

**WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES  
November 15, 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, November 15, 2021, at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center located at 3743 Moon Lake Drive, Phenix City, Alabama 36867. 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 Hunter, City Attorney Jimmy Graham, City Attorney James McKoon, and City Clerk Melony Lee. Department Heads in attendance: Building Official Gil Griffith, Deputy Building Official Ray Rogers, City Engineer Angel Moore, Economic Development Manager Shaun Culligan, Economic Development Planning Director Tracie Hadaway, 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, Assistant Chief of Police George Staudinger, and Utilities Director Charles Woody.

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

Mayor Lowe led the invocation.

Mayor Lowe welcomed East Alabama Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Dennis Beson and intern Mr. Scott Winchell to the Work Session. Mayor Lowe stated that Mr. Winchell is a Public Administration graduate student in college. Mayor Lowe also stated that working in government is not easy and it has to be done for the right reasons. Mayor Lowe further stated that it is all about making things better for other people.

Mayor Lowe called upon Pat Brakefield to address Council, as listed on the agenda. Mr. Brakefield came forward to address Council. Mr. Brakefield stated that he would like to address Council concerning the amount of theft and crime that is happening in the downtown area of Phenix City. Mr. Brakefield also stated that he has been a business owner in Phenix City for over 37 years and has three properties located in downtown Phenix City. Mr. Brakefield further stated that the crime rate has really increased over the years and he is worried about his family's safety. Mr. Brakefield stated that over the last few years, he has reported loss due to theft over thirty thousand dollars. Mr. Brakefield also stated that he is not the only business owner in the area that has experienced loss due to theft. Mr. Brakefield stated that there are many people walking the streets late at night and some of them are on drugs. Mr. Brakefield also stated that it is not safe to live or do business in downtown Phenix City. Mr. Brakefield further stated that he has called the police on numerous occasions. Mr. Brakefield recalled a time that a trespasser came onto his property, he called the Police and the person was arrested but released from jail a couple of days later and was back on the streets. Mr. Brakefield stated that he feels that nothing is being done to control the crimes that are happening in our City. Mr. Brakefield asked Mayor and Council if a citywide curfew could be applied to limit the amount of people strolling the streets at night. Mayor Lowe stated that the City Manager Wallace Hunter and the Chief of Police Ray Smith will speak on the issue brought before Council. Chief Smith thanked Mr. Brakefield for his concern and everything he has done to report suspicious activity. Chief Smith stated that the City has no control of how long an inmate stays in jail; it is up to the Judge and the granting and posting of bail. Chief Smith also stated that he has spoken with the Russell County Sheriff Office concerning the lengthening of housing of inmates. Chief Smith further stated that there are a certain number of beds available and because of the pandemic, cells cannot be overcrowded and

court dates were taking a little longer than before the pandemic. Chief Smith stated that court dates and cases are starting to open back up and they should take some people off the streets. Chief Smith also stated he understands the frustration that business owners may be going through. Chief Smith further stated that the City has experienced theft with catalytic converters being stolen from City vehicles. Councilmember Bailey asked if a Police Officer notices someone out in the streets in the middle of the night who appears to be up to no good, what could be done about it. Chief Smith stated that a person could be stopped and questioned under what is called legal suspicion if warranted. Chief Smith explained the legal suspicion rules as defined by the state of Alabama. Chief Smith stated that a citywide curfew is not an option because they are only legal when there is a major emergency. Chief Smith also stated that there are some jurisdictions that have curfews set in place for minors but they are often challenged by freedom organizations. Chief Smith further stated that the major theft issues that Phenix City is experiencing is probably more on the organized crime level than the juvenile level. Councilmember Gordy asked if there were procedures in place followed by other Cities that seem to be affective that Phenix City could possibly follow. Chief Smith stated that he is researching something now to reduce the theft on catalytic converter that is going through the licensing board. Councilmember Day recalled the same topic of catalytic converter theft came up at the Lee-Russell Council of Governments Executive Board meeting as an issue in this entire area. Chief Smith stated that there are items that can be purchased for automobiles to limit access to the catalytic converters and therefore reducing theft. Councilmember Day stated that it has been brought to his attention that a young man was arrested one day for the possession of drugs, made bail the next day and was back out on the streets. Chief Smith stated that the Police Department makes the arrest but the court system sets bail and decides terms of release. Councilmember Gordy asked if the thefts are happening at a certain time, and if so, can more Police Patrol be present around that time frame. Chief Smith stated that officers are patrolling the area in peak time and other hot spots throughout the City. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that video cameras have been placed strategically throughout the City. Mr. Hunter stated that the Police Department cannot be everywhere in the City at the same time and it is up to Citizens to say something if they see something. Chief Smith assured Mr. Brakesfield that the Police Department is doing everything that they can to reduce the crime rate. Chief Smith stated that the Police Department has a Facebook page and will often post videos of unidentified suspects. Chief Smith encouraged everyone to help identify the individuals. Councilmember Johnson asked if all City properties have security cameras. Chief Smith stated that most of them do and they are in a good proximity of a security camera. Mr. Hunter stated that we are living in unprecedented times and a lot of people don't care about other people. Mr. Hunter also stated that some of the crime bleeds over from Columbus, Georgia. Mr. Hunter further stated that the City is doing the best that we can to patrol the entire City and reduce crime. Mr. Hunter stated that it is also going to take the entire community coming together. Mr. Hunter encouraged everyone to call the Police Department and report suspicious behavior. Mayor Lowe thanked Mr. Brakefield 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 November 9, 2021 meeting. Ms. Moore stated that the meeting was canceled due to no agenda items.

