

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
June 6, 2022

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, June 6, 2022, 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, and Councilmember R. Griff Gordy. Mayor Eddie N. Lowe was not present. Also present were City Manager Wallace Hunter, City Attorney Jimmy Graham, and City Clerk Melony Lee. Department Heads in attendance: Deputy Building Official Ray Rogers, City Engineer Angel Moore, 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 Tammy Henry, Parks and Recreation Director Todd Hughes, Human Resources Director Stephanie Chastain, Chief of Police Ray Smith, Assistant Chief of Police George Staudinger, Graduate Engineer John Spraggins and Utilities Director Charles Woody.

Upon a quorum being established, Mayor Pro Tem – Councilmember Gordy called the meeting to order.

Councilmember Bailey led the invocation.

Mayor Pro Tem – Councilmember Gordy advised there were no Requests to Address Council.

Mayor Pro Tem – Councilmember Gordy called upon Tracie Hadaway, Economic Development Planning Director, to discuss the actions taken by the Planning Commission at their May 24, 2022 meeting.

Mayor Lowe joined the meeting at 3:12 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem – Councilmember Gordy 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 7, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
2. Reminded Council that the Mayor's Ball Golf Tournament will be held on June 10, 2022.
3. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet June 14, 2022 at 5:15 p.m.
4. Advised Council that the Budget Work Session will be held on June 17, 2022 at 8:30 a.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
5. Reminded Council that City Offices will be closed on June 20, 2022 in observance of the Juneteenth / Freedom Day Holiday.
6. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on June 21, 2022 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 Juneteenth / Freedom Day Holiday.
7. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on June 22, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at the Phenix City/Russell County Library. This meeting will be held on a Wednesday due to the Juneteenth / Freedom Day Holiday.

8. Informed Council that Councilmember Johnson will hold a meeting for District Two residents prior to the regular scheduled Council Meeting on June 22, 2022 from 5:15 p.m. until 5:45 p.m. at the Phenix City/Russell County Library.
9. Advised Council that the Mayor's Ball will be held on June 25, 2022.
10. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet June 28, 2022 at 5:15 p.m.
11. Informed Council that City Offices will be closed on July 4, 2022 in observance of the Independence Day Holiday.
12. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on July 5, 2022 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.
13. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on July 6, 2022 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 Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday.
14. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet July 12, 2022 at 5:15 p.m.
15. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on July 18, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
16. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on July 19, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center
17. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet July 12, 2022 at 5:15 p.m.
18. Informed Council that the National League of Cities 2022 City Summit Conference will be held November 17, 2022 through November 19, 2022 in Kansas City, Missouri. Ms. Lee asked Council if they would like to attend the conference, to please notify the City Clerk's Office. Ms. Lee stated that registration is now open for the conference.
19. Reviewed upcoming board appointments.

Councilmember Johnson inquired about the number of applications that have been turned into the Human Resources Department that were hired by the City. Councilmember Johnson asked if the City was getting close to the number of employees to be considered fully staffed. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the City is not close to being fully staffed. Mr. Hunter also stated that the Human Resource Department is doing everything that they can to recruit and retain employees. Mr. Hunter further stated that throughout the United States, over 4 million people are quitting their jobs per month. Mr. Hunter stated that the workforce shortage is happening not only in Phenix City but all over the United States. Mr. Hunter also stated that Human Resource Director Stephanie Chastain will present data from the Alabama Labor Market at the Council Meeting on June 7, 2022. Ms. Chastain stated that in the last 60 days between April, 2022 and May, 2022, the City received 150 applications, interviewed 77 candidates, and hired 11 new employees. Ms. Chastain also stated that there are certain skill levels that must be met by the applicant that require pre-employment testing for certain positions. Ms. Chastain further stated that 19 individuals were called for pre-employment testing in the last 60 days, 15 tested and passed, 1 no call/no show, 1 rescheduled testing and 2 scored below standards. Ms. Chastain stated that it is a process to go through from applicant to hired employee. Ms. Chastain also stated that an individual seeking employment may put in several applications with different companies which makes the job market more competitive. Ms. Chastain further stated that youth that don't want to work and unfavorable back ground screening is also a challenge. Ms. Chastain stated that the City's interview to hire ratio for April and May is about 37%. Ms. Chastain also stated that the national average is about 10%. Ms. Chastain further stated that the City's application to interview ratio is 57% and the national average is 20%. Councilmember Johnson stated that according to her understanding, the national unemployment rate is at an all-time low of 3.6%. Ms. Chastain stated that the unemployment rate is calculated by people who are actively seeking employment. Ms. Chastain also stated that there are people who do not want to work. Mr. Hunter stated that he is thankful for the employees that the City has that are showing up for work and doing their jobs.

