



**BLAKELY CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES
CITY HALL**

JUNE 2, 2020

6:00 P.M.

I) CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Let the record show that Mayor Travis Wimbush called the meeting to order. Mayor Travis Wimbush, Councilmember Margaret Zachary, Councilmember Al Hutchins and Councilmember Ray Jarrett were all present. Also present was City Attorney Gary Lamar and City Clerk Melinda Crook. Jeffery Haynes gave the invocation. The Mayor led the Council and public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II) PRESENTATION OF WATCH – FOR EDDIE BURDETTE

Fire Chief Randy McDonald spoke of the sudden passing of Eddie Burdette. He stated that Eddie had been with the Fire Department for 26 years and that he had never called in sick. An engraved watch was presented to Eddie Burdette's wife and son in honor of his service with the City.

III) APPROVE MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilmember Hutchins and seconded by Councilmember Jarrett to approve the May 5th and May 15th minutes. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

IV) CITIZENS AND DELEGATIONS

Joy Freeman – Mobile Home on Twin Oaks

Building Official, Mark Hawkins, came before the Council stating that the conditional use was due to the lot not being wide enough for the set back that was required for placement of a new mobile home. He stated that the citizen wants to back the mobile home in. He stated that the Ordinance says the lot must face a City street but not that the mobile home needs to face the street so he felt he couldn't make the call. He stated that there was plenty of room to on the lot to place the mobile if placed long ways on the lot. The Mayor stated that Ms. Freeman had already purchased the lot and mobile home. Mark spoke of where the door would be located and how emergency vehicles could gain access. A motion was made by Councilmember Hutchins and seconded by Councilmember Zachary to approve the condition use. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

Councilmember Jarrett questioned the lot across from CVS. He stated that he had received calls from Priscilla George. The Building Official Mark Hawkins stated that an ice machine was going on that lot. He then commented on the Mock property directly behind this lot and where that was in its process.

V) ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

Will Caudill – Updates

Police Chief Will Caudill gave his monthly update. Chief Caudill informed the Council of the Probation Dept. audit and stated that it had gone very well. He stated that operations were getting back to normal but that they were still practicing safety procedures. Chief Caudill then stated that he had spoken with the Mayor regarding personnel matter. He stated that several Police Officers were leaving and then questioned increases in the starting pay. He stated that he would be implementing a two-year contract. He informed the Council that a new candidate would be starting the next week and then going to the academy. There was some discussion between Chief Caudill and the Council regarding the possible starting pay increases. The Mayor reiterated to the

Council to be mindful that what you do for one department you will have to do for others.
Councilmember Hutchins questioned if there was room in the department's budget.

VI) CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Second Reading & Adoption of Ordinance Requiring Occupational Tax Certificate
The City Attorney, Gary Lamar, re-explained the Ordinance stating that it was designed to require those individuals with five or more rental home to purchase an Occupational License. A motion was made by Councilmember Hutchins and seconded by Councilmember Zachary to not adopt this Ordinance. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

VII) CITY CLERK'S REPORT

The City Clerk presented the Mayor and Council with financial reports. She also read aloud the monthly and year to date balances per department. She informed the Mayor and Council that the City finished the month with \$127,972.86 in the General Fund. She informed the Council that paper for FEMA claims were being finalized after the FEMA Rep had compared earlier submission with insurance proceeds. She also informed the Mayor and Council that she had received notification that the GEMA balance of the EWP project had been released for payment and that the City should be receiving those funds shortly.

VIII) NEW ITEMS PROPOSED BY MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

MEAG Power Year End Settlement

The City Clerk explained that this was the year end settlement from MEAG after their yearly audit is complete and the fund balance is refund and broken down accordingly through their 49 cities. She stated that this year's settlement was \$257,483. She stated that in past years 100% of this refund had been put back into the Competitive Trust Flexible Operating Account. A motion was made by Councilmember Jarrett and seconded by Councilmember Hutchins to approve putting 100% of the MEAG yearly refund into the Competitive Trust Flexible Operating Account. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

Vehicle Policy

The Mayor informed the Council that this policy was just to put into writing what was already being practiced. A motion was made by Councilmember Zachary and seconded by Councilmember Hutchins to ask a question. Councilmember Hutchins questioned about the Police cars being parked behind their building. The Mayor stated that this was being done due to watching gas usage during COVID-19. There was further discussion regarding the Police cars being parked. Councilmember Hutchins state that parked cars might deter theft. A motion was made by Councilman Hutchins and seconded by Councilman Jarrett to allow Police Officers to drive Police cars home. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present. A motion was made by Councilmember Zachary and seconded by Councilmember Jarrett to approve the vehicle policy with allowing Police Officers to drive their vehicles home. The motion carried with Councilmember Zachary and Councilmember Jarrett voting "YEH", Councilmember Hutchins voting "NAY" and the Mayor breaking the tie with a vote of "YEH"

Election of GMA's District 10 Officers

A motion was made by Councilmember Zachary and seconded by Councilmember Jarrett to approve the GMA District 10 Officers. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

Councilmember Hutchins questioned again about hazard pay. The Mayor questioned where the funds would come from. Councilmember Jarrett questioned if it could be days off. Councilmember Hutchins questioned if days off would be paid, to which the Mayor stated they would. The Mayor asked for a plan from the Council. Councilmember Jarrett was delegated to come back with a plan and then the Council would discuss it for those that did not stagger shifts during COVID-19.

