

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
June 1, 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 Tuesday, June 1, 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, and Mayor Eddie N. Lowe. Councilmember R. Griff Gordy was not present. 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, IT Manager Mike Bauer, Fire Chief Kris Kennedy, Golf Manager Mike Barber, Library Director Michele Kilday, Municipal Court Clerk Ruby White, Human Resources Director Stephanie Chastain, Police Chief Ray Smith, Assistant Chief of Police George Staudinger, Utilities Director Charles Woody and Graduate Engineer John Spraggins.

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

Councilmember Gordy joined the meeting by Zoom Video Conferencing at 3:02 p.m.

Councilmember Day led the invocation.

Mayor Lowe called upon Dr. Thomas J. Lalka to address Council, as listed on the agenda. Dr. Lalka was present by the way of Zoom Video Conferencing and came forward to address Council. Dr. Lalka stated that he would like to discuss the water infrastructure issues in the Bridgewater Subdivision. Dr. Lalka also stated that he spoke with the Utilities Director, Charles Woody, shared his thoughts, and they both agreed that the water system in Bridgewater is failing and needs to be replaced. Dr. Lalka further stated that he has three major questions to present to Mayor and Council: what does the City plan to do to rectify the infrastructure breakdown, what funds will be used to correct the breakdown, and are there any Federal funds that can be used to help fund the project. Dr. Lalka stated that due to the issues with the water lines, the water usage at his home has increased and resulted in higher Utility bills over the past few months. Mayor Lowe stated that the City is aware of the issues in the Bridgewater Subdivision. Mayor Lowe also stated that the City is currently working on a success plan to rectify the water break issues in the Bridgewater Subdivision. Mayor Lowe further stated that Mr. Woody and the Utilities Department are diligently working on resolving the problems but it will not be completed overnight. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that Bridgewater Subdivision is among other older subdivisions throughout the City and have had normal wear and tear on the water system. Mr. Hunter also stated that it will take money and time to make all of the repairs. Charles Woody, Utilities Director, stated that there is a plan in place to make upgrades to the Bridgewater Subdivision water system. Councilmember Bailey asked Dr. Lalka, to explain why he thinks the infrastructure issues have increased the usage of water at his home. Dr. Lalka stated that as pipes age they accumulate residue and particles that are forced through the system causing a valve to stay in open position which increased the water flow in his home. Dr. Lalka also stated that if consistent pressure was applied with the breaks in the system, then the problem would not have occurred. Councilmember Bailey stated that he agrees with Mayor Lowe, Mr. Hunter and Mr. Woody when they stated that aged structures have aged pipes. Councilmember Bailey also stated that there are several older subdivisions in District One that have similar issues. Mayor Lowe stated that the City Council understands that the problem exist and is taking the necessary steps to minimize the issues not just in Bridgewater but older subdivisions throughout the City. Mayor Lowe thanked Dr. Lalka 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 May 25, 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 June 2, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. over the platform ZOOM. This meeting will be held on a Wednesday morning due to the Memorial Day Holiday.
2. Informed Council that the Ft. Benning Change of Command Ceremony will be held on June 4, 2021 at 8:00 a.m.
3. Informed Council that Troy University Spring Commencement Ceremony will be held on June 4, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.
4. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet June 8, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
5. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on June 14, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. over the platform ZOOM.
6. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on June 15, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. at the Phenix City-Russell County Library.
7. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet June 22, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
8. Advised Council that the Budget Work Session will be held on June 28, 2021 and June 29, 2021 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
9. Informed Council that City Offices will be closed on Monday July 5, 2021 in observance of Independence Day.
10. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on July 6, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center. This meeting will be held on a Tuesday afternoon due to the Independence Day Holiday.
11. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on July 7, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center. This meeting will be held on a Wednesday morning due to the Independence Day Holiday.
12. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet July 13, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
13. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on July 19, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
14. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on; July 20, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
15. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet July 27, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
16. Informed Council that the Mayor's Ball Scholarship Award Night will be held on July 29, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. at the Amphitheatre.
17. Advised Council that there were no upcoming board appointments for July.

