



Blakely City Council Minutes

March 22, 2023, City Hall, 6:00PM

Disciplinary Appeal Hearing

i. Disciplinary Appeal Hearing

Mayor Travis Wimbush called the hearing to order. The City Attorney explained the procedures of the hearing. He stated that Lt. Hunt had been given a 40hr suspension and then read parts of the disciplinary reprimand. He then stated that this hearing give the employee the opportunity to rebut what has been done or said. He stated that the Mayor and Council are present to listen and obtain facts. He then stated that the Council can asked questions related to the facts presented.

Attorney Amos Sheffield addressed the Mayor and Council representing Lt. Hunt. He explained how he would be handling her representation and spoke on the incident from 12/13/22. Mr. Sheffield state that Lt. Hunt had spoken with Asst Chief Tinsley and Chief Caudill on 12/13/22 and how those conversations went. He spoke on a meeting that Lt. Hunt had with Mayor Wimbush. He went through what had transpired since the date of incident up to the date of this meeting. He spoke of stress levels with police officers and how situations like this will cause even more stress on how police officers do their jobs. Mr. Sheffield called Mayor Wimbush as his first witness to which the City Attorney explained that the Mayor is an adverse witness and that it is up to the Mayor whether he wishes to testify or not. The Mayor stated he was not testifying. Mr. Sheffield then called several other witness, Rollins Davis, Eric Cawthorn, Capt Brent Alderman and Chief Caudill. Mr. Sheffield asked questions of their working/training relations with Lt. Hunt. Each witness spoke of their working relations, training and their opinions of her work ethics. Chief Caudill explained jobs that Lt. Hunt handles, his side of the incident on 12/13/22 and how he came to his choice of discipline for her actions on 12/13/22. Chief Caudill stated that he had a meeting with the Mayor regarding his disciplinary action of Lt. Hunt, to which he stated that the Mayor did not feel that a written reprimand was strong enough and that the Mayor was going to have a meeting with Lt. Hunt. Chief Caudill then explained what had transpired regarding the meeting in January 2023. He stated his opinion of the Mayor and Council actions in the January meeting and disciplinary action after the January meeting. Chief Caudill spoke on the challenges of recruitment and how issues like this could affect recruitment as well. Mr. Sheffield then called Lt. Hunt as a witness. Mr. Sheffield question Lt. Hunt on her police history. He asked that she give a brief job description of her job to which she spoke on the different pieces of the job she does. She also spoke about her different trainings and how she instructs others, along with her duties as a certified probation officer. Lt. Hunt then spoke on what led up to the incident on 12/13/22 and how much she had worked up to this time. She spoke of insomnia issues she has. She stated that she has spoken over and over about communication regarding shift changes between supervisors. She expressed how she felt her concerns were address and

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how she got upset. She stated that she felt she was not taken seriously and how the situation escalated to her feeling that she could not affectively do her job for her shift or the public. She spoke on her conversation with Chief Caudill. She stated that this was out of character for her. She spoke on what transpired when she returned to duty for her next shift. She stated that she knows her reaction was not professional. She stated that she told Chief Caudill that however he chose to discipline her she would accept. She then spoke on her meeting with the Mayor. Lt. Hunt stated that she had explained the back story to the Mayor about communication issues and that she felt things were not being done fairly. She stated that she and the Mayor had a good conversation. She stated that she had admitted to the Mayor that she acted poorly and was not proud of the choice she had made the day of the incident. She stated that at the conclusion of the meeting the Mayor said he was satisfied with how she handled the incident and how Chief Caudill handled the issue fairly and satisfied how she was disciplined and that as far as he was concern the issue was done. She stated that she felt the meeting went better than she thought it was going to go. Lt. Hunt stated that she was surprised when there was a Council meeting about what had taken place. Mr. Sheffield questioned Lt. Hunt if she had gotten paid for that day to which she stated she did not put in for time because of how the incident had taken place. Mr. Sheffield asked Lt. Hunt if she had recorded the meeting with the Mayor to which she stated she had recorded the whole conversation. Mr. Sheffield then play portions of the recording from the meeting with the Mayor. After each witness the City Attorney asked the Mayor and Council if they had any questions. After Lt. Hunt's testimony the Mayor asked her if she knew that the disciplinary action (suspension) she refused to sign was from the recommendation of the City Council to which she stated that she was not until she was called into the Mayor's office when it was shared to her by the Mayor. Mr. Sheffield gave a closing summation speaking about the facts presented.

The City Attorney explained the next steps the Council could take.

