

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
April 5, 2021

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 5, 2021, 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 Hunter, City Attorney Jimmy Graham, and City Clerk Melony Lee. Department Heads in attendance by Zoom Video Conferencing were: Building Official Gil Griffith, City Engineer Angel Moore, Economic Development Manager Shaun Culligan, Finance Director Labrita King Copeland, IT Manager Mike Bauer, Fire Chief Kris Kennedy, Golf Manager Mike Barber, Library Director Michele Kilday, Municipal Court Clerk Ruby White, Parks & Recreation Director Todd Hughes, Director of Human Resources Stephanie Chastain, Chief of Police Ray Smith, Acting Utilities Director Charles Woody and Graduate Engineer John Spraggins.

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

Mayor Lowe led the invocation.

Mayor Lowe called upon Linda Barefoot to address council, as listed on the agenda. Ms. Barefoot was present by the way of Zoom Video Conferencing and came forward to address Council. Ms. Barefoot stated that she is coming before Council to request that her property located at 4904 16th Court be annexed into the City for trash pickup. Ms. Barefoot also stated that several houses surrounding her property are serviced by the Phenix City Utilities department but her property is not. Ms. Barefoot further stated that she missed the previous opportunity to have the property annexed into the City prior to the restrictions. Mayor Lowe stated that Ms. Barefoot's property is not within City limits. Mayor Lowe also stated that there is a moratorium in place at this time preventing the annexation. Mayor Lowe further stated that he is hopeful that by the end of the year things maybe different as mandated by the State. City Manager Wallace Hunter suggested that Ms. Barefoot reach out to the service provider to request individual services as an alternative. Mr. Hunter stated that there are a few residence in that area that are not in City limits among some that are. Mr. Hunter also stated that some of the owners chose not to be a part of the original annexation. Mr. Hunter further stated that as the State permits, the opportunity may present itself again. Mr. Hunter stated that Acting Utilities Director, Charles Woody would follow up with Ms. Barefoot at a later date to see if she has reached out to Advanced Disposal. Mayor Lowe stated that boxing in the area is a work in progress and out of the City's hands at the moment. Mayor Lowe thanked Ms. Barefoot 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 March 23, 2021 meeting.

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

1. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on April 6, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. over the platform ZOOM.
2. Advised Council that the Historic Preservation Committee will meet April 7, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. at Troy University.

3. Informed Council that the Face Mask Order set by Governor Kay Ivey and the State Health Officer will expire on April 9, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
4. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet April 13, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
5. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on April 19, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. over the platform ZOOM.
6. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on April 20, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. over the platform ZOOM.
7. Informed Council that the Alabama Attorney General will hold a Press Conference and Presentation to recognize the service and sacrifice of Assistant Police Chief Gail Green Gilliam at 11:00 a.m. on April 20, 2021 at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center. City Clerk Melony Lee stated that if Council approves, the Council Meeting could be held at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center as well so that Council will already be there when the Attorney General arrives. Council agreed.
8. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet April 27, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
9. Reminded Council that April 30, 2021 is the last day to file the Statement of Economic Interest.
10. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on May 3, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. over the platform ZOOM.
11. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on May 4, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. over the platform ZOOM.
12. Advised Council that on May 7, 2021, Governor Kay Ivey's Public Health Emergency Order ends which affects the ability to hold meetings over platform Zoom.
13. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet May 11, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
14. Informed Council that the Alabama League of Municipalities Convention Meeting will be held May 12, 2021 – May 15, 2021.
15. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on May 17, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. either over the platform ZOOM or in person at the Martin Idle Hour Community Center.
16. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on May 18, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. either over the platform ZOOM or in person at the Martin Idle Hour Community Center.
17. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet May 25, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
18. Informed Council that City Offices will be closed on May 31, 2021 in observance of Memorial Day.
19. Reviewed upcoming board appointments.

City Clerk Melony Lee advised Council that Senate Bill 119, the Municipal Elections Bill, has passed the House and the Senate and now awaits the Governor's signature. Ms. Lee stated that the bill would extend Municipal terms for the Mayor and Council by one year which would mean they would be off of the Presidential election cycle. Ms. Lee also stated that the current City Council's term would end in 2025 and not 2024. Councilmember Bailey asked if the bill effected all elections. Ms. Lee stated that she understands that it only affects the Cities Municipal elections. Councilmember Johnson stated that when she attended the Alabama League of Municipalities meeting in February, the topic came up that a year could be added to but not subtracted from Council's time served. Councilmember Bailey stated that Councilmembers terms may end the same year as the Presidents but not in the same month. Councilmember Bailey also stated that there shouldn't be a conflict because of the different times. Councilmember Johnson stated that with both elections being held in the same calendar year, poll workers were a challenge as well as other reasons. Ms. Lee stated that once the governor signs the bill, the five year term is only a one time occurrence, after which the term will be four years.

Councilmember Johnson inquired about the ADA Ramp and Sideway Project. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the project is coming along well. Mr. Hunter also stated that he and his team are working on a video from the sky that will display the different projects that are going on in the City to include the sidewalk, Opelika Bridge and the Brickyard Road Resurfacing projects.

