

## MINUTES OF THE CITY OF HULL MAYOR AND COUNCIL

December 29, 2020

### HELD VIA ZOOM DUE TO COVID 19

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Paul Walton at 7:00 p.m.. Those in attendance in addition to the Mayor were the Clerk, and council members Brian Koepnick, John Barber, and Marilyn Walton. Due to the current State of Emergency due to Covid 19 the meeting was held via Zoom. In addition Ms. Donna Sherrer-Gantt joined the meeting as a guest with Ms. Mia Ji and CPA Keith Terrell.

A moment of silent prayer followed the pledge of allegiance.

The minutes from the November meeting and the financial reports all of which had been provided to Mayor and Council prior to the meeting were approved after a couple of minor typos in the minutes and a motion by Marilyn Walton and a second by John Barber.

Mayor Walton provided council with an update on the 2019 audit from Hawkins and McNair. Mayor Walton advised that after numerous promises that the audit along with other requested documents would be completed those documents were still outstanding and had not been completed. These documents are legally due by June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year however due to Covid 19 that deadline had been extended to December 31<sup>st</sup>. Mayor Walton indicated that he understands that the CPA firm has had some challenges of its own due to Covid 19 and other issues however after having not receiving the promised audit and reports he felt like he had no alternative but to terminate the firm and begin the search for another firm. Mayor Walton had spoken with Ms. Jackie Newbert from the Department of Audits and received an extension until January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 to have the audit and reports completed. In this regard he had spoken with other Mayors around the State and after doing his due diligence and research he introduced Mr. Keith Terrell of the CPA firm of The Wesley Peachtree Group out of Conyers, Georgia. Mr. Terrell provided some valuable information about himself and his firm, including that they were a minority owned firm and specialized in local and state government audits. Mr. Terrell along with Mayor Walton provided information about the two types of audits that were required depending on the size of the government entity, etc. Mayor Walton advised council that the City had been paying the former firm of Hawkins and McNair an average of \$5,000.00 per year to complete the audit and required reports. Mr. Terrell advised that his firm would be willing to provide this service for the City at an annual rate of \$4,000.00. Mayor Walton again advised council that Mr. Terrell and his firm came with good recommendations. He also advised council that in his training he had learned that it was recommended that cities change CPA firms every 3-5 years. Mayor Walton opened the floor for questions from council members and the Clerk. The Clerk had several procedural questions for Mr. Terrell and both the Clerk and Mr. Terrell felt like we could work together to provide the necessary information and follow similar procedures with exchanging documents as done in the past. The Clerk inquired of Mayor Walton about retrieving the paperwork provided to Hawkins and McNair so that Mr. Terrell's firm could complete the 2019 audit. Mayor Walton advised that he planned to ask the City Attorney to send a letter by certified mail requesting the return of City files along with a partial refund of the \$2,000.00 advance paid to Hawkins and McNair.

Mayor Walton then advised Council that although we had previously conducted in-put sessions on the proposed Zoning Ordinances we need to have a formal hearing. The NEGRC will host the meeting Mayor Walton recommended having the meeting beginning at 6:00 p.m. prior to our

January council meeting which will be January 28, 2021. Mayor Walton will provide the Clerk the proper verbiage for the legal notice that must be published prior to the meeting. The consensus was that this date would work for everyone.

Mayor Walton advised Council that he had received the approval for the LMIG grant the amount of which is \$3,052.51. Funds should be received shortly and will go into the general fund as miscellaneous income.

Mayor Walton also advised council and guests that, after concerns that were voiced from Ms. Mia Ji along with other citizens about the safety of the Highway 72 Glenn Carrie Road intersection, he had received assurance from GDOT that they were going to install new traffic lights, yield signs and re-paint the crossings at that intersection. They could not promise how quickly this would take place but did say that it was in the "Q" to be done as soon as possible. Ms. Ji expressed her thanks for the follow up on this and that she was happy with the progress made by Mayor and Council in this regard.