A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Jarret to enter into Executive Session for personnel. The motion carried with Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Hutchins, Councilmember Jarrett and Councilmember Clenney voting "YEH"

A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Hutchins to return to regular session. The motion carried with Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Hutchins, Councilmember Jarrett and Councilmember Clenney voting "YEH"

A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Jarrett to revoke Lt. Hunt's suspension and stay with the written reprimand give by Chief Caudill. The motion carried with Councilmember Clenney, Councilmember Jarrett and Councilmember Hutchins voting "YEH" and Councilmember Davis abstaining.

The disciplinary appeal hearing was closed.



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Special Called Meeting Immediately following hearing

- 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 Davis, Councilmember Al Hutchins, Councilmember Ray Jarrett and Councilmember Brad Clenney were all present. Also present was the City Attorney Tommy Coleman and the City Clerk Melinda Crook. Charlie Sol gave the invocation. The Mayor and Council led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance
- II. Re-zoning of Howell Street
The Mayor asked for a motion – No motion was made therefore the City Attorney stated that this died due to lack of a motion
- III. New Items Proposed By Mayor And City Council
 - a. Bid for Water/Sewer lines on Oklahoma St & Flowers Dr
The Mayor stated that there was a bid opening and the engineer provided a bid tab. He stated that there were two bids – one from Blankenship Contractors and one from Concrete Enterprise LLC. He stated that the bids were, Blankenship in the amount of \$276,493.50 and Concrete Enterprise LLC's in the amount of \$285,387.13. He informed the Council that it was the engineers recommendation to go with the lowest bid from Blankenship in the amount of \$276,493.50 and that this amount was for both projects. A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Hutchins to approve the low bid from Blankenship in the amount of \$276,493.50 and the withhold of 10% until completion is satisfactory. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present. The Mayor then stated for clarification that this will be a ARPA project.
 - b. Al Hutchins Jr Community Center Parking Lot & Parking Lot on North Main
The Mayor presented two bids for the paving of the parking lot at the Al Hutchins Jr Community Center. He stated that his recommendation was to go with the bid from Mickey Rice Land Clearing. He stated that if the City provides the rock base, at a cost of \$25,000, the total for paving is \$76,475 with Oxfords bid being \$103,775. A motion was made by Councilmember Hutchins and seconded by Councilmember Jarrett to approve the Mickey Rice bid for the paving of the Al Hutchins Jr Community Center. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present.



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The Mayor present two bids for the paving of the lot on North Main St next to Sheila's Place. He stated that the bid from Mickey Rice was \$101,162.50 with the City providing the rock base and the Oxford bid was \$118,900. A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Hutchins to approve the bid from Mickey Rice to pave the parking lot on North Main St, in the amount of \$101,162.50. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present. The Mayor asked that the North Main parking lot be done out of Contingency and the parking lot at the Al Hutchins Jr. Community Center be done out of TSPLOST to which the Council was in agreement.

Councilmember Hutchins stated that he had heard that a May Day festival has been seen on FB at the Jeanette King Memorial Park. The Mayor stated that it was coming before the Council at the April meeting.

IV. Public Comments

Ms. Cawthorn asked for clarification about the Howell St rezone to which the City Attorney stated that with no motion it failed. He then stated that no further discussion could be had on this matter.

Bruce Wilson spoke about Hobb St. and a wore out spot in the street that has been there a while. He stated that there have been repairs/resurfaced but it comes back. He stated someone is running a generator on Williams St. all night long and he has spoken with Code Enforcement. He stated that loud music is being played around his house. He stated he has spoken with Chief Caudill but wanted to bring these concerns to the Mayor and Council.

Charlie Sol spoke about the GICH program and stated that assessments on housing are needed. Charlie asked the Council to assist in their district. He stated that this is needed to get affordable housing in Blakely. Councilmember Hutchins quested if it is for the County as well to which Charlie stated that it is being started in the City but because the City is in the County that it was for the County as well.

Mildred Mells spoke about needing a sidewalk on Flowers Dr. She stated there is a lot of walking traffic in this area.

V. Executive Session - Personnel

A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Davis to enter into Executive Session for personnel. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present



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A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Hutchins to enter back into regular session. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Jarrett to approve a \$2.00 pay increase for Lane Davis and a \$3.00 increase for Billy Powell. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

The Mayor reminded the Council and public of Peanut Proud that weekend and stated that hopefully the rain holds off.

VI. Adjournment

A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Davis to adjourn the March 22nd Special Called Meeting. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

Travis Wimbush, Mayor