

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
June 2, 2014

PRESENT: Mayor Brandon Johnson, City Manager David Aldrich, Councilmen Arthur Craft, Billy Ethridge, Tony Haynie, Mike MacNabb and Tray Hicks, City Attorney Rob Leverett, City Clerk Jean Turner, Members of the Press/Media, and Interested Citizens.

ABSENT: Councilman Bill Griggs

The Hartwell City Council met in regular session on Monday, June 2, 2014 in the council chambers of city hall, 456 E. Howell Street, Hartwell. Mayor Brandon Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance.

Following the invocation given by Mr. Chuck Whelan, everyone present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag.

Mayor's Comments:

- Council had tentatively agreed to participate in the Downtown Renaissance Program, but after speaking with University of Georgia Archway Representative Ilka McConnell, the City feels that the current Archway Program could provide much of the same work as the Downtown Renaissance Program.
- Consultants are moving forward with a feasibility study regarding Hart State Park, which is an expenditure of \$18,000.00.
- The annual Cars & Guitars event and the Lake Hartwell Music Festival were held over the past weekend, with great attendance.

A motion was made by Councilman Hicks, seconded by Councilman MacNabb, and carried unanimously to remove item #19, N. Forest Sewer & Annexation, from the agenda.

A Proclamation was read by the Mayor and presented to Mr. Farris T. Johnson, Commander of Chapter 531 of the Military Order of Purple Hearts of Athens, Georgia, proclaiming the City of Hartwell as a "Purple Heart City," and encouraging citizens to show appreciation for sacrifices made by Purple Heart recipients in defending our freedoms.

Mayor Johnson read a Proclamation designating the week of June 1 – 7, 2014 as National Garden Week. On hand to receive the Proclamation were Nancy Hart Garden Club President Ann Roedler, Pine Tree Garden Club President Linda Harris, Madora Garden Club President Margaret Haley, and Azalea District Director and Pine Tree Garden Club member Peggy Tucker. The Mayor not only commended the local Garden Clubs for their many contributions, but reported that each year Garden Clubs across the state presented scholarships, and just recently scholarships totaling approximately \$52,000 were given out across the state.

Hearing no corrections or additions to the minutes of the May 5, 2014 regular council meeting, a motion was made by Councilman Hicks to approve as recorded. Motion was seconded by Councilman Haynie and carried unanimously.

Mr. Don Burdick, retired Army Major General and President of the Athens Chapter of The Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), explained that the SAR was a historical, educational and patriotic organization. One aspect of SAR's educational program is to recognize communities and organizations that fly the American flag properly. Mr. Burdick stated that in recognition of Flag Day, June 14th, the SAR presents a Certificate of Commendation to the City of Hartwell and the Mayor for exemplary patriotism in the display of the flag of the United States of America.

A motion was made by Councilman Hicks, seconded by Councilman MacNabb, and carried unanimously to approve the extension of natural gas to serve approximately eight (8) new poultry houses off the Bethany-Bowersville Road.

A motion was made by Councilman Ethridge to approve the replacement of the Clover Lift Station pump at a cost of \$7,306.60 as quoted by Xylem Water Solutions USA, Inc., Flygt Products. Motion was seconded by Councilman Haynie and carried unanimously. It was noted that the current damaged pump was 21 years old and the cost of repair quoted for the pump was \$2,462.22.

As discussion ensued regarding the disposal of sludge from the water treatment plant storage ponds, the City Manager gave the following options for the disposal: (1) City to try to remove the sludge, dry, and haul to landfill; (2) remove and take to the Wastewater Treatment Plant drying beds, which would take a period of time; (3) remove and haul to the Athens landfill, which could have issues of seepage, and tipping fees could be anywhere from \$0 to \$15 per ton; or (4) have the sludge pumped out and put in tankers to haul to city property on Hodges Mill Road and then land apply on city property, which could also be applied to local farmland. Upon recommendation, a motion was made by Councilman Ethridge to accept the low bid from Synagro South, LLC in the amount of \$117,462 for option #4. Motion was seconded by Councilman Hicks and carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilman Hicks to accept the prepared list of police vehicles, confiscated vehicles, and two motorcycles, as surplus vehicles to be placed on the GovDeals website for sale. Motion was seconded by Councilman Ethridge and carried unanimously.

As Council discussed bids for street resurfacing under the Department of Transportation's Local Maintenance Improvement Grant (LMIG) Program, the City Manager requested that a 65' portion of Winding Way be tagged onto this resurfacing while the contractor is in the city, as well as the intersection of N. Forest and Johnson Streets. A motion was made by Councilman MacNabb, seconded by Councilman Ethridge and carried unanimously to accept the low bid from Souder's Asphalt, Inc. in the amount of \$125,809.00. It was noted that 70% of the funding would come from the state and 30% from the City, with any additional cost by the City to be taken from SPLOST funds.

Councilman Haynie made a motion to table discussion regarding consideration of the Downtown Development Authority Director becoming a city employee until Council begins to work on the budget for the next year. Motion was seconded by Councilman MacNabb and carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilman Haynie, seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously to seek bids for bare steel replacement on the Elberton Highway. The City Manager reported that this would be Phase III of the natural gas bare steel replacement project.

Mayor and Council heard a request from Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Director Henley Cleary for the purchase of new banners for the downtown area. As discussion ensued, Councilman Haynie stated that he would have a hard time voting on something that the City did not absolutely have to have, explaining that everything the City had approved during this meeting were necessary items. It was also stated by Councilmen Hicks and MacNabb that the City's budget for this year did not include the purchase of new banners. No action was taken.

The City Manager explained that the City now had a plan and method for removal of dilapidated houses in the city, with the removal project to be under someone else's license. Mayor Johnson also stated that the initial startup cost for the project would be approximately \$15,000. A motion was made by Councilman Ethridge to approve the plan for removal of the dilapidated houses. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously.

Interim Director of TORCH of Hartwell, Inc. Ms. Bonnie McFall addressed Mayor and Council, requesting that TORCH receive a loan from the City in the amount of \$7,600.00, to be repaid to the City. As explained by Ms. McFall, the funds would be used to assist in the purchase of the weigh station and other surrounding property