

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
April 4, 2016

PRESENT: Mayor Brandon Johnson, Councilmembers Tony Haynie, Arthur Craft, Billy Ethridge, Mike MacNabb, Tray Hicks, and Bill Griggs. Others present included City Manager David Aldrich, City Clerk Jean Turner, City Attorney Robert Leverett, Members of the Press/Media, and Interested Citizens.

The Hartwell City Council met in regular session Monday, April 4, 2016 in the council chambers of city hall. Mayor Brandon Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. Following the invocation by City Manager David Aldrich, Mayor Johnson led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

Mayor's Comments:

- With lots of renovations taking place in the city, it appears the economy is picking up.
- Appreciation is extended to the Downtown Development Authority and many other organizations for the successful cleanup campaign.
- TORCH of Hartwell, Inc. will have a 'Dance A Thon' on May 7th at the Hart County High School beginning at 1:00 p.m. to raise money for the Railroad Street Park project. Top prize for the 'Dance a Thon' will be \$500.00.
- An email was received just prior to this meeting from Chamber of Commerce Director Nicki Meyer asking for approval of road closings for the annual 'Cars & Guitars' event to be held on May 28th. A motion was made by Councilman Hicks to add this request to the agenda and also approve the road closings as in the past. Motion was seconded by Councilman Griggs and carried unanimously.

Hearing no additions or corrections to the minutes of the March 7, 2016 council meeting, a motion was made by Councilman Haynie to approve as recorded. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilman Griggs to approve a request from the Service League for the annual Pre-4th event on June 25, 2016. Motion was seconded by Councilman Hicks and carried unanimously.

Mayor and Council heard the first reading of Ordinance No. 2016-01, annexing property of C. William Kidd into the corporate limits of the city. The property, consisting of approximately 4.38 acres, is located at 523 Parkdale Drive and will be zoned as B-2, General Business District, as approved by the Hartwell Planning and Zoning Commission.

Following discussion, and due to certain concerns, a motion was made by Councilman Hicks to table action regarding establishing Housing/Dilapidation Policy. Motion was seconded by Councilman Griggs and carried unanimously.

Mayor and Council heard the first reading of Ordinance No. 2016-02 regarding establishment of enterprise zones. As Mayor Johnson explained, state law allows cities to designate certain areas as enterprise zones, whereby incentives could be offered in an effort to stimulate economic development. The designation would be for a period of ten (10) years and certain stipulations would be required for eligibility to become an enterprise zone. A map identifying possible areas as enterprise zones was presented by the City Manager, which included the areas of Railroad Street, off Leard Street, off Opal Street, and the area around Savannah Street Market.

Representing property owner Tom Habel, Attorney Walter Gordon addressed Mayor and Council, asking that Council overturn a 3-2 decision by the Hartwell Planning and Zoning Commission to deny Mr. Habel's request for rezoning of his property from R-1 Residential to B-2 General Business District, located at 47 Whitehall Street. Attorney Gordon explained that Mr. Habel wished to construct living quarters on the property for his in-laws, if needed. He reported that some neighbors are opposed to the rezoning, while all adjacent property owners are in favor of the rezoning. He further stated that a B-2 Zoning District at this location would be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, and north of the property is currently all business, as well as the area below the property. Speaking in opposition of the rezoning were Ms. Betty Hornick of 144 Whitehall Street and Mr. Steve Ferguson of 143 Vickery Street. Both residents were concerned about the narrow street and increased traffic problems. Mr. Ferguson also expressed concern over the lack of definite plans for the property in the future if zoned B-2. As a point of order, Mr. David Little stated that since Councilman Hicks had worked for Mr. Habel, he should recuse himself from voting on the issue. Councilman Hicks replied that he did not work for Mr. Habel at the present time and had no financial interest in Mr. Habel, and therefore there was no requirement for him to recuse himself. Following considerable discussion, a motion was made by Councilman Hicks to overturn the Zoning Board's recommendation and approve the request to rezone the property as B-2, General Business District, based on all the facts that it meets all zoning requirements. Hearing no second to the motion, the motion died. Mayor Johnson stated that he did not know what the next step would be legally.

A motion was made by Councilman Hicks to accept the bid amount of \$548,639 from Lanier Contracting for upgrade of effluent filter at the Waste Water Treatment Plant, and give the City Manager authorization to bid out the rest of the project. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilman Hicks to accept a proposal from Trimble Navigation, Ltd. for GIS Mapping System Data Collection Hardware and Software for the Water/Wastewater and Gas Departments in the amount of \$19,980.00. Motion was seconded by Councilman Haynie and carried unanimously.

Upon recommendation of the City's Insurance Committee after reviewing other health insurance plans, a motion was made by Councilman Craft to remain with the current employee health benefit plan at this time. Motion was seconded by Councilman Ethridge and carried unanimously.

Commander Bill Fogerty of American Legion Post 109 requested that Council consider veterans preference when hiring personnel. Mr. Fogerty made reference to the current advertisement for an Assistant City Manager, as well as the County's advertisement for a County Administrator. Councilman Haynie commented that he would be pleased to have a veteran apply. Councilman Hicks stated that he fully supported the veterans preference program, but expressed concerned about legal aspects.

City Attorney Robert Leverett explained that a settlement had been offered to the City by Electric Motors Company regarding the City's lawsuit against the Company for damage to one of the City's pumps at the waste water treatment facility. Although the damage to the pump was more than the offered settlement of \$5,000, Attorney Leverett recommended that the City accept the settlement. Councilman Haynie stated that he begrudgingly moved to accept the settlement. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously.

Mr. David Little requested that Council present a motion to specify that all councilmembers be required to obtain approval from the full council, in a public meeting, prior to taking overnight trips for meetings or training sessions. He stated that these trips cost taxpayers money, with an average cost of approximately \$500, including meals, gasoline, and hotel lodging. No action was taken.

Council Comments:

- Councilman Hicks reported that the Hart State Project was moving along, with a possible update from the consultant during the next council meeting. He also thanked all volunteers who showed up for the recent cleanup campaign.
- On behalf of the Hart County Water & Sewer Authority, Councilman MacNabb reported that the Authority was now purchasing more water from the City of Hartwell than from the City of Lavonia. He wished to thank everyone involved for making Hartwell the low cost provider.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Councilman Haynie to adjourn the meeting. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Turner
City Clerk