Council Member Walton inquired of Mayor and Council as to their thoughts on the Christmas Decorations. She received positive feedback and thanks from Mayor and Council for all the work she had done. Although she did not have an exact figure she advised that she was able to come in under budget with regard to the new decorations, installation and removal. There was some confusion with invoices from Universal Concepts and we should be receiving a refund of a portion of the amount paid to them. The Clerk will follow up with council member Walton if the refund is not received in a reasonable time frame. It was pointed out that there was no line item in the budget for Christmas Decorations and any additional items purchased for 2021 would need to be addressed before any additional expenditures were made.

The Clerk was asked to provide the qualifying dates again for the special election to which she advised that qualifying would be held at the Hull City Hall on January 11<sup>th</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> from 6-7 p.m. Qualifying Fee is \$19.50.

Mayor Walton then advised Council that he had spoken with Mike Reilly about the water line which is and has been for some time shared by City Hall and the Civic Club although there is no formal agreement. The expense for the water is shared equally between the Civic Club and the City. Mayor Walton had expressed that going forward the Civic Club would need to consider having their own water line installed as once the City starts construction on the new City Hall there would need to be changes made. Mr. Reilly indicated that he would advise the Civic Club Board of this issue.

Mayor Walton gave an update on the REBC Grant and the obstacles that had to be overcome to make this project a reality. It has been necessary to find a new Landscape designer due to the fact that the former "Butler" firm were not required to and did not participate in the e-verify program which is a requirement by the GDOT. Mayor Walton had spoken with several firms to try and find someone willing to oversee the project using the design that had already been submitted and approved. He was able to obtain the services of College Pro Landscape who is local to the City. There may be a few modifications and minor negotiations going forward but he felt like College Pro would be a good fit to move forward with the project. Council member, Koepnick had met with College Pro at the site and there was some concern about the existing grass and how to control that to be able to keep it from intruding on the new plants, etc. He also advised that College Pro advised that they would be using mulch instead of pine straw due to the fact that it was more durable. Mayor Walton advised that we had received the required permit

from CSX Railroad and once we receive the Special Encroachment Permit from GDOT and the City provided the Maintenance Agreement work could begin. He had submitted all the paperwork for the Special Encroachment Permit and we are just waiting for approval. Council Member Walton encouraged everyone, if they had not already read, to read the article that appeared in last week's Madison County Journal about the Beautification Grant along with other positive comments about the City of Hull, including the mask give away and the grand opening of the new Chevron.

The 2021 Budget was presented and approved after a motion by Brian Koepnick and a second by John Barber.

The Clerk then advised that we needed to approve the qualifying fees for 2021 which are set by law at 3% of the salary of Mayor and Council. The Qualifying Fee for Mayor is \$39.50 and for council member is \$19.50. This was approved after a motion by Brian Koepnick and a second by Marilyn Walton.

Under citizen input both Ms. Mia Ji and Ms. Sherrer-Gantt brought to the attention of Mayor and Council several incidences that had occurred in Hidden Falls Subdivision with unknown persons approaching houses, etc. Mayor Walton advised that he had spoken with the Sheriff and was in the process of completing the requirements for a Neighborhood Watch program in that subdivision. He advised everyone to stay vigilant in this regard.

As a final matter the Mayor gave a recap of all that had been accomplished during 2020 to move the City forward including but not limited to, the Beautification Grant; LMIG Grant, proposed new Charter; and a new business which would bring additional revenue to the City. He stated, that while it had been challenging at times that he had enjoyed it. He also expressed thanks to the council members and the Clerk for all of their hard work and that it was team effort. Mayor Walton then presented the members of Council and the Clerk with a gift thanking them for all their hard work.

There being no further business at this time the meeting was adjourned after a motion by Brian Koepnick and a second by John Barber.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Pou  
Hull City Clerk