



REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, September 17, 2024; 6:30 P.M.
Bennettsville Public Safety Complex

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER Mayor Pro Tempore Abraham
2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Tyrone Davis
3. ROLL CALL

Mayor Pro Tempore-Tyron Abraham
District 1-Wanda Weaver-**Not present**
District 2- Tyrone Davis
District 3- Allen Taylor-**Not present**
District 4-William Jennings, Jr.
District 5- Tyron Abraham
District 6- Gregory Scott
4. APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES
A. **Regular Council Meeting: Tuesday, August 20, 2024** - Mr. Davis moved that we approve the Regular Council Meeting minutes for Tuesday, August 20, 2024. Seconded by Mr. Jennings. The motion passed unanimously.
5. PUBLIC REQUESTS/ PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
A. **Employees Anniversaries-** Mrs. Angela Ward announced Employee Anniversaries:
 - Shawn Lucas (Police Department)-25 years
 - Audra Johnson (Public Works)-9 years
 - Patricia Bethea (Finance)- 8 years
 - Amber Hendrix (Police Department)- 8 years
 - Christy Quick (Water Treatment)-5 years
 - Jo Ann Jackson (Water Treatment)- 2 years
 - Jessica Miles (Public Works)- 2 years
 - Amani Sinkler (Electric)- 1 year

B. **New Hires & Promotions:**

- Mr. Samuel Sparkman (Chief Financial Officer)

C. **Proclamation: “Boys Night Out”**-Removed from the Agenda. The presentation will be done onsite.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rippin McLeod- His concerns were about the maintenance of gas charges. He stated, “It used to be that if you had access to city gas, whether you use it or not, you charge \$5 a month. In the last couple of months or so, they’ve doubled at \$10 a month.” Mr. McLeod only uses gas for his emergency generator. He mentioned that the \$ 60-a-year fee is now going to go up to \$120, just to be connected to the city gas. He is asking the council to take another look at it because it will affect those who are on a fixed income.

Neal Fair- He had a few questions to ask. He wanted to know if what Mr. Abraham read at the beginning of public comments was constitutional or if it was something he just read. He mentioned he put in a FOIAI for certain people not having a contract with the city but are doing work. He stated, “In order for people to do work for the city, do they have to have a contract? I will come up and ask for this in writing tomorrow.” He went on saying, “Seems like somebody is covering up for some council members because if they work for the city and do work for the city, they should have had a contract.” He wasn’t sure if it happened under Mr. Alderman's leadership or Mr. Simon's, “But somebody needs to go back and check that record. You’re taking money from the city. You are supposed to have a contract. Find out what happened?”

Pamela Best- Began by saying, “It’s been 3 years y’all. Ain’t not one of y’all got up with me. You supposed to get up with me, Simon. You texted me a year and a half ago and said, “You messaged me and said, you missed me the last city council meeting to keep it up. I’m keeping it up and I will continue to keep it up.” She went on saying, “People are moving y’all. They are not moving here.” She ended by reading what citizens were posting on Facebook about animals and the safety of children.

7. SECOND READING AND PASSAGE IN FULL OF ORDINANCES

No Business

8. FIRST READING AND ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCES

No Business

9. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTION

No Business

10. GENERAL BUSINESS DISPENSED BY MOTION

- A. **Permission to draft an RFP for Affordable Housing**- Mr. Simon said, “We have an opportunity to still develop this parcel for affordable housing. We just have to

do it in different way and so, what I'm proposing before you all tonight is to allow us to, I say, us administration in the city to write a request proposal for developers to come and develop affordable housing on that parcel. Now, I will tell you we have already been approached by a few developers who've looked at the property, and looked at the fact that there's infrastructure there, looked at this location, and surrounding atmosphere and it's very desirable but we want to make sure we follow the proper process when we select someone, and they come in and do work here in our city. We all know how important affordable housing is here especially when we talk about the needs of some of the community members who may want to exercise options in the Shady Rest and Richardson Park area. So, this is an opportunity for us to take the next step without that grant and so what would happen is we would write that RFP, and we would actually bring it back before council so that you know the details of the RFP before it goes out."

Approving Action: Mayor Pro Tempore Abraham entertained a motion to approve the Administrator's request and propose upon the development of affordable housing, on the parcel, identified at Kids Land Park. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Scott. The motion passed unanimously.

- B. **Elevated Storage Tank Maintenance Contract** – The contract and agreement were included in all council packets. The city has storage tanks as part of the Water Distribution System and the tanks are required to be maintained. There is a company that has contacted the city about doing it. Mr. Simon stated, "Last year while going through the budget process we knew we needed to do it this year. It was already budgeted for it actually, last year, but this year's process. I think some of you even asked about that line item and wanted to know what it and we were told you at the time it was the maintenance of the water tanks and what they're and so we're here at that point where we have a company that's ready to do that for and the representative from the company is here tonight." Mr. Daniel Wilson with Southern Corrosion gave an update on the terms of the agreement. It's a 12-month agreement. It can be canceled in any year. "The initial term shall be automatically extended successive additional periods of twelve (12) months each unless the owner notifies Southern Corrosion in writing sixty (60) days prior to the expiration of the then existing term that it does not extend this agreement."