Councilmember Zachary informed the Council that Tawanda Sparrow had complaints on her CDBG rehab and that she will refer Ms. Sparrow to the City Clerk.

The Mayor informed the Council that the reimbursement from the deconsolidation of Public Safety, in the amount of \$464,218.17, had been brought up again at the County meeting and that they had instructed their attorney to get with the City attorney regarding this matter.

Guidelines were given to the Council regarding the soft reopening of the Recreation Dept. The Council was asked for recommendations after review.

A motion was made by Councilmember Zachary and seconded by Councilmember Jarrett to re-open City Hall on June 8th which would allow for 24-48 hours notification. Councilmember Hutchins questioned the latest COVID numbers in Early County. The Mayor stated that as of Sunday there were 232 positive, 31 deaths but that there were no major increases. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

The Mayor stated that construction of the new building at the Landfill had begun and that no construction materials were presently being accepted and would not be for the next four weeks.

The Mayor informed the Council that the 2018 CDBG Grant was complete and the first two homes of the 2019 CDBG Grant had begun.

The Mayor stated that purchased items being stored in the Middleton Building needed to be addressed due to the contract expiring.

The Mayor informed the Council of EMC's services for the Gateway project and that we would be paying the final payment for Phase II in the amount of \$1,822.50 for a grand total of \$52,450.25. He stated that bids are out for Phase III and will be opened on the 12th.

The Mayor informed the Council of a proposal from M.E. Sacks Engineering for writing a plan for DNR to stay in compliance. He stated that a grant would be looked into regarding this work that will be necessary per the engineers recommendations for EPD compliance.

The Mayor asked the Council if they preferred to continue waiver of the \$3.50 credit card fee or to reinstate the fee. Councilmember Zachary questioned the number of customers that use credit cards. The City Clerk stated that she wasn't sure of the number of customers but that the City is presently being billed between \$1,100 and \$1,500 per month. A motion was made by Councilmember Zachary to continue waiver of the credit card fee. The motion died due to lack of second. Councilmember Hutchins questioned if the City was losing funds. The City Clerk stated that the convenience fee was to offset the cost charged by the credit card processor and that the City was presently paying that cost. There was further discussion regarding the fee to which the City Attorney, Gary Lamar confirmed that since no action was taken by the Council there was no need to make another motion.

The Mayor questioned reinstating the 10% late fee. Councilmember Zachary questioned the pay history of customers to which the Clerk stated that about 50% were continuing to pay however when cut-offs resumed in May a good portion of the unpaid customers had paid. The City Attorney, Gary Lamar, recommended that a 15- or 30-day notification be given to customers if the Council chose to reinstate the 10% penalty. A motion was made by Councilmember Zachary and seconded by Councilmember Jarrett to approve reinstatement of the 10% penalty with a 30-day notification. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

The Mayor thanked Chief Caudill for his alert regarding some text messages that were circulating. He stated that he felt the combined briefing that he, Chief Caudill and Sheriff Price put out went over well and even with what was going on in other cities Blakely citizens were peacefully exercise their opinions.

The Mayor informed the Council of Lawyer bills for the Pioneer Bankruptcy in the amount of \$13,810.00. He informed the Council that the bills had been presented incorrectly and that we were waiting on corrected copies before making payment

The Mayor reminded the public of the Census and upcoming Election.

IX) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jeffery Haynes wanted to thank the Mayor and Sheriff regarding plans to help protect business owners. He then commended Chief Caudill for the Police Dept assistance to make sure his building was secure when he left his keys.

Anna Sewell thanked the Mayor for being available to the citizens. She then stated that there are still trees on trailers across from her and that property behind her is starting to grow up again. She stated that she has spoken with the neighbors about the messed up trailer owned by Billy Day. She also stated that cars are being washed in the street in her neighborhood.

E911 Director, Matt Hromalik, gave the Council an E911 monthly update. The Mayor asked the E911 be placed on the agenda for monthly updates.

X) ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilmember Zachary and seconded by Councilmember Hutchins to adjourn the June 2nd City Council meeting. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present.

Travis Wimbush, Mayor