

**MINUTES**  
**MARION CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING**  
**CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 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 – September 12, 2023
- Special City Council Meeting – September 20, 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 September 12, 2023, and the special City Council meeting held on September 20, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.***

**5. SEPTEMBER EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

Mayor Brady named Chase Funderburk with the City of Marion Fire Department as the September Employee of the Month. He thanked Chase for all his hard work and dedication to the City of Marion.

**6. PRESENTATION TO CITY COUNCIL– DONNETTE BETHEA, UNITY ~N~ DIVERSITY**

Mrs. Crawford was not in attendance.

**7. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MONTH PRESENTATION**

Mrs. Michelle Brewton-Smith from Pee Dee Coalition was present to address Council. She stated that Pee Dee Coalition recently moved into their new location in the City of Marion, and they have established a Board of Directors. This is the first time in 30 years that the agency has been housed in their own center. Mrs. Brewton-Smith noted that October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and her agency is taking every available opportunity to spread awareness about the seriousness of issue. She highlighted several recent and upcoming events sponsored by Pee Dee Coalition to help bring awareness. Mrs. Brewton-Smith reported that 7 people in Marion County have lost their life due to domestic violence since 2020, and sexual assault cases have increased from 2 to 20 over the last year. They have partnered with MUSC, McLeod Health and local law enforcement to help address these issues, and provide the best services to the clients. Pee Dee Coalition will be hosting an upcoming luncheon to show their appreciation to law enforcement. In closing, Mrs. Brewton-Smith provided Council with some literature to support this year's National Domestic Violence Awareness Month theme: *"Safer Homes, Safer Communities"*.

8. **1<sup>ST</sup> READING ORDINANCE #23-08 – AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUSINESS LICENSE ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF MARION, SC TO UPDATE THE CLASS SCHEDULE AS REQUIRED BY ACT 176 OF 2020**

Mayor Brady stated that state law requires the approval of this ordinance every 2 years to amend the business license class schedule in accordance with Act 176 of 2020. *Mayor Pro tem Emerson Hunt motioned to approve 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of Ordinance #23-08 An Ordinance Amending the Business License Ordinance to the City of Marion, SC to Update the Class Schedule as Required by Act 176 of 2020. The motion was seconded by Councilman Donny Gerald, and carried unanimously.*

9. **2<sup>ND</sup> READING ORDINANCE #23-07 – AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE #22-12 AN ORDINANCE PROHIBITING CERTAIN HOURS OF OPERATION IN THE CORE COMMERCIAL BUSINESS ZONE**

Mayor Brady stated that Council previously passed Ordinance #22-12 which prohibited business hours after 12 midnight in the core commercial business zone, with the exception of New Year's Eve in which businesses can remain open until 1:00 A.M. Councilman Fred Gause provided a background to the citizens in attendance of how the consideration of Ordinance #23-07 originated. He stated that a citizen request was received at the August 2023 council meeting asking that Ordinance #22-12 be amended to allow for extended hours of operation until 1:00 A.M. on additional holidays. Councilman Gause stated that the consideration was not placed on the September 12, 2023 agenda for further discussion; therefore, he recommended a special meeting which was held on September 20, 2023 to address the request. He feels that the recommendation presented by Police Chief Tony Flowers at the September council meeting was

rushed, and did not provide the facts needed for Council to fully understand and approve Ordinance #23-07 as it is presented today. Following a lengthy discussion by Council, ***a motion was made by Councilman Fred Gause to table the approval of Ordinance #23-07 until there is a clear understanding of the ordinance by all members of Council. The motion was seconded by Councilman Ronald Atkinson.*** Following additional discussion, **the motion carried unanimously.**

10. **2<sup>nd</sup> READING ORDINANCE #23-09 – AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE #23-06 AN ORDINANCE PROHIBITING DISTURBING NOISES**

Mayor Brady explained that the amendment to this ordinance establishes a fine of \$100 for offenses, not including all court costs, fees, etc. as allowed by South Carolina State Law. ***A motion was made by Councilman Fred Gause, seconded by Councilman Michael Baker to approve 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of Ordinance #23-09 An Ordinance to Amend Ordinance #23-06 An Ordinance Prohibiting Disturbing Noises.*** The motion carried unanimously.

11. **DISCUSSION ON PARADE SAFETY AND ATV'S BY CHIEF TONY FLOWER**

Police Chief Tony Flowers stated that Council previously discussed parade safety issues as it relates to ATV four-wheelers. He stated that several four-wheeler riders participated in the recent Marion High School Homecoming Parade. Some of these riders left the parade and proceeded to speed through city streets, and ride through residents' yards. Chief Flowers expressed his concerns with this activity and the risk of a bystander being seriously hurt as a result. He shared some parade policy information from surrounding cities and asked that Council consider such a policy in 2024. Mayor Brady asked that Chief Flowers prepare some information for further discussion on this item.

**12. MUNICIPAL STATE HIGHWAY PROJECT AGREEMENT**

Mayor Brady stated that a meeting was recently held by SCDOT to discuss an upcoming project which will include the construction of a roundabout connecting Jones Avenue, Jones Avenue Ext., Walnut Street and Railroad Avenue for a safer route through that area. He stated that SCDOT may need to acquire some city property to complete the project. ***A motion was made by Councilman Fred Gause, seconded by Councilman Donny Gerald to approve the Municipal State Highway Project Agreement. The motion carried unanimously.***

**13. APPROVE BID – CD JOYNER STAGE LIGHTING UPGRADE**

Mayor Brady stated that upgrades are needed to the stage lighting at the CD Joyner Auditorium to address necessary improvements and safety concerns. There were two bids received to complete the project – Eaglewing Productions for \$12,250, and Zeman Electric for \$18,213. Hospitality funds will be used to complete this project. ***A motion was made by Councilman Ronald Atkinson, seconded by Councilman Fred Gause to approve the low bid of \$12,250 from Eaglewing Productions. The motion carried unanimously.***

**14. REQUEST TO ADDRESS COUNCIL – PEGGY GUNTER**

Ms. Peggy Gunter expressed her concerns regarding the lack of a speed limit sign on Green Street in the area of Grice’s Recreation Center and Johnakin Middle School leading in from Highway 76. She has witnessed cars speeding through while children are walking home from school, playing at the park, and the swimming pool. Ms. Gunter requested that a sign also be installed that says “Slow Children Playing” to help ensure the safety of the children. Mayor Brady stated that he will contact Mr. Harold Coleman with SCDOT to further discuss solutions to this issue.

**15. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Alan Ammons provided an update on the Green Street Sports Complex. He stated that the lighting contractor has started work, and completion will take about 4 weeks. Mr. Ammons stated that the City Hall Renovation Project has started and roofing repairs will begin next week. He noted that Mr. Page with SCDOT was previously appointed to handle CTC Projects on behalf of the City of Marion. Mr. Page has taken over the current projects on South Withlacoochee Ave, Liberty Street, and Cherry St.

**16. CITY ATTORNEY'S LEGAL UPDATE**

Attorney James Brogdon had no update.

**17. DISTRICT AND CITY UPDATE FROM COUNCIL AND MAYOR****Mayor Ashley Brady:**

Mayor Brady thanked Chief Tony Flowers for a job well done on the recent Faith & Blue Weekend held in the City of Marion. The event included a Senior Forum Day on Friday, October 6; a Family Community Day at Withlacoochee Park on Saturday, October 7; and a Community Forum at Bethlehem Baptist Church, October 9. Mayor Brady reported that HMRA was awarded \$25,000 for the Hometown Economic Development Grant through the SC Municipal Association. HMRA will use these grant funds to develop apartments in downtown Marion. Mayor Brady stated that Fire Chief Kevin Hammond and the City of Marion Fire Department recently celebrated Fire Prevention Week. They hosted a fire safety event at the fire department which was attended by 65 children. Mayor Brady also commented on the City Hall Renovation Project. He noted that the old clock located at the top of the building was unrepairable; however, it was saved. He stated that the renovations to the building will include ADA compliant upgrades,

and removal of the columns in the council chambers to allow for better visibility during council meetings.

**Councilman Michael Baker:**

Councilman Baker asked for an update on the police surveillance cameras. Chief Flowers stated that funding for the cameras through the county is no longer an option as previously considered; therefore, the City will proceed in ordering the cameras. It could take 6-8 months for the cameras to be delivered.

**Councilman Fred Gause:**

Councilman Gause thanked everyone for their participation in attending the city council meeting. He also thanked Chief Flowers for a great job in spearheading the Faith & Blue Weekend. He noted that he received a lot of positive feedback from citizens regarding the event.

**Councilman Ronald Atkinson:**

Councilman Atkinson also thanked everyone for attending the city council meeting, and stated that all his concerns were addressed by Mr. Ammons prior to the meeting.

**Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt:**

Mayor Pro Tem Hunt commented on the benefits of the police surveillance cameras that will be installed in the City. These cameras will read the license plates of all vehicles entering and exiting the main entrances into the City. He also encouraged citizens to take care of themselves and their health by getting fresh air and exercising.

**Councilwoman Tassie Lewis:**

Councilwoman Tassie Lewis thanked everyone for attending, and commented that Council is working hard to make the City safer for everyone. She asked

citizens to please report anything they see that is suspicious in the community. Councilwoman Lewis stated that the Annual Rise Above It All Coat Drive will be sponsoring coat giveaway events on November 18 at CD Joyner Auditorium, and November 25 at Grice's Recreation Center in conjunction with a free community Thanksgiving meal giveaway. She also thanked Chief Flowers for an amazing job with the Faith & Blue Weekend. In closing, Councilwoman Lewis thanked Pee Dee Coalition for all that they do for the community.

Chief Flowers reported that the Police Department was awarded a \$26,000 grant to purchase new body cameras which will sync with their in-car cameras.

**Councilman Donny Gerald:**

Councilman Gerald stated that he enjoys serving the City of Marion as a member of city council. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting, and asked that they continue to come out and support. Councilman Gerald also commended Chief Flowers and the Police Department on a great job with the Faith & Blue Weekend.

Chief Flowers thanked Pee Dee Coalition for all that they do, and Mrs. Marilyn Woodberry for allowing him to host the Faith & Blue Community Forum at Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church.

**18. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

**19. POSSIBLE ACTION FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION**



***A motion was made by Councilman Ronald Atkinson, and seconded by Councilman Fred Gause to return to regular session. The motion carried unanimously.***

***Councilman Baker made a motion that Council submit an offer for the purchase of property on Liberty Street belonging to Mr. Jerry Mitchell for \$15,000 up to \$17,000. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Tassie Lewis, and carried unanimously.***

***Mayor Pro Tem Emerson Hunt made a motion to have a public auction for a tract of land to be developed on Marshall Street for a minimum bid of \$20,000. 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.***

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Mayor Ashley Brady

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Lakesha Y. Shannon, City Clerk