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Administrator to execute a contract with Southern Corrosion for the maintenance of our elevated water tanks. Moved by Mr. Jennings. Seconded by Mr. Scott. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. **Procedural Change to Regular Meetings to Establish Two (2) Public Comments Sections**- Mr. Simon stated, "Procedural change to Regular Meetings to establish two(2) public comments sessions. Public comments, session #1 will allow citizens to voice their opinions on matters on the agenda for the current meeting. Public comments, session #2 will allow citizens to voice their opinions on any matter they desire within the rules of the meeting. Session #1 will remain

in order on the agenda as practiced and session#2 will be placed later on the agenda. This will allow the council to discuss business as scheduled and continue to allow the public to voice their opinions.

Mr. Scott suggested that we just keep it like it is.

Mr. Jennings said he liked the idea, and they should give it a try.

Mr. Davis said to try it and see how it works.

Approving Action: Mayor Pro Tempore Abraham entertained a motion to implement two public sessions in the regular meetings effective for the next meeting. Let it be known that it will be a trial. We will try it out for the next two (2) meetings. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Jennings. Mayor Pro Tempore Abraham, Mr. Jennings, and Mr. Davis are in favor. Mr. Scott is against. Motion passed.

11. REPORTS AND INFORMATION PRESENTATION

A. **Lake Wallace Dam** (Responsibility & Next Steps)

Lake Paul Wallace Dam Repair:

Mr. Simon stated, “We are all aware of the first breach and second breach. To address the second breach what has been brought to our attention and we’re still working through it. To make sure that his information is accurate. Administration is still looking for other documents. It appears that the City of Bennettsville could be responsible for making repairs for the dam for the second breach. Attached was an agreement that was signed in 1983. The City of Bennettsville was granted an easement to construct and maintain a dam for the purposes of drawing water from that particular water body to provide those services.” We are continuing to search for other documentation that could provide further context to this matter.

B. **Grants Update-** Miss. Brittany Jones gave some updates on grants, and where we are with the process of each grant, and how we will move forward.

C. **Financial Report-**Mr. Sam Sparkman gave an update and stated he was very familiar with grants. He said, “We are on target. According to the budget projection, we should be at thirty-three-point thirty-two percent (33.32%). We are as you can see on revenue and expenditures we are.” I look at that as a good positive thing. We had a lot of annual reports we had to do as I came on board and I was really fortunate that we had good records and were able to submit those timely because some of us, don’t get them in on time, they’ll penalize you and actually take money away from you.”

D. **Business Report** (Information Only) [below]

Mira 11 LLC dba Subway	(New Owner)	131 15-401 Bypass
Tommy Little	Landlord	Bennettsville, SC
Ed Hiott Inc.	Specialty Contractor	Statesville, NC
Mary Gillespie	Landlord	Fayetteville, NC
Lemae's Scoops & Treats	Food Truck	Bennettsville, SC
FQSR LLC dba KFC	(New Owner)	477 15-401 Bypass
Spence Golf Inc.	Specialty Contractor	Oak Ridge, NC

12. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL AND CITY ADMINISTRATOR

- A. **Ordinance Review/Amendments** – Mr. Simon stated, “We have not done a good job.” I want to do two things because y’all are the lawmakers per sat, right? So, we want to make sure that we have and we’re not just the administration is not only sitting back, looking at various areas that need to be improved, that council plays a role in that as well. There are things that all of you may want to see done differently in your neighborhoods. Different regulations that you know that you know are older and need to be changed. You too can approach us and ask us to do some research and consider making some changes and amendments to the ordinances. Along with us looking at it from an operation standpoint and looking at what is efficient and what’s not efficient. We have three standing committees working now, Public Service, Public Safety, and Finance. There are a few ordinances that we’ve brought before you already.”
- B. **Salary Survey Implementation Plan of Action-** Mr. Simon stated, “I want the public to know Council already knows that we commissioned a salary survey last year. We’ve gotten the results of that salary survey a significant portion of our city team members are not being paid at market value. We cannot we, we really knew that, but we wanted to do it the right way. Particularly since in this study, we had them to assess every single position.” The study has shown that we should have pay raises for the Fire Department, Public Works personnel, and some Police Officers. As well as pay raises for other Administrative positions.
- C. **Sexual Harassment & Sensitivity Training-** Mr. Simon stated, “We take workplace culture serious. So, we’re going to do it the right way and we felt it necessary to have this type of training. We’re going to have other types of training as well. It is going to be required annually. It will be a part of your HR Personnel file. The fact that you attended this training or not.”
- D. **Mosquito Spraying [update]** – The City of Bennettsville is now spraying for mosquitoes.
- E. **Hurricane Idalia Funds Recovery** – Mr. Simon stated, “During these natural disasters or events we have to use personnel, equipment, and things of that sort pretty much after the storm or event if you will. Those are the things we seek recovery for.” Citizens sometimes think that the money that we’re getting back for recovery is to make some sort of repair or to fix something and I wish that was the

case, but it's just not the case. When a natural disaster has been declared that allows funding, allows local government and other agencies to recover and that's what it is. We may have to buy extra materials, use extra staff, wear and tear on the equipment all the things that you may have to do to respond to a natural disaster. Those are the things and the funds that you're getting back. That's what recovery is designed for."