Councilmember Johnson stated that she received a phone call inquiring about underground piping near the Dillingham Bridge area. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that proper permits have been obtained from the natural gas company to complete the project.

Councilmember Johnson inquired about the hours of operation for the Phenix City Russell County Library during summer break. Councilmember Johnson stated that she has received a few phone calls from Citizens asking if they were allowed to use the computers at the library to fill out job applications and complete resumes. Michele Kilday, Library Director, stated that the Library is open to the public and following the guidelines and mandates sent by Governor Kay Ivey concerning the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Councilmember Johnson stated that she will not host the Annual District Two Meet Your Council Representative this year due to the CDC guidelines and the Covid-19 Pandemic. Councilmember Johnson asked if a hard copy of the projects that the City is working on in District Two could be available for the Citizens in District Two at the June 15, 2021 Council Meeting that will be held at the Phenix City Russell County Library. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that he and City Engineer Angel Moore would look into it and follow up with Councilmember Johnson.

Councilmember Johnson inquired about the 14th Avenue Walking Trail Project. City Engineer Angel Moore stated that the project is in process but has been delayed due to the shortage of contractor workers and receiving bids for the project.

Councilmember Day inquired about the condition of the pool and grass at South Side Park. Councilmember Day stated that he received a phone call from a Citizen in his District. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the parks are not being overlooked. Mr. Hunter also stated that projects are many in the City and right now workers are few in some areas including lifeguards. Mr. Hunter further stated that jobs are available to qualified candidates. Mr. Hunter asked everyone to have patience as the City fills open positions and complete projects. Mr. Hunter stated that the Covid-19 Pandemic had a great impact on not just the City's employment rate but the Nation's employment rate as well.

Councilmember Day asked if the Public Safety Building Remolding Project was moving along schedule. Chief of Police Ray Smith stated that the project is progressing very well with a scheduled completion date of Summer 2022.

Councilmember Day inquired about the charges at the Lakewood Golf Course. Councilmember Day asked if the fee was the same for individuals, groups and organizations. Mike Barber, Golf Manager, stated that the fees are the same for everyone.

Councilmember Bailey stated that the Covid-19 Pandemic has taught us all that all jobs are important. Councilmember Bailey also stated that some business are unable to open back up fully because of the lack of employees.

Councilmember Bailey stated that he has received a couple of phone calls concerning the Utilities Department disconnecting of service policy. Councilmember Bailey asked if it was possible for a customer to be notified before their service is disconnected for a lack of payment. Councilmember Bailey stated that delays in the mailing system may have an impact on bills being paid on time. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the Utilities bill is due upon receipt. Mr. Hunter also stated that the cycle is twenty-one days before the late fee is charged and five days before the disconnection process is carried out. Mr. Hunter further stated that the Utilities Department has over 14,000 customers in their system and the department does the best that they can in helping customers out. Mike Bauer, IT Manager, stated that each customer receives a one time courtesy phone call when their account goes into delinquent status. Councilmember Bailey thanked Mr. Hunter for the clarification.

Councilmember Bailey asked if the City will be holding a Christmas Parade this year. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the City is continuing to follow the guidelines set by the Governor and CDC. Mr. Hunter also stated that he or Todd Hughes, Parks and Recreation Director, will keep Mayor and Council updated as things begin to open back up.

Councilmember Bailey inquired about the number of employees that have received the Covid-19 vaccination. Councilmember Bailey asked if the incentive help increase the number of vaccinated employees. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the number of employees that are fully vaccinated has increased.

Mayor Lowe reflected on the 2008 recession and the high unemployment rate. Mayor Lowe stated that he believes that things will turn around for not just our City but the Nation as well. Mayor Lowe thanked City Manager Wallace Hunter and Human Resources Director Stephanie Chastain for their willingness to give some people who may not have the best past a second chance.

Mayor Lowe informed everyone that the Mayor's Ball Committee will host a Golf Tournament Fundraiser on July 16, 2021.

Mayor Lowe went over the agenda items.

City Attorney Jimmy Graham reviewed agenda claims with Council.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting adjourned until 3:00 p.m., Monday, June 14, 2021.