

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
April 6, 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 Monday, April 6, 2020, by the way of Zoom Video Conferencing. Upon roll call, the following members were present by the way of Zoom Video Conferencing: Councilmember Arthur L. Day, Jr., Councilmember Vickey Carter Johnson, Councilmember Steve Bailey, Councilmember R. Griff Gordy, and Mayor Eddie N. Lowe. Also present by the way of Zoom Video Conferencing were City Manager Wallace B. Hunter, City Clerk Melony Lee, and City Attorney Jimmy Graham. Department Heads in attendance by Zoom Video Conferencing 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, Parks & Recreation Director Todd Hughes, Director of Human Resources Stephanie Chastain, Police Chief Ray Smith and Graduate Engineer John Spraggins.

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

The invocation was led by Councilmember Gordy.

Mayor Lowe advised there were no Requests to Address Council.

Mayor Lowe called upon Angel Moore, City Engineer, to discuss the actions taken by the Planning Commission at their March 24, 2020 meeting. Ms. Moore advised the meeting was canceled due to no quorum.

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

1. Advised Council that Ft. Benning's Community Appreciation Reception scheduled for April 9, 2020 has been postponed.
2. Informed Council that the DRA quarterly meeting scheduled for April 16, 2020 has been cancelled.
3. Advised Council that Mayor Lowe's "Thank you" Luncheon is scheduled for April 23, 2020.
4. Informed Council that the Alabama League of Municipalities Convention scheduled for May 16-19, 2020 has been postponed, a new date has not been given, and a proposed revised constitution is available for viewing in the Council book for the voting delegate.
5. Reviewed upcoming board appointments.

Mayor Lowe stated that the Mayor's "Thank you" Luncheon scheduled for April 23, 2020 has been cancelled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. Mayor Lowe also stated that as of right now, the Mayor's Ball is still scheduled for June 20, 2020; however, the Mayor's Ball Committee will make a decision after April 30, 2020, or once the Alabama Stay at Home Order has been lifted.

Councilmember Johnson stated that Ms. Renee Toombs will not be present for the Downtown Redevelopment Authority Board interview scheduled after the Work Session Meeting.

Councilmember Johnson asked the Department Heads if there have been any major concerns with employees because of the Coronavirus Pandemic. City Manager Wallace Hunter, stated that that there were no major issues at this time.

Councilmember Johnson inquired about the board interviews conducted by the Police Department. Stephanie Chastain, Director of Human Resources, stated that the interviews are a part of the pre-employment process. Ms. Chastain also stated that with restrictions because of the Coronavirus, the process has been placed on hold. Ms. Chastain further stated that the number of applications for the Police Department have increased.

Councilmember Johnson inquired about any new developments or projects going on in District Two. Angel Moore, City Engineer, stated that the City has been awarded the TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) Grant for the areas along 14th Street, Broad Street and 5th Avenue. Ms. Moore also stated that there is no definite date when construction will begin.

Councilmember Day inquired about an update on the 5th Street South project. Angel Moore, City Engineer, stated that the project inspector has had a set back with the Covid-19 Outbreak and the concrete crew has been quarantine for fourteen days. Ms. Moore also stated that once driveways have been poured, then the asphalt can be put down.

Councilmember Day inquired about an update on the new shopping center on Highway 431. Angel Moore, City Engineer, stated that the City is waiting on the approval from ALDOT (Alabama Department of Transportation). Gil Griffith, Building Official, stated that a certificate of completion has been issued to Renfro Market. Mr. Griffith also stated that everything is moving right along schedule for Renfro's opening pending approval of the City Council for their alcohol license which is on the April 7, 2020 agenda. Ms. Moore stated that the traffic lights are up and the City is waiting on ALDOT to give approval for operation once the retail population threshold has been met.

Councilmember Day inquired about the ADA and pedestrian accessibility along 14th Street, 5th Avenue and Broad Street. Councilmember Day stated that it was to his understanding that improvements would be made throughout the City. Angel Moore, City Engineer, stated that there are projects going on throughout the City but this TAP Grant is specific for the 14th Street, 5th Avenue and Broad Street area.

Councilmember Day inquired about the Bridge Project on Old Opelika Road. Angel Moore, City Engineer, stated that the road is closed, contractors are on sight, and demolition has begun.

Councilmember Bailey asked if any scheduled work in the City was being held up because of the Coronavirus Outbreak besides the 5th Street South Project. Angel Moore, City Engineer, stated that the concrete boxes for the Saddle Brook Subdivision have not come in. Ms. Moore also stated materials are taking longer to come in which has an effect on completion time.

Councilmember Bailey inquired about the Parks and Recreation's Concert Series scheduled to start on April 3, 2020. Todd Hughes, Parks and Recreation Director, stated that the Concert Series for the month of April has been canceled. Mr. Hughes also stated that all artists have been contacted and have rescheduled for late June or July. Councilmember Bailey asked if the Artist could not reschedule, what happens to the money that has already been paid. Mr. Hughes stated that as of right now, all of April's artist have rescheduled.

