

**MINUTES OF MARION CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING**  
**CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**TUESDAY, JUNE 14, 2022**  
**6:30 P.M.**

A regular meeting was held by Marion City Council on Tuesday, June 14, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. in which Mayor Ashley Brady presided. Council members Ronald Atkinson, Michael Baker, Joseph Frazier, Donny Gerald, Mayor Pro-tem Emerson Hunt and Tassie Lewis were present. Staff present were City Administrator Alan Ammons, City Treasurer Patricia Brown, City Clerk Lakesha Shannon, City Attorney James Brogdon, Police Chief Tony Flowers, and Fire Chief Jeremy Bass.

Mayor Ashley Brady called the meeting to order, gave the opening prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He then welcomed citizens and guests.

**APPROVE MINUTES OF REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING APRIL 12, 2022:**

Councilman Michael Baker made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular city council meeting held on May 10, 2022, and the budget workshop held on May 25, 2022. The motion was seconded by Councilman Joseph Frazier; motion carried unanimously.

**APRIL EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH:**

Mayor Ashley Brady named City Custodian William Blake the May Employee of the Month. He thanked Mr. Blake for all that he does at city hall and all over the City, and commented that he is a great asset to the City.

**PROMOTION CEREMONY – CITY OF MARION FIRE DEPARTMENT:**

City of Marion Fire Chief Jeremy Bass led a promotional ceremony for fire officers being promoted to Lieutenant, Captain and Safety Officer. Promotional badges were presented to the following officers:

**Lieutenant Chandler Tisdale**

**Safety Officer Robert Davis**

**Captain Kevin Hammond**

**Captain Ethan Brown**

**Lead Safety Officer Russ Cotton**

Mayor Brady thanked all the officers for their hard work and dedication to the City of Marion. He further thanked the officers for saving lives and putting out fires. Mayor Brady then administered the oath of office to the officers.

**APPROVE RESOLUTION FOR BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL TEAMS:**

Mayor Brady announced that Pee Dee Academy recently won back to back baseball and softball state championships. Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt motioned to approve that a resolution be presented to the teams at the July council meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Ronald Atkinson, and carried unanimously.

Mayor Brady also requested that Marion High School student Travis Stuckey be presented with a resolution for winning the Class 2A state discus throw championship. A

motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt to approve a resolution for Travis Stuckey. The motion was seconded by Councilman Donny Gerald, and carried unanimously.

**PROPOSED JUNETEENTH HOLIDAY:**

Mayor Brady proposed that the City allow its employees to be off on Monday June 20, 2022 to observe the Juneteenth holiday. Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt made a motion to approve Juneteenth as a City holiday. The motion was seconded by Councilman Ronald Atkinson, and carried unanimously.

**HMRA PRESENTATION – MRS. TAYLOR NEWELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

HMRA Executive Director Mrs. Taylor Newell presented council with updates on projects currently taking place on Main Street. She noted that the Harlee Place Mural she reported on last month is now complete. She stated that some string lights will also be hung in that area in the next couple of weeks to further bring the area back to life.

Mrs. Newell noted that the Art Alley beside Swoon Boutique is now complete. This area consists of paintings from a community partnership of artist that participated in a contest. She noted that the downtown area is expanding, and the shops are filing up with new businesses. She stated that they would like to expand projects off of Main Street as well so that businesses will want to locate in areas like Harlee Place and other streets behind Main Street.

Mrs. Newell highlighted the downtown growth, and stated that 11 new businesses will open on Main Street over the next 2 weeks in the downtown district. She stated that they are

also working to make the alley ways more walkable as businesses expand. Mrs. Newell stated that she's received several phone calls over the last 3 weeks from businesses inquiring about what Marion is doing to make so many businesses want to locate here. She stated that HMRA is meeting with an average of 5 people per week to show properties on Main Street. A large part of the progress is a result of HMRA's partnership with the City with donations for Facade Grants to enhance the businesses. She stated that they just received funding from the Healthcare Foundation as part of its partnership, and hopes that the City will also continue funding through its partnership as well.

Mrs. Newell announced some upcoming events in the downtown district to include:

- Unveiling of the Harlee Place Mural and celebration for student artist on July 7th at 5:30 pm
- Summer Concert Series on July 22, August 13, September 10, and November 23
- Casino at The Grove Fundraiser on New Year's Eve

## **1<sup>st</sup> READING OF ORDINANCE 22-06 AN ORDINANCE TO SET RATES FOR SANITATION**

### **FEES**

Councilman Ronald Atkinson motioned to approve 1<sup>st</sup> Reading on Ordinance 22-06 **An Ordinance to Set Rates for Sanitation Services.** The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt, and carried unanimously.

