

REGULAR MEETING CITY COUNCIL

September 21, 2020

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in a regular session on Monday, September 21, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall. Mayor Ronnie Michael presided, and the following members were present, to-wit: Mayor Pro Tempore Martha Sue Hall and Councilmembers Bill Aldridge, Chris Bramlett, Martha E. Hughes, Dexter Townsend, Chris Whitley, and Shirley E. Lowder.

Mayor Michael called the meeting to order.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Presentation of a City of Albemarle Retirement Certificate to Christine Cote'

The Mayor presented Ms. Cote' a plaque in gratitude for her more than 21 years of service, almost 8 of which were in the Albemarle Police Department.

Presentation of a City of Albemarle Retirement Certificate to David Hunt

The Mayor presented Mr. Hunt a plaque in gratitude for his more than 22 years of service in the Albemarle Police Department.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Townsend, unanimously carried, the minutes from the September 8, 2020 regular and closed meetings as submitted were approved.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Update on Minimum Housing Demolition Program

Planning and Development Services Director Kevin Robinson provided an update to Council and distributed a handout of the presentation he gave. So far in 2020 one property at 110 Park Ridge has been burned down. There are 6 properties that have been deemed to be in a state to be demolished/burned, and 1 property where a burn/demolition cannot occur so the City is trying to pursue a tax sale.

The Mayor requested that an ordinance be drawn up for Council to take action in order to move forward on demolition/burn recommendations. Mr. Robinson noted the request and will bring that in front of Council when other properties have moved through the process and are at this point.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall asked about the property on North 2nd Street and Salisbury Avenue which was badly burned. Mr. Robinson will have staff look at the structure to assess it for either repair or demolition.

The Mayor asked about an updated property list of any new properties deemed eligible for demolition/burn. Mr. Robinson replied that they will do so, but are trying to prioritize properties by a number of factors. The Mayor also asked if the new Code Enforcement Officer will work on assessing commercial properties. Mr. Robinson assured the Mayor and Council that an updated list will be drawn up and that the new Code Enforcement Officer will prioritize commercial building assessments once hired and oriented.

The Mayor noted that Council had authorized staff's ability to try to get money back from properties that have been deemed to be ready to be demolished/burned, even if a property was in foreclosure. He asked Mr. Robinson for an update. That process is difficult due to up-front costs, which the City would have to pay. Also per City Attorney Britt Burch, the City needs to know if the County is ok with City plans to demolish properties, as they might have liens placed for taxes. She would need to find out what the costs and/or reimbursements would be for the properties on the list.

Monthly Departmental Reports

The Mayor and Council received August 2020 monthly departmental reports prior to the meeting. The Mayor asked if any Council members had and questions or comments about the reports.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall had some comments about the reports. She gave an "attaboy" to Joy Almond and ADDC for providing welcome bags to Pfeiffer students at the opening of the Pfeiffer Health Sciences Building on September 17th. She asked that Chief Dulin and Chief Brewton come in front of Council to report on progress on staffing and vehicles for their respective departments.

Chief Dulin stated that his force has vacancies but with 4 new officers in BLET class, and a certified officer starting work in a week. In terms of shared vehicles, only approximately 5 officers now share vehicles; the rest have their own vehicles to use.

Chief Brewton also reported that his department is fully staffed with 13 personnel for each shift totaling 39 personnel, with the exception of 1 resignation reported earlier in the day. Three new firefighters have started and will be ready for duty after their 2-week training period, and overtime has been adjusted for all applicable personnel. All fire apparatus is in service.

There were no further questions or Council discussion on this item.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Mayor asked if Council wanted to move any items on the consent agenda.

Ordinance 20-23 – To Remove the Police Only and 15-Minute Parking Restriction Adjacent to the Former Police Building

With the building at the corner of North Second Street and West North Street no longer serving the APD, these two parking restrictions can be removed and opened back for general public use.

[Ordinance 20-23 - To Remove the Police Only and 15-Minute Parking Restriction Adjacent to the Former Police Building]

Ordinance 20-24 – To Amend the Ordinance Related to Deer Hunting in the City of Albemarle

Mayor Pro Tem Hall requested this be placed on the agenda. Per State Wildlife District Sergeant Jones, this text-based update is to make our urban archery portion of the ordinance consistent with State wording. There is no change to the hunting season nor the use of bows and arrows as a sanctioned weapon.

