the Chamber of Commerce for 2019. Mr. Beson passed around bags and golf towels with the Chamber of Commerce logo as well as the Positively Phenix City logo on them. Mr. Beson stated that the bags were used at many Chamber of Commerce events as a marketing tool and the golf towels were given out at the Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament which brought in revenue for the City. Mr. Beson also stated that the Chamber of Commerce is working with the City's Economic Development Department to enhance the City's web portal and boost Facebook promotion. Mr. Beson stated that the Chamber of Commerce serves as a Visitors Center for residents that are new to the area. Mr. Beson also stated that the Chamber of Commerce has Leadership and Education Programs for the Community's adults and youth. Mr. Beson further stated that the Chamber of Commerce major projects of 2019 were the Child Advocacy Program, Phoenix Wings Mural Project in the Amphitheater parking lot and the Young Citizens Scholarship Award. Mr. Beson thanked Council for their support in 2019 and asked for their continued support in 2020 as a platinum sponsor. Councilmember Day inquired about the diversity of the Chamber of Commerce ambassadors at ribbon cutting ceremonies. Councilmember Day stated that he noticed the same person is at every ribbon cutting ceremony. Mr. Beson stated that the Chamber of Commerce, as of recently, has a diverse group of 20 ambassadors that will attend ribbon cutting ceremonies for Chamber members. Councilmember Day inquired about how the Chamber of Commerce works with the City's Economic Development Department on bringing new business to the City. Mr. Beson stated that the Chamber of Commerce gives all leads to and are in constant communication with the City's Economic Development Department. Councilmember Johnson inquired about the cost and managing of three Facebook pages by the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Beson stated that the Visit East Alabama page was inherited from the Convention and Visitors Business Bureau and it has over 7000 followers. Mr. Beson also stated that the second website is the Young Professionals page which is run strictly by the Young Professionals group and not the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Beson further stated that the third website is actually the Chamber of Commerce website. Mr. Beson stated that all three websites list events, businesses and current events in the City. Councilmember Johnson stated that she believes that the Chamber of

Commerce main goal should be to bring the business communities together to create a strong network to benefit the citizens of the community. Councilmember Johnson inquired about what business practices are in place as the new CEO and President of the Chamber of Commerce to prevent the voting infractions that took place a few years ago. Mr. Beson stated that he was not at the Chamber of Commerce at that particular time but he is aware of the issue. Mr. Beson stated that the Chamber of Commerce is a political advocate and the voice of the business community. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the Chamber of Commerce should be bipartisan and sides should not be picked. City Manager Wallace Hunter also stated that things must be done decent and in order and everyone must be represented. Councilmember Day stated that we all must be a good steward with the Citizen's money and that includes the Council and the Chamber of Commerce. Councilmember Day inquired about the splitting of funds received from Phenix City, Smiths Station and Russell County. Mr. Beson stated that Smiths Station and Russell County are not platinum sponsors. Mr. Beson also stated that all the funds are used to help all three entities. Mr. Beson further stated that the Chamber of Commerce does not back any individual candidate but allows them to be heard at their "Meet the Candidate" forum for the citizens. Mr. Beson stated that his goal is to be a partner and an assistant to the City. Councilmember Gordy stated that the Council must make sure that the citizen's funds are used properly and for the benefit of the City. Councilmember Gordy also stated that it has been brought to Council's attention that there are members of the board of the Chamber of Commerce that would rather see Smiths Station grow versus Phenix City. Mr. Beson stated that he represents all Chamber members and things are different since he has arrived. Councilmember Bailey stated that the Chamber of Commerce does not work for the City but works with the City of Phenix City, Smiths Station and Russell County to help move all three entities forward. Councilmember Bailey also stated that Phenix City may have the advantage because of its infrastructure, availability and the man power. Councilmember Bailey further stated that we are all one region and should work together and grow with each other. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the City Council, Department Heads and City employees have worked hard to get Phenix City in the position that it is currently in and the credit rating shows the dedication. City Manager Wallace Hunter also stated that the City has a plan in place to continue its growth. Councilmember Gordy encouraged the Chamber of Commerce to continue to work with the City. Mayor Lowe thanked Mr. Beson for coming to speak with Council.

Mayor Lowe called upon Adren Stallion to address council, as listed on the agenda. Ms. Stallion came forward to address Council. Mrs. Stallion stated that she, along with her husband, are the founders of Hand of Love Resource Center which is located at 910 13th Street, Phenix City, Alabama. Mrs. Stallion also stated that Hand of Love Resource Center is a nonprofit organization that services low income families and the homeless population of Phenix City and Russell County by providing a food bank, clothing bank, lunch on Wednesdays, resume building, general computer classes, parenting classes and other life skills. Mrs. Stallion further stated that Hand of Love Resource Center has been in its current location for the past two years. Mrs. Stallion stated that she wanted to introduce the organization to the Council to inform them of the resources available for the community. Mrs. Stallion also stated that the number of families has decreased in the past year, which is the goal of the center, to educate and decrease the need of assistance. Councilmember Johnson encouraged Mrs. Stallion to continue the great work for the community and the Council will help get the word out about the resources available. Councilmember Johnson stated that every community needs a place that people can go to as a temporary help with long term goals to not be dependent upon the services. Councilmember Bailey asked if the Center service the same families year after year of if the Center provides the tools and resources so that the family doesn't need the Center's help the next year. Mrs. Stallion stated that the goal of the Center is to reduce the families need for certain resources and provide continued support for others. Councilmember Gordy inquired about the resume building and career program. Mrs.