**1<sup>st</sup> READING OF ORDINANCE 22-07 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND PART 7, SECTION 7-6008 RELATING TO YARD SALES, SO AS TO INCREASE THE FEES**

Councilman Michael Baker motioned to approve 1<sup>st</sup> Reading on Ordinance 22-07 **An Ordinance to Amend Part 7, Section 7-6008 Relating to Yard Sales, So As To Increase The Fee.** The motion was seconded by Councilman Joseph Frazier, and carried unanimously.

**1<sup>st</sup> READING OF ORDINANCE 22-08 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 5-6035 FEES FOR CITY INSPECTIONS**

Councilman Ronald Atkinson motioned to approve 1<sup>st</sup> Reading on Ordinance 22-08 **An Ordinance to Amend Section 5-6035 Fees for City Inspections.** The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Tassie Lewis, and carried unanimously.

**1<sup>st</sup> READING OF ORDINANCE 22-09 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 3-2005 FEE FOR BURIAL PERMITS**

Councilman Ronald Atkinson motioned to approve 1<sup>st</sup> Reading on Ordinance 22-09 **An Ordinance to Amend Section 3-2005 Fee for Burial Permits.** The motion was seconded by Councilman Donny Gerald, and carried unanimously.

**RESOLUTION 2022-03 A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE CURRENT BUILDING PERMIT FEE SCHEDULE APPENDIX L**

Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt motioned to approve Resolution 2022-03 **A Resolution to Adopt the Current Building Permit Fee Schedule Appendix L.** The motion was seconded by Councilman Ronald Atkinson, and carried unanimously.

## **REQUEST TO ADDRESS COUNCIL:**

### **Ms. Racquel Kenney**

Ms. Racquel Kenney was present to address council regarding the removal of her dog from her home. Ms. Kenney stated that she was issued a code violation in June and September of 2021. She stated that the dog was removed from the home and placed at the animal shelter due to her not having adequate insurance to cover any animal liability. She stated that during that time she was in the process of getting the additional insurance.

She stated that the most recent issue was in February 2022 when her daughter was out walking the dog and a complaint was received from her neighbor regarding the dog not wearing a muzzle. Ms. Kenney also referenced a previous incident in November 2021 when the dog was removed by the police chief and code enforcement officer and taken to the animal shelter. She stated that the dog is a family pet and not a vicious dog. She further stated that all incidents related to the dog took place on her property, and the dog was leashed and not running loose throughout the neighborhood.

Ms. Kenney stated that she was never included in any decisions regarding the removal of her dog, and was never given the opportunity to share her side of the story. She noted that the dog is an emotional support animal for the children she raised as her own following the tragic loss of their father. She said no one asked her any questions regarding the insurance paperwork or anything prior to removing the dog based on complaints. She asked that city council reconsider the decision to remove her dog.

## **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:**

City Administrator Alan Ammons reported that the preliminary plans for the Green Street Sports Complex are complete. He noted that the 450-page document includes all specifications for how the complex will be constructed. He stated that approval was also received from DHEC and core engineers to fix the ditch in that area. The preliminary plans are ready to be advertised for bid, and he will provide a copy to council for review. Mr. Ammons provided council with a copy of a proposal letter from Alliance Engineering stating that they would continue the process of assisting the City with the project until completion. This would include handling the bid process, qualifying a contractor, and ensuring that the project is completed. Mayor Brady recommended allowing Alliance Engineering to complete the process as the City does not have the expertise to handle the bidding, and necessary steps to complete the project. Mayor Brady stated that capital sales tax will help fund the project, and additional funds may have to be financed to complete it.

Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt motioned to allow Alliance Engineering to handle the bidding and completion of the project. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Baker, and carried unanimously.

## **CITY ATTORNEY'S LEGAL UPDATE**

There was no legal update from City Attorney James Brogdon.

## **DISTRICTS AND CITY UPDATE FOR COUNCIL AND MAYOR**

**Mayor Ashley Brady** provided an update on a commitment from Senator Kent Williams to help provide \$100,000 from the state to fund the lighting at the Green Street Sports Complex. He stated that some additional information is also being sent to Senator Williams to request funding for the fishing piers at Catfish Creek.