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 November 16, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
2. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet November 23, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.

3. Informed Council that City Offices will be closed on November 25, 2021 and November 26, 2021 in observance of Thanksgiving Day Holiday.
4. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on December 6, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
5. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on December 7, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
6. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet December 14, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
7. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on December 20, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
8. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on December 21, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
9. Informed Council that City Offices will be closed on December 23, 2021 and December 24, 2021 in observance of the Christmas Holiday.
10. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet December 28, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
11. Informed Council that City Offices will be closed on December 31, 2021 in observance of the New Year's Holiday.
12. Reviewed upcoming board appointments.

City Clerk Melony Lee stated that the Alabama League of Municipalities will hold its 2022 Municipal Advocacy Day on January 19, 2022. Ms. Lee stated that there is a scheduled Council Meeting on that date. Ms. Lee asked Council to let the City Clerk's Office know who plans to attend the event.

Councilmember Johnson thanked the City Clerk's Office for reminding her of her Alabama League of Municipalities meetings last week. Councilmember Johnson stated that she appreciates everything that they do to help Council.

Councilmember Gordy inquired about the pricing increase on Aluminum Sulfate from the distributor. Councilmember Gordy asked if the increase was sent as a proposal. Charles Woody, Utilities Director, stated that according to the email received from our current vendor, the price will increase significantly but did not give specific details on actual price. Mr. Woody also stated that other vendors submitted a bid as well and they might be cheaper than our current vendor is. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that Mr. Woody will reach out to the current vendor. Mr. Hunter also stated that when the demand is high and there are no chemicals in stockpile, it increases the price or puts a limit on what can be ordered. Councilmember Gordy asked how it affects the City's contract with the vendor since the vendor could not predict the price increase. Mr. Hunter stated that it is difficult on both sides, the vendor and the City. Mr. Hunter also stated that the price might be negotiated to satisfy both parties.

Councilmember Gordy stated that he has received several phone calls from organizations that were not awarded an appropriation from the City for the 2022 fiscal year. Mayor Lowe stated that there are not a lot of Cities in Alabama that grant appropriations. Mayor Lowe also stated that the City does not guarantee that an organization will be awarded an appropriation each fiscal year. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated the nation as a whole has experienced budget cuts due to the pandemic. Mr. Hunter also stated that he is thankful that the City was able to provide the appropriation and they have helped many people in the past. Mr. Hunter further stated that we are living in unprecedented times.

Councilmember Day asked if there was an expiration date on the chemicals that are being stock piled. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that there is an expiration date on the chemicals. Mr. Hunter also stated that there are limitations on what can be stock piled and the amount of storage space.

Councilmember Bailey encouraged everyone to be aware of their surroundings and report suspicious behavior to the Police Department. Councilmember Bailey stated that it is unsafe to try to handle a suspicious situation by yourself and law enforcement is trained in that area. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that when a person takes the law into his or her own hands, it makes the situation worse.

Mayor Lowe went over the agenda items.

City Attorney Jimmy Graham reviewed agenda claims with Council.

Mayor Lowe thanked the Department Heads for all that they do for the City.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting adjourned until 3:00 p.m., Monday, December 6, 2021.