[Ordinance 20-24 – To Amend the Ordinance Related to Deer Hunting in the City of Albemarle]

Knollwood Lane Street and Utility Assessments

At the September 8th, 2020 Council meeting, Council approved the preliminary plat for the Knollwood Park Major Subdivision. Since this development is on the existing City maintained right of way of Knollwood Lane, the applicant intends to petition the City for assessment of a water line extension, a sewer line extension, and the paving of a 20' wide street. Knollwood Lane is currently a City maintained gravel public right of way. The applicant also intends to pay up front for all improvements and is requesting the customary 10% discount as they are paying in full. This is similar to the request approved by Council at the previous meeting for a sewer line extension on Sibley Street.

Updates to the Cash Management and Investment Policy

There are minor changes needed to the current Cash Management and Investment Policy. The City needs to reflect recent changes to bank names and to add information regarding the handling of Section 8 funds from HUD. The overall policy in place is the model policy recommended by the State Treasurer's office. City staff requests adoption of the resolution.

[Resolution – Cash Management and Investment Policy Update]

Consider Road Closure for Strong Communities 5K

The Stanly County YMCA will be hosting its annual Strong Communities 5K on Saturday, October 3, 2020. The event will be from 7:00 am - 10:00 am. The road to be closed is C.B. Crook Drive from 1st Street to 2nd Street.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Aldridge, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, unanimously carried, Council approved the following:

- Ordinance 20-23 removing the police-only parking spot and 15-minute parking restrictions at the corner of North Second Street and West North Street;
- Ordinance 20-24 updating text in our urban archery portion of the firearms and fireworks ordinance to make it consistent with State wording;
- Knollwood Park Subdivision street and utility assessments;
- Updated Cash Management & Investment Policy; and
- Road closure for the October 3rd YMCA Strong Communities 5K.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Consider Appointments to Boards and Commissions

This item was held over from the September 8, 2020 meeting. Council agreed to seek volunteers to fill the below vacancies:

Historic Resources Commission:

- *Seat 2*, Mr. Marvin Smith resigned effective August, 2020.
- *Seat 6*, Mr. Gene Starnes, who served a full term that expired July 1, 2020. He is not eligible for re-appointment.

Councilmember Hughes noted that a resident she knows might be available to serve and will check back with that resident to fill out a volunteer application.

Since there were no new volunteer applications for Council to consider, this item was tabled until the October 5th meeting.

Consider Replacement on the Stanly County Convention & Visitor's Bureau

This item was held over from the September 8, 2020 meeting. Council agreed to seek candidates for consideration.

Since there were no volunteers for Council to consider, this item was tabled until the October 5th meeting.

Historic District Regulations

This item was held over from the September 8, 2020 meeting. The HRC and Planning Board submitted to Council for their consideration in recent years several significant changes to their regulations, including expanding permissible signage. These were approved by the City Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall specifically wanted Council to consider and discuss Section 2 of the HRC Guidelines, particularly the guidelines for changes to existing businesses. She feels that downtown buildings are not being utilized; are the guidelines part of the reason? She also noted that per her perspective, the guidelines were developed to be used as a tool for new business owners. How much are they being used as a tool for assistance?

Councilmember Bramlett noted that the HRC and its guidelines should help establish an architectural footprint for the City. But do we have one here? He stated that it is difficult for downtown businesses to apply rules here; owners come to him about this frequently.

The Mayor recommended that Council look through the guidelines again with an eye towards reviewing them to see if they go beyond the state requirements or regulations associated with downtown historic districts. Council needs to make sure that downtown businesses still are eligible for tax credits, though, as they review the guidelines again and suggest any changes.

Planning and Development Services Director Kevin Robinson noted that the state holds more rigid standards for designated historic districts. With the legislated update to General Statute 160D, historic district guidelines will become standards.

There was no further discussion or action on this item.

NEW BUSINESS

Update: Autumn/Fall Festival in October

Mayor Pro Tem Hall noted that there are changes the Special Events Committee has made to the Autumn/Fall Festival scheduled for October 29-31, 2020. She provided an updated events flyer in meeting. An “attaboy” went out to the Special Events Committee for being responsive and recommending changes on a timely basis.