Councilmember Johnson stated that the City is a great place to work. Ms. Chastain stated that applications can be completed online on the City's website or in person at the Human Resource Department. Mr. Hunter stated that the Public Works Department, Utilities Department and Parks and Recreation Department are in the most need of employees. Mr. Hunter also stated that the job market is a competitive market and some companies are paying more for less work. Mayor Lowe encouraged everyone to be patience if it takes longer for services to be completed throughout the City. Mr. Hunter stated that the City is a great place to work and has a great retirement plan. Mr. Hunter also stated that some people are working for today and not working towards the future.

Councilmember Johnson stated that the safety of the public is on the hearts and mind of everyone with an increase of violence, not just in our nation, but in our City as well. Councilmember Johnson asked if police patrol had increased in our public housing areas. Councilmember Johnson stated that there was a shooting that happened recently in District Two. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that there has been an increase in patrolling all apartments throughout the City. Mr. Hunter also stated that there are a few officers that live in apartment complexes in the City. Mr. Hunter further stated that preventative measures are in place but somethings are beyond control. Chief of Police Ray Smith stated that even though the Police Department is short 25 officers, they are still doing a great job patrolling the City. Chief Smith also stated that in April, the department answered over 2800 calls, made 220 arrest, and issued 127 citations. Chief Smith further stated that the Police Department is on top of the recent homicide. Chief Smith stated that there are 4 officers that live in and service apartments. Chief Smith encourage everyone to not believe what they see on social media if it isn't coming directly from the Police Department or designated official. Chief Smith stated that the information on social media does not always come from a reliable source. Chief Smith also stated that it is unfortunate that family members are finding out information about their loved ones on social media before they are contacted by the Police Department. Councilmember Bailey stated that we all have to be prayed up because an evil person is going to find a way to be evil.

Councilmember Johnson stated that she had the opportunity to attend an event held at Troy University. Councilmember Johnson also stated that members of the Police Department were in attendance and they did an excellent job speaking to our youth. Councilmember Johnson further stated that Tammy Henry, Library Director, was also in attendance and spoke about the summer activities for the youths at the Phenix City Russell County Library.

Councilmember Johnson stated that she received a compliment from a citizen concerning the employees working at the Central Activity Center. Councilmember Johnson also stated that the caller commented that the employees are always willing to help. Councilmember Johnson asked if the hours of operation for the Central Activity Center had returned to the hours prior to the pandemic. Todd Hughes, Parks and Recreation Director, stated that the Center is still under controlled access.

Councilmember Johnson inquired about the lighting at the walking trail on 14th Avenue. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the park will have closing hours and lights aren't necessary. Mr. Hunter also stated that the track has been used prior to the opening of the park by people on four wheelers. Mr. Hunter further stated that they are tearing up the track before the park opens and it's discouraging. Parks and Recreation Director Todd Hughes stated that the park should be open to the public in a few weeks. Mayor Lowe stated that it is going to take the entire community to help keep City parks safe. Mayor Lowe encouraged citizens to be an eye for the community and if they see something, say something.

Councilmember Bailey stated that he has received several calls concerning the Lakewood Dam area. Councilmember Bailey also stated that he understands the City is working with a smaller workforce and he encouraged the callers to be patient. Councilmember Bailey recalled years ago when people in Phenix City and Columbus, Georgia would volunteer to clean up areas around the Chattahoochee River. Councilmember Bailey asked if this was something that the City could do. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that community involvement helps people be a part of the solution and not the problem. Parks and Recreation Director Todd Hughes stated that the removal of the trees has to be contracted out.

Councilmember Bailey stated that he has heard several complaints on the condition of garbage bins. Councilmember Bailey also stated that he actually witnessed, while paying his Utility bill, an employee of the Utilities Department receive backlash from a citizen who has issues with their garbage bin. Councilmember Bailey further stated and explained that Advance Disposal may be experiencing an employee shortage just like the City and most employers, which causes delays. Charles Woody, Utilities Director, stated that the Utilities Department is receiving complaints on missing or broken garbage bins and missing trash pick up routes. Mr. Woody also stated that he has a meeting with the District Manager of Advance Disposal soon and will cover these issues.

Councilmember Day inquired about the length of time it takes for a Police Officer to respond when a citizen dials 911. Councilmember Day stated that he received a call from his neighbor stating that they called 911 and it took 40 minutes for the police to respond. Councilmember Day further stated that the situation turned out to be a young man caring a toy gun, but the citizen was upset because it took so long for Police to respond. Chief of Police Ray Smith stated that he would look into the situation.

Councilmember Day inquired about an update on the Old Seale Road Bridge Project. Angel Moore, City Engineer, stated that requests are being reviewed by ALDOT. Ms. Moore also stated that the project has several steps remaining.

Councilmember Day inquired about an update of the renovation of the Public Safety Building. Chief of Police Ray Smith stated that the project is on schedule and no major problems to report have slowed down the process.

Councilmember Day stated that when he receives calls from citizens, he listens to their situation and explains that the City is operating with a shortage of staff. Councilmember Day encouraged everyone to have patience if it takes longer for tasks to be completed.

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., Tuesday, June 21, 2022. **

**Note to Minutes: Tracie Hadaway passed out the Phenix City 13th Street Corridor Redevelopment Proposal.