Stallion stated that the center does provide resume building services, job search assistance and mock interviews. Mayor Lowe asked if the clothing bank was able to provide for all genders. Mrs. Stallion stated that the center is in need of men and boys clothing of all sizes. Mayor Lowe thanked Ms. Stallion for coming to speak with Council.

Mayor Lowe called upon Tracie Hadaway and City Manager Wallace Hunter to address council, as listed on the agenda. Ms. Hadaway came forward to address Council. Ms. Hadaway stated that she is with Lee Russell Council of Governments. Ms. Hadaway also stated that she came to speak with Council concerning planning as it pertains to the City of Phenix City. Ms. Hadaway further stated that the City's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in January 2015. Ms. Hadaway stated that the Comprehensive Plan is listed on the City's website. Ms. Hadaway also stated that the plan is well written in regards to the usage of land, economic development, infrastructures, housing, transportation, historical, cultural and natural resources. Ms. Hadaway further stated that the Comprehensive Plan includes detailed plans and strategies for the City's Districts including the Riverfront District. Ms. Hadaway stated that visions change and plans should be updated annually to coincide with annual budget, short term and long range strategies. Ms. Hadaway stated that the Lee Russell Council of Governments works well with the City's Planning Commission. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the City's Comprehensive Plan is reviewed not only annually but when a new City Council has been appointed. Mr. Hunter also stated that without a plan in place, the City would not have made it through the Recession. Mr. Hunter further stated that the City is governed by Charter and State laws and certain board and the Planning Commission are mandated by State law. Councilmember Day inquired about the Riverfront Development and what portion belongs to the Phenix City Housing Authority. Mr. Hunter stated that the Housing Authority has the portion that their property is on and the City has its own plan. Councilmember Day stated the City has grown tremendously since he has been on the Council the past eight years and especially District Three. Mr. Hunter stated that the City doesn't always get the recognition from the County but the City continues to work with them for the good of the citizens. Councilmember Bailey stated that he has worked on Broad Street since 1972 and has seen a lot of Mayors, Councilmembers, City Managers and plans come and go. Councilmember Bailey also stated that Phenix City was one of the few Cities that did not grow backwards during the Recession but maintained its position and grew forward. Councilmember Bailey further stated that the City did not have to cut the work force or layoff any employees because of the Recession. Councilmember Bailey stated that it was not only the City Council but the Department Heads and City employees that helped maintain the City. Councilmember Johnson stated that it was rumored that the City does not have a plan in place. Councilmember Johnson stated that she would not be on the City Council if the City did not have a plan to grow and develop for the citizens of Phenix City. Mr. Hunter stated that the Census count is very crucial for the growth of the city. Mr. Hunter encouraged everyone to participate. Mayor Lowe thanked Ms. Hadaway for coming to speak with Council.

Mayor Lowe called upon Angel Moore, City Engineer, to discuss the actions taken by the Planning Commission at their February 11, 2019 meeting.

Mayor Lowe called upon City Clerk Melony Lee who discussed the following with Mayor and Council:

1. Advised Council that the East Alabama Chamber Leadership Luncheon will be held February 19, 2020 at 12:15 p.m.
2. Advised Council that the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast will be held on March 5, 2020 at 7:00 a.m.

3. Advised Council that the March 17, 2020 Council Meeting will be held at Martin Idle Hour Community Center at 6:00 p.m.
4. Reviewed upcoming board appointments.
5. Reminded Council of Board Interview for Zoning Adjustment and Appeals Board after Work Session Meeting.

Mayor Lowe called upon Steve Smith, Director of Utilities, to speak on the Public Building Authority Refinancing. Mr. Smith stated that three bond issues were refinanced and as a result the City will have almost six million dollars in savings. Mr. Smith also stated that a fourth issue will be refinanced in May with a potential savings of another three million dollars with the current interest rate. Mr. Smith further stated that the issues were structured in 2010 and refinanced in 2020; it will be a total of over nine million dollars in interest cost savings. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that maintaining a sound credit rating allows for the City to refinance bonds and save money.

Mayor Lowe went over the agenda items.

City Attorney Jimmy Graham reviewed agenda claims with Council.

City Attorney Jimmy Graham asked for an Executive Session to discuss Pending Litigation for 10 minutes, from which the meeting would adjourn.

Councilmember Bailey moved to go into Executive Session to discuss Pending Litigation for 10 minutes, from which the meeting would adjourn. Councilmember Johnson seconded said motion. All were in favor.

Mayor and Council interviewed candidate for the Zoning Adjustment and Appeals Board.

Council went into Executive Session at 5:35 p.m.

Council came out of Executive Session at 5:38 p.m.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting adjourned until 3:00 p.m., Monday, March 2, 2020.