Councilmember Bailey asked if the Coronavirus Pandemic has had an effect on the upcoming elections for the City Council and the Phenix City School Board. Melony Lee, City Clerk, stated that at this time, the Governor's office has not released any updates or changes. City Attorney Jimmy Graham stated that the Pandemic may have an effect on the elections with everything that is going on. Mr. Graham also stated that any alternate dates must be dictated by Governor Ivey's office. Mr. Graham further stated that the prequalification process should go on as scheduled. Mayor Lowe stated that unless anything changes, he will give the notice of the election as scheduled in June.

Councilmember Bailey inquired about what safety measures are in place for the First Responders when answering emergency calls. Fire Chief Kristin Kennedy stated that no major problems have surfaced. Chief Kennedy also stated that as of right now, the City has enough PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) suits and necessary supplies for all of the responders. Chief Kennedy further stated that additional supplies and disinfectants have been ordered to lower the risk of running out of protective gear.

Mayor Lowe went over the agenda items.

Mayor Lowe stated that the board interviews for the Downtown Redevelopment Authority Board will be postponed until after the Coronavirus Pandemic Stay at Home Order has been lifted.

City Attorney Jimmy Graham stated that there were no agenda claims to review with Council.

Mayor Lowe stated that the Zoom Video Conference speaks volumes for the growth of the City. Mayor Lowe also stated that the IT Department did an outstanding job pulling it all together.

Councilmember Bailey thanked the IT Department and the City Clerk's Office for their help in setting up the Zoom App so that everyone can attend the meetings virtually.

Councilmember Johnson asked if the City Council Meeting will be televised by CTV Beam for the citizens. Mike Bauer, IT Manager, stated that the meetings will be available on the City's Website, www.phenixcityal.us/events for live streaming on Zoom Video Conferencing during the meeting. Mr. Bauer also stated that the meetings can be found on the City's YouTube channel once the Work Session or City Council Meeting have adjourned. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that Mike Bauer and the IT department is currently working on a way for CTV Beam to live stream the meetings as well. Mr. Hunter also stated that in the meantime, Mr. Bauer will make sure CTV Beam has access to the recorded Work Session and City Council Meetings. Councilmember Johnson asked if the meeting will be streamed live on Zoom until the Pandemic is over. Mr. Hunter stated that the meetings will be conducted live on Zoom until it is no longer needed.

City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that we as a City, are not operating under normal circumstances. Mr. Hunter also stated that the next two weeks are going to be vital to the spreading of the Coronavirus Disease. Mr. Hunter further stated that people should listen to governing officials and take the matters at hand very seriously or the numbers of infected people will continue to increase. Mr. Hunter stated that setting a curfew for the citizens of Phenix City may have to be put in place to slow the spread of the virus. Mr. Hunter also stated that we must get the Coronavirus under control for the safety of our citizens and City employees. Mr. Hunter further stated that everyone must work together and follow all safety rules and social distancing.

Councilmember Bailey stated that the Pandemic is definitely real and the City Council is looking out for the citizens of the City as well as City employees. Mayor Lowe stated that the Governor's office released a proclamation on Friday April 3, 2020 implementing the Stay at Home Order. Mayor Lowe also stated that citizens should only be out of the house for essential items only. Mayor Lowe further stated that the City follows the guidelines set by the governor's office. Mayor Lowe stated that Smiths Station's Mayor has issued a curfew for their area but Phenix City has not reached that point yet. Mayor Lowe also stated that a curfew for Phenix City citizens may be implemented in the near future if citizens do not take this outbreak seriously. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the numbers of those with the virus continues to increase. Mr. Hunter also stated that there is no amount of money that is more valuable to a person's life.

Councilmember Bailey inquired about having a Covid-19 test area in the City for those experiencing symptoms. Councilmember Bailey stated that the number of those that tested positive in Russell County appear to be low which may be given people a sense of false security. Councilmember Bailey asked if it was possible for Phenix City to be a hot spot for testing for more accurate numbers. City Manager, Wallace Hunter, stated that the overall numbers are frightening. Mr. Hunter also stated that he has spoken with Representative Blackshear about getting a testing site in the City. Police Chief Ray Smith stated that there are more than 10 cases, as reported, in Russell County but because they are being tested in Eufaula, Auburn, Opelika and Columbus the numbers may not be transferred back to Phenix City's count. Russell County does not have a major test sight. Chief Smith also stated that people should take this Pandemic seriously because it may get worse before it gets better. Mayor Lowe stated that the Pandemic is real and people should maintain all safety measures and practice social distancing.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting adjourned until 3:00 p.m., Monday, April 20, 2020.