Councilmember Johnson spoke about how excited she was to see the construction and birthing of new businesses on Highway 80. Councilmember Johnson stated that new businesses equal new jobs in the City. Angel Moore, City Engineer, stated that a Dollar Tree would be opening soon. Ms. Moore also stated that Taco Bell, Popeye's Restaurant and a car wash are currently under construction. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that Shaun Culligan, Economic Development Manager, is doing a great job communicating with developers. Mr. Culligan stated that there is one more fast food restaurant that maybe added to Highway 80 in the near future. Mr. Culligan also stated that he is very excited about the growth in that area. Mr. Hunter stated that Phenix City is steadily growing and he is excited as well.

Councilmember Day inquired about the Brickyard Road Resurfacing Project. Angel Moore, City Engineer, stated that the project is moving along very well. Ms. Moore also stated that permanent striping will began after the asphalt's currying period has ended. Councilmember Day asked if State Docks Road would be included in the paving project. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that Brickyard Road has been the main focus in that area but State Docks Road will be repaired in spots as needed.

Councilmember Day asked if there was a date for the reopening of Arthur Sumbry Park. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that Alabama Governor Kay Ivey should be addressing the reopening of public parks and facilities on April 9, 2021. Todd Hughes, Parks and Recreation Director, stated that parks are only open for exercise.

Councilmember Bailey inquired about the fencing around Phenix Plaza. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the Bradley Company is setting things up for a project that they are working on. Mr. Hunter also stated that a meeting will be taking place soon to discuss Phenix City's side in the upcoming project. Mr. Hunter further stated that he will keep Mayor and Council updated as he finds out more information.

Councilmember Bailey asked Fire Chief Kris Kennedy about recruiting for the Fire Department. Chief Kennedy stated that currently there are seven candidates in school that are scheduled to graduate on April 23, 2021. Chief Kennedy further stated that the Fire Department is set to hire five more candidates.

Councilmember Bailey spoke on events being held in the City's Parks or the Amphitheater. Councilmember Bailey stated that 2020's events had to be canceled because of the pandemic. Councilmember Bailey asked if the concert series would resume for summer 2021. Parks and Recreation Director Todd Hughes stated that depending upon the decisions made by the Governor and the CDC, there are hopes of everything opening back up around September or October this year.

Councilmember Bailey asked Police Chief Ray Smith about recruiting for the Police Department. Chief Smith stated that currently there are three candidates in the Police Academy. Chief Smith further stated that the Police Department has openings for eleven positions.

Councilmember Bailey stated that he has received a few inquiries concerning the new Kiosk payment services for the Utilities Department. Charles Woody, Acting Utilities Director, stated that the Kiosk project is on schedule to debut in either May or June of this year.

Councilmember Bailey thanked City Manager Wallace Hunter, Department Heads and City employees for their hard work and dedication to the City during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Councilmember Bailey stated that the City Council is very fortunate to represent a City that has pushed forward even during a pandemic. Fire Chief Kennedy stated that the hardest part was not hiring during the pandemic but keeping recruits safe during training. Chief Kennedy also stated that Phenix City Fire Department has not had an issue with students being exposed to the Coronavirus unlike other Fire Departments.

Councilmember Day inquired about the Public Safety Building Project. Chief of Police Ray Smith stated that the project is back on schedule. Chief Smith also stated that approval has been received on asbestos removal that will allow the project to get back on schedule.

Councilmember Day inquired about the Utilities Water Meter Register Replacement Project. Charles Woody, Acting Utilities Director, stated that the project is an ongoing work in progress. Mr. Woody also stated that there are approximately 400 registers that still need replacing. Mr. Woody further stated that the project should be complete by the end of summer. Councilmember Day asked if the project requires overtime for completion. Mr. Woody stated as of now, the project should be able to be completed within normal business hours.

Councilmember Day stated that he has received good reviews on the completion of the Opelika Bridge Project. Councilmember Day also stated that citizens in that area are very excited that the bridge is open for through way traffic.

Mayor Lowe stated that the 2021 Mayor's Ball that was scheduled for June 19, 2021 has been canceled due to large gathering restrictions set by the CDC. Mayor Lowe also stated that donations and or sponsorships are being accepted to provide scholarships to deserving students. Mayor Lowe further stated that no donation is too small. Mayor Lowe stated that 2020 certificates were given out at the Amphitheater to allow social distancing and the committee plans on doing the same thing this year around August.

Mayor Lowe went over the agenda items.

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

City Manager Wallace Hunter spoke on the hiring deficit within several City departments. Mr. Hunter stated that during the pandemic, some people are choosing not to work for various reasons. Mr. Hunter also stated that a portion of the people who choose not to work may feel as if they receive more with unemployment benefits than actual working income. Mr. Hunter further stated the Government has helped many people by extended the length of time a person can receive unemployment benefits and additional payment amounts. Mr. Hunter stated that jobs on the lower end of the pay spectrum are finding it hard to compete against the benefits. Mr. Hunter also stated that the hiring deficit is not only in our area but throughout the United States. Mr. Hunter further stated that the HR Department receives a number of applications but either they are not qualified for the position, not passing drug test, or not seeking employment and just filling out applications for benefits.

City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that it is time for the community to come together and look out for each other. Mr. Hunter also stated that Police Officers cannot be everywhere at all times, so if they see something, say something. Mr. Hunter further stated that it will take prayer and the entire community coming together to make a difference in the City.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting adjourned until 3:00 p.m., Monday, April 19, 2021.