- F. **Financial Audit of FY 2023-2024** -[update] Mr. Sparkman (CFO) gave an update on the Financial Audit of FY2023-2024. He and Mr. Milhous have been in touch via email. They have been coordinating to get started on the audit. Mr. Sparkman stated, "In previous years, I looked back in the records. We were getting it done by the end of October well I don't know if we're doing that fast. I just saw a good end of September but we're going to expedite just as fast as we can and hopefully, it won't be after Christmas. We want to try and get it done by the end of the year."

13. NON-AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

Tyrone Davis- He thanked all staff for the work they do for the city. He stated that the Shady Rest area was unsafe for residents or police officers with all of the shootings that have been going on. Mr. Davis stated, "I say that because when shooters and different things or whatever may occur, they can't see them because they bushes and places to hide." "Make sure we can help our citizens in some way."

William Jennings, Jr.- Thanked the volunteers of the group that's gotten together on their own to beautify areas of downtown and I encourage people to get involved in things like that with people. So, I called them the shrubbery beds but planting beds downtown on Broad Street and Main Street. He said it looks great. the Beautification Department needs to maintain it and keep it up because the citizens aren't doing it to maintain it. "I am proud it was done by the citizens." Lastly, he welcomed Mr. Sam Sparkman and his team aboard.

Gregory Scott- He thanked all city employees for all they do. He stated, "The ones from one year to the ones that have put in 25 years. I have to say this about Mr. Lucas, 25 years in law enforcement is a long time. Especially, with that occupation. It really affects you in a lot of ways mentally, and socially and if you get out without getting injured, that's a blessing. I commend him and all of our employees for the time that they put in." He went on saying, "I was so glad to hear about the work that is being done with our parks and that is much needed, and they will have access for the handicapped and that is great. That is something we need." Next, he mentioned, "Ordinances being replaced and need to be reviewed and some need to be changed. Truth be told, some need to be done away with." He ended by saying the monthly reports they receive in their packets; he thinks citizens should be aware of some. "With one being, the DNR came and put up a rip rap on the walkway to have the washing away and start working on a temporary fix for the dam on Country Club Road." Another one is assisting with the clean-up of flooding victims in the Shady Rest and Richardson Park areas. "Ricky Ingram with the CRWA came by to meet with Brittany Jones and talked about options for the name and also we have that James Ruff with the CRWA came by to discuss grants. So, we are doing things

for the citizens in the Richardson Park and Shady Rest area and our Administrator has been meeting with some of the citizens. So, we are trying to do things. I know it's discouraging sometimes because when you're going through these events, you don't want to hear about time and all these other things, but we are trying to do our best to work with this problem that we have for many, many years. So, we are trying to do the best that we can, and I like to echo our Administrator on the theme he put out and it really seems like that now, "A City On The Move" and we're really all trying to get things done.

Mayor Pro Tempore Abraham- Stated, "We really appreciate the job that you do. We understand that sometimes it gets hard." He thanked the citizens and workers for coming together. He stated, "Without the citizens, there would be no us. I appreciate everything." He went on to talk about social media posting and that if there's anything that citizens aren't sure about reach out to City Council before posting inaccurate information. "We are not living in a perfect world, and we know that some people do not have any city interest or best interest at hand. Make sure what you are told is true or look into it before it's passed on." "We have a lot of things we have inherited it, from past years but it's our job to try and make it better now. All I'm asking is to please make sure what you say or what you hear, make sure it is correct before you pass it on because it hurts our city whenever we hear negative things and then find out, it's not true." Mr. Abraham mentioned that the Public Service Meeting went well. They talked about the Planning and Zoning Department updating some ordinances. He expressed his concerns with the Planning and Zoning Department about property owners who live in the Shady Rest and Richardson Park area about the Buy-Out Program after the property is demolished. The Office of Resilience is going to cut it one time and then the responsibility for the upkeep of the properties will be on the Public Works Department. Do they have the staff for it? Mr. Abraham mentioned the parks need more lighting and Mr. Simon would be speaking with Chief Miller to get input on providing better security. Lastly, he mentioned the Christmas Committee and getting things ready for Main Street., so when it's time for the lights to come on, make sure everything is working. "I would like to see an employee of the month or employee every quarter, either one of those." He said it helps boost morale.

12. ADJOURN
Mayor Pro Tempore Abraham

Public Comment Policy: Citizens desiring to speak at any regular meeting must provide a written request to notify the City Clerk prior to the agenda deadline. Citizens interested in commenting at a regular meeting shall sign in to speak and limit comments to no more than 3 minutes.

Mission Statement: To utilize all available resources for the development of plans, programs, and projects to improve services to the citizens of Bennettsville and establish and maintain an active role in economic and community development.