Parks and Recreation Director Lisa Kiser came in front of Council to summarize these changes. The City cannot hold all of the pre-scheduled events due to the continued presence of COVID19 in the community. Event changes are as follows:

- Costume contest:
 - The costume contest will be virtual. Information Systems is setting up a FB page to post pictures submitted. Those with the most likes will win prizes.
- Ghost tours:
 - The ghost tour will become virtual and will be hosted by the Stanly County Historical Center.
- October 16-30:
 - Instead of the trick or treating event the City will host a scavenger hunt/bingo event; those children who get their entire bingo card stamped will receive candy and prizes.
- For Friday October 30th –
 - The Friday Food Truck event will be held that night with food trucks and a Halloween-themed movie planned at City Lake Park.

- For Saturday the 31st –
 - The Street Festival will be combined with the Market Station Craft Fair.

Ms. Kiser wanted to let Council know about the changes recommended first, with the intent of bringing them back to the October 5th meeting for Council action.

COMMENTS

The Mayor commented on the opening of the Pfeiffer Health Sciences Building on September 17th. He thanked Councilmember Bramlett for providing the T-shirts for Council and him. There was a great turnout for the opening. He noted that with the opening of Health Sciences campus here in downtown, it will attract other downtown projects and drive growth in the downtown area. He asked if Councilmember Bramlett wanted to make remarks.

Councilmember Bramlett stated that he was personally and deeply involved in this project, and noted that when early talks were occurring about where to locate the campus, he steered it towards Albemarle. He noted that the City and County came together like never before and cooperated to bring this campus here. He thanked the residents of Albemarle too.

Councilmember Whitley:

- Related to the opening of the Pfeiffer Health Sciences Building, he saw that it has taken some years to complete, but showed that City and private investors could make a project happen. The City is getting ready to pop and he is excited about its growth. He believes that demolition and subdivision building will increase and pick up pace.
- Per COVID19 and the number calculated per the Stanly County Health Department, the City is trying to slow the spread in order to get businesses back open again. People still need to wear their masks.
- Per the monthly reports, the jobs and skills sets of personnel at the City of Albemarle are amazing. He hopes the public realizes it.

Mayor Michael:

- Subdivision construction is going up or is under construction partly due to the need for housing.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall:

- Charters of Freedom update: Jennifer from Foundation Forward will be in Albemarle this week to help set up the fundraising committee.

- Hats off to Jay Voyles in Planning for going out with the Census folks at the Food Truck Friday events to encourage people to fill out the Census form. There are only 9 days left before the Census survey response period ends – please complete the Census survey.
- She received her ElectriCities mailing. She hopes that other Council members read their mailing.

City Manager Michael J. Ferris:

- The City Manager thanked Councilmember Whitley for his comments and agreed with the comments of other related to the City’s partnership and project with Pfeiffer. It was amazing how the City and Pfeiffer partnered to bring the Pfeiffer Health Sciences campus here and we were able to overcome the hurdles when trying to bring this project to a reality. There was great work done behind the scenes by a number of City employees and he thanked them.

Councilmember Townsend:

- Per an accident on the Northeast Connector he emailed Council about recently, he had some remarks to make. Even though Albemarle Fire Department was closer, they were bypassed as the responding unit. This is the second time this has happened. He wondered if the City could voluntarily annex the road portion of the Connector between the two roundabouts. Planning and Development Services Director Kevin Robinson responded by saying that the General Assembly is not fond of Extra Territorial Jurisdictions (ETJs). What about a mutual aid agreement? The “home” township needs to request that from Albemarle. Councilmember Townsend said that it does not make common sense to have the emergency response occur this way when lives are at stake. The Mayor requested that Albemarle Fire Chief Brewton look into the issue and bring a recommendation back to Council.

CLOSED SESSION

Upon a motion by Councilmember Lowder, seconded by Councilmember Whitley, unanimously carried, Council approved moving into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4) Economic Development and N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

The Mayor called for a motion to note that Councilmember Hughes was acting clerk during the Personnel portion of closed session. Upon a motion by Councilmember Aldridge, seconded by Councilmember Hall, unanimously carried, Council approved Councilmember Hughes as acting clerk during the Personnel portion of closed session.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Lowder, seconded by Councilmember Hughes and unanimously carried, Council returned to open session. The Mayor stated that a Closed Session was held pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4) Economic Development and N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) Personnel.

The Mayor called for a motion to move the public hearing to the Monday, October 5th regular Council meeting to consider a tax incentive for Earnhardt Exchange LLC for development of the old Lowder Hardware Store building. Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Aldridge, unanimously carried, Council approved the motion.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Bramlett, seconded by Councilmember Townsend, unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned to Monday, October 5, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers.