

MINUTES
MARION CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2023 AT 6:30 P.M.

MAYOR/COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Ashley Brady	Councilman Fred Gause
Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt	Councilman Donny Gerald
Councilman Ronald Atkinson	Councilwoman Tassie Lewis
Councilman Michael Baker	

STAFF PRESENT:

Alan Ammons, City Administrator	James Brogdon, City Attorney
Patricia Brown, City Treasurer	Tony Flowers, Police Chief
Lakesha Shannon, City Clerk	

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ashley Brady.

2. PRAYER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Ashley Brady led the prayer and pledge of allegiance.

3. WELCOME CITIZENS, GUESTS & PRESS

Mayor Ashley Brady welcomed all citizens and guest.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

➤ Regular City Council Meeting – July 11, 2023

A motion was made by Councilman Michael Baker, seconded by Councilman Fred Gause to approve the minutes of the regular City Council Meeting held on July 11, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

5. JULY EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Mayor Brady recognized all the Recreation Department lifeguards as the July Employees of the Month. He thanked them all for their hard work and dedication at the city pool this summer. He noted that it was a busy season as swimming lessons were offered this year.

6. AUDIT PRESENTATION – Mrs. Brenda Jackson, Kenneth Cobb & Co.

City Auditor Mrs. Jackson thanked the Mayor, Council and City staff for the opportunity to serve as auditor. She noted that it was a pleasure working with staff to complete this year's audit. She stated that the City received a clean unmodified opinion, which is the top opinion that can be received. Mrs. Jackson highlighted the following items from the 2021 – 2022 City of Marion audit:

- Current cash flow \$5.1 million, up \$300,000 from last year
- Restricted cash of \$2.5 million, up \$1 million from last year due to remaining ARP funds
- Total Liabilities of \$10,709,496, which mainly consists of pensions and OPEB obligations
- Assets minus Liabilities \$7.2 million
- Hospitality Tax Revenue \$594,253
- Unrestricted Net Revenue was at a deficit just over \$2 million which is a result of the pension obligations
- Unrestricted General Fund balance was at \$5.7 million, which was \$5.4 million last year
- \$363,774 was added to the General Fund balance rather than spending the estimated \$672,000 that was budgeted

- \$538,969 increase in restricted cash was a result of the new SC Business License Standardization Act which changed the license due date to May 31, and resulted in 2 business license payments in the same fiscal year
- \$60,000 decrease in police fines and forfeits due to vacancies within the Police Department
- \$51,000 increase in sanitation fees
- \$527,000 under-budgeted in Police Department; however, it was favorable due to department vacancies
- \$92,000 revenue surplus in Recreation Department

Mayor Brady thanked Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Patricia Brown, and City Department Heads for maintaining an outstanding budget. In closing, Mrs. Jackson noted 2 findings which were inadequate segregation of duties and preparation of financial statements. She stated that these are common findings in small rural cities due to limited staff.

7. DISCUSS CITY OF MARION FIREWORKS ORDINANCE

Police Chief Tony Flowers updated Council on community concerns regarding the current fireworks ordinance. He noted that he received several calls requesting consideration for the elderly with health concerns, persons with PTSD, and those who work early morning hours and are not able to sleep due to the fireworks. Chief Flowers recommended the following changes to the ordinance relating to dates and times for firework usage:

- Fourth of July allowable dates to July 3-4 from 5:00 PM – 11:00 PM
- Christmas allowable dates to December 24-25 from 5:00 PM – 10:00 PM
- No changes to New Year's allowable dates

Council agreed with the recommended changes as presented by Chief Flowers, and asked that Attorney James Brogdon review the current ordinance and prepare an amendment for review and consideration at next month's meeting.

8. NATIONAL FAITH & BLUE WEEKEND

Chief Tony Flowers presented council with information regarding the National Faith & Blue Weekend 2023 which will be held on October 6-9, in the City of Marion. He is currently working with several churches in the City who are interested in working with him to organize and participate in this event. The goal of the National Faith & Blue Weekend is to help bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community. It helps get the officers out so that the community can get to know them. This 4-day event will include activities for the elderly, children, and families such as bouncy houses, sports events, and round table forums with an open line of discussion on serious issues. Chief Flowers stated that he would like for this to become an annual community event. He asked for support in getting the word out through the faith-based community.

9. REORGANIZE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mayor Brady stated that two members need to be replaced on the Citizens Advisory Committee. He stated that we will also reach out to the other members to make sure they are still willing to serve. ***A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt, seconded by Councilman Michael Baker to appoint Marilyn T. Woodberry and Virginia Davis Miller to serve a 4-year term on the Citizens Advisory Committee. The motion carried unanimously.***

10. APPROVE BID FOR CITY HALL RENOVATIONS

Mayor Brady stated that the City Hall renovation Project has been advertised for bid three times, and a bid was finally received from Eagle Contracting &

Construction for \$435,000. Councilman Fred Gause asked for an itemized list of the work that will be included in the overall project. City Administrator Alan Ammons stated that the scope of work will include replacing exterior areas to include the roof, windows, doors, rotten boards, and installing a handicap ramp. The interior will include renovating the bathrooms, and removing the columns in the council chambers. Once these priority items are complete, any additional funds will be used to further renovate the inside of the building. Council discussed the possibility of having to borrow additional funds to complete the project if needed. Councilman Donny Gerald recommended that the contractors use local vendors to their building supplies. Mayor Brady and Mr. Ammons will encourage the contractors to shop local. ***A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt, seconded by Councilwoman Tassie Lewis to approve the bid of \$435,000 from Eagle Contracting & Construction to complete the City Hall renovations. He also added that Council would have the option to borrow funding if needed to complete the renovation project. The motion carried unanimously.***

11. REQUEST APPROVAL OF FUNDING – Dump Truck for Public Works Department

Mayor Brady stated that the city has excess funds from the Hurricane Florence FEMA Grant which can only be used to purchase specific items. He requested that a dump truck for the Public Works Department be purchased from the grant funds. He also asked that council authorize himself and Administrator Alan Ammons to use \$110,000 in FEMA funds to purchase a medium sized dump truck when one becomes available that meets the required specifications. ***A motion was made by Councilman Fred Gause, seconded by Councilman Michael to approve \$110,000 for the purchase of a medium sized dump truck***

and to authorize the Mayor and City Administrator to make the purchase. The motion carried unanimously.

12. REQUEST APPROVAL OF FUNDING – Surveillance Equipment for Police Department

Mayor Brady stated that the Police Department is requesting to purchase some surveillance equipment to assist them in carrying out their duties. A bid was received in the amount of \$8,345, and it will be funded through the ARP budget.

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt, seconded by Councilman Michael Baker to approve the bid of \$8,345 to purchase surveillance equipment for the Police Department. The motion carried unanimously.

13. REQUEST APPROVAL OF FUNDING – Bleachers, Goal Posts, and Fencing for Recreation Department

Mayor Brady stated that bleachers, goal posts and fencing is needed to complete the Green Street Sports Complex. He stated that hospitality tax funds were approved at last months council meeting to help fund this project. Mayor Brady noted that the City received a Parks, Recreation & Tourism Grant in the amount of \$35,000 which will be utilized first. He requested that council approve

hospitality funding in the amount of \$100,000 to purchase the equipment. ***A motion was made by Councilman Ronald Atkinson, seconded by Councilman Michael Baker to approve the bid presented in the amount of \$134,114 to purchase bleachers, goal posts, and fencing for the Recreation Department.***

The motion carried unanimously.

14. REQUEST TO ADDRESS COUNCIL

- Shakera Davis – Holiday Business Hours in Core Commercial Zoning District

Ms. Shakera Davis, the owner of Bleu's Sports Bar & Grill, and the manager Jackie McGill were present to request that businesses in the City of Marion Core Commercial District be allowed to stay open until 2:00 am on holidays, and for the Marion High School's Homecoming Weekend. Ms. Davis stated that this will allow for additional holiday revenue for the core district businesses, and allow for older aged patrons to have somewhere to go later on the holidays. They specifically requested 5 dates to include Christmas, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Marion High School Homecoming Weekend. Mr. McGill asked that Council give them a chance, and further stated that the business would increase security and ensure that they are following city ordinances. Mayor Brady stated that Council will discuss the request further for consideration and follow-up with Ms. Davis. Councilman Michael Baker asked that Ms. Davis submit her request to Council in writing and include the specific dates. Attorney James Brogdon stated that any approved changes would need to have two ordinance readings by Council.

15. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Alan Ammons provided an update on the Green Street Sports Complex, and stated that the project completion date is still on schedule. The final walkthrough is scheduled for next Tuesday morning. The outdoor lighting installation is scheduled to start on the week of August 21. The restrooms and concession stand will not be ready for the grand opening. Construction of these facilities will take place during early 2024. The City will rent a restroom trailer and provide a mobile concession stand until that time. Fall sports are scheduled to start in September, and the playground equipment is 99% complete.

16. CITY ATTORNEY'S LEGAL UPDATE

Attorney James Brogdon had no update.

17. DISTRICT AND CITY UPDATE FROM COUNCIL AND MAYOR

Councilman Michael Baker:

Councilman Baker had no comments.

Councilman Fred Gause:

Councilman Gause provided an update from the recent MASC Annual Meeting he attended in Greenville last month. He stated that he is excited about all the great things he learned about that is taking place throughout the state. He noted that there were several wonderful comments from other cities about Main Street Marion. Councilman Gause also attended the PDRTA Rural Transportation Day. He was able to ride the bus on the routes and experience the day to day operations of PDRTA. He stated that it was a great experience to see the importance of this transportation to those in the community for shopping and doctors' appointments. He highlighted his tour of Harbor Freight and the Inland Port in Dillon County.

Councilman Ronald Atkinson:

Councilman Atkinson had no comments.

Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt:

Mayor Pro Tem Hunt encouraged all citizens to stay hydrated and be safe in the high temperatures. He expressed his condolences on the recent passing of Dillon County Sheriff Douglas Pernell.

Councilwoman Tassie Lewis:

Councilwoman Tassie Lewis thanked those in attendance for coming to the meeting and sharing their concerns. She asked that we continue to be safe and

vigilant about our community, the elderly, and the youth. Councilwoman Lewis stated that she was the guest speaker at the recent NAACP Gala. She noted that this was a great event and many deserving citizens received awards and recognition for their hard work and contributions to this community.

Councilman Donny Gerald:

Councilman Gerald had no comments.

18. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Councilman Ronald Atkinson, and seconded by Councilman Fred Gause to go into executive session to discuss a Contractual Matter and a Legal Matter. The motion carried unanimously.

19. POSSIBLE ACTION FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Councilman Ronald Atkinson, and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt to return to regular session. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Tassie Lewis to allow the Mayor and Administrator to utilize up to \$25,000 per year for the lease of license plate readers from Flock safety Systems, and enter into any necessary leases or contracts for the same. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Baker, and carried unanimously.

20. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business. *A motion was made by Councilman Michael Baker, and seconded by Councilman Donny Gerald to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.*

Mayor Ashley Brady

Lakesha Y. Shannon, City Clerk