Mayor Brady stated that this year's Foxtrot Festival was a success with great turnout and no issues. He noted that the city pool is now open to the public. The public works department is cutting grass throughout the City. Mayor Brady stated that the City is hiring for several positions including public works equipment operators, police and fire officers.

Mayor Brady provided an update on the water fountain project in front of the courthouse which is a partnership between the City, HMRA and the Garden Club. There are plans to install stamped concrete around the fountain along with some plantings, shrubbery and landscape lighting by the Garden Club. He commented that the fountain area is a beautiful asset to the City.

**Councilman Michael Baker** asked if Mrs. Newell has contacted the State Arts Council to request any funding. Mrs. Newell advised that they have provided funding to assist with the Harllee Place Mural. Councilman Baker also asked if funding was received from Marion County. Mrs. Newell stated that no funding was received from the County.

**Councilman Joseph Frazier** asked for an update on the vacant building that's boarded up on Main Street. Mr. Ammons stated that the property owner has applied for a facade grant to paint the building which will have to be approved by the Historic District Committee.



Councilman Frazier also asked for an update on the old Coca Cola building on Manning Street. Mr. Ammons stated that an engineer is scheduled to come assess the brick walls, and the property owner is okay with the engineering inspection.

Councilman Frazier asked what activity is taking place at the old Blumenthal Mills plant. Mr. Ammons stated that the building was purchased from Marion County and is currently being used by a company to assemble furniture.

Councilman Frazier inquired about the activity at the fairgrounds. Mr. Ammons stated that the fairgrounds is being used by a private group to teach youth batting and pitching lessons. Mayor Brady stated that the trashcans at the fairground will be picked up and the grass will also be cut. Councilman Frazier thanked Mr. Ammons for all that he does to assist with issues and complaints throughout the City.

**Councilman Ronald Atkinson** thanked Mrs. Taylor Newell for the great job she is doing with the downtown area.

**Mayor Pro tem Emerson Hunt** expressed his compassion to Ms. Racquel Kenney on the situation with her dog. He also thanked Mrs. Newell and HMRA for all the work in developing the downtown community. He stated that they are attracting more people and helping to develop a culture in the City of Marion. Mayor Pro Tem Hunt encouraged everyone to take care of themselves physically.

**Councilwoman Tassie Lewis** thanked Chief Jeremy Bass for his leadership and passion for the fire officers and the community. She also thanked Mrs. Newell for all the beautification projects in the downtown district. Councilwoman Lewis expressed her empathy to Ms. Kenney regarding the situation with her dog. Councilwoman Lewis reported on the Gun Violence Rally that was recently held at Pop Dorsey Park. She also expressed her concerns with the issue of crime that's taking place in the City, and stated that everyone must be vigilant in speaking up if they know something.

**Councilman Donny Gerald** thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He also thanked Mrs. Newell for her work in the downtown area. He stated that he has not seen the City of Marion look this way in a long time. He noted that he receives calls about the progress, and highlighted that people from out of town show up at events just to watch what the City of Marion does.

Mayor Brady stated that there was a good crowd downtown last weekend for the summer concert and everyone had a great time. He noted that water barricade safety measures were put in place by Chief Bass on Main Street to protect the citizen while they enjoy the concert. He also thanked Mrs. Newell for the work HMRA is doing downtown with the beautification projects and facade grants.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Councilman Ronald Atkinson made a motion to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter with the employee retention plan, and economic development with a land

acquisition and downtown development. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Tassie Lewis, and carried unanimously.

Returning from executive session, Councilman Michael Baker made a motion to return to regular session. The motion was seconded by Councilman Joseph Frazier, and carried unanimously.

**ACTION ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS:**

Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt motioned to extend the employee retention plan bonus for each year of employment up to 20 years for employees who left the City, but returned to work with the City within one year. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Baker, and carried unanimously.

Councilman Ronald Atkinson motioned to allow Mayor Brady and Mr. Ammons permission to work with Marion County to purchase a land acquisition with the understanding that the purchaser is allowed to come back into the city limits. He further motioned that the City be allowed to purchase the land should the agreement not work out with the County. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt, and carried unanimously.

Mr. Ammons stated that he was contacted by Mr. Jay Jordan who is requesting that the City partner with his foundation to host a back to school giveaway at a city park. Mr. Ammons will work with him on this request.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Hearing no further business, a motion was made to adjourn by Councilman Ronald Atkinson and seconded by Councilman Michael Baker; motion carried unanimously.

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Mayor Ashley Brady

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City Clerk Lakesha Y. Shannon