

## **MINUTES**

### **CITY OF HARTFORD, ALABAMA**

### **CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING**

**September 5, 2023**

**JOHNNY HUGHES COMMUNITY CENTER COURTROOM, 405 SOUTH THIRD AVENUE, HARTFORD, ALABAMA 36344**

**ATTENDANCE:** Mayor Wendel Nolan, Council members Ron Adams, Melissa Clements, Zane Fowler and Paul Fondren. Council member Ted Thompson was absent.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** City Magistrate Vernon Alford, Utility Superintendent Jerry Sorrells and Fire and Rescue Chief Phillip Herring

See Attachment for others present.

**CALL TO ORDER-** The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**PRAYER AND PLEDGE-** Ted Thompson led the prayer which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MINUTES** – Mayor Nolen asked for one of the council members to take the minutes and Paul Fondren volunteered. Zane Fowler made the motion to approve Paul Fondren to take the minutes. The second was made by Ted Thompson. The motion carried.

**JEANNA BRANNON-** Ms. Brannon addressed the following issues: city finances and budget, city projects, possible increase in utilities rate, the council meeting agenda and her need for the city government to be transparent.

**KIM CURENTON-** Mrs. Curenton talked about the high utility bills experienced by residents the last 2 months. She asked each council member what their utility bill was this past month. She read a social media post by council member, Ron Adams, during his campaign for his council seat.

**AGENDA AMENDED** – Mayor Nolen amended the agenda to include a 3rd item. Mayor Nolen explained that the city needs to purchase 4 meters to be installed for the transition of Constellation as the electricity provider. The cost is \$24,919. Mayor Nolen said this can be taken from the line of credit with Friend Bank. Utility Supervisor, Jerry Sorrells explained what these meters are and why they are needed for the new contract. Zane Fowler made the motion with Ron Adams giving the second. The motion carried.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS –**

Mary Miller spoke to the council and said she has watched the meetings online and said she was concerned by the lack of transparency. She said she is concerned that questions being asked are not being answered. She stated her concerns about the possible rate increase in utilities, the city's budget and overtime by city employees.

Alfreda Hillard asked about a city-wide cleanup on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Nolen said that the city will pick up curbside rubbish and have a dumpster at the Barnes building for citizen's use. Ms. Hillard addressed her church's utility bill of \$409. She said that they are only in the church twice a month. Mayor Nolen said that they will look at that bill. She said that there is a sewage issue right above her mother's house. They discussed the location with Jerry Sorrells and that issue will be Checked on.

**JERRY JUSTICE-** Mr. Justice addressed the issue of the way women are being talked to at the council meetings.

## **COUNCIL COMMENTS –**

Mayor Nolen opened the floor to comments by the council. He said he understands citizen's frustrations on the increases in rates but explained that increased cost are everywhere.

Melissa Clements thanked the utility workers for their diligence in fixing water leaks. She asked for the minutes for the August 7<sup>th</sup> meeting to be amended. She said the minutes state that she said the second rescue crew should be stopped. Clements said that she proposed it as an option only. She asked that the wording is changed.

Ted Thompson addressed the city's need for a city clerk. He stated that a clerk needs to be hired. He asked if the prior applications can be reconvened, and a decision be made on a new city clerk. He made a motion to reopen applications for a city clerk. Melissa Clements made the second motion. Motion carried. Mr. Thompson made a motion to make all monthly reports available to the council and the public five days prior to the meeting. Discussion among the council and mayor showed that this is impossible at this time since there is no city clerk. The motion was amended by Ted Thompson to have the council approve all non-recurring bills before the check is issued. The second was given by Melissa Clements. The motion carried. Mr. Thompson made a motion to reschedule the work schedule for the various boards for the city. The meeting was set Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at city hall. The second was provided by Melissa Clements. The motion carried. Mr. Thompson said that applications for assistance with utilities will be at city hall next week. These applications are from various agencies.

There were no other remarks by any of the council members.

## **COMMENTS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS –**

There were no comments by department heads.

**ADJOURNMENT-** Mayor Nolan asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Melissa Clements made the motion which was seconded by Zane Fowler. The vote was unanimous in approving the adjournment.

  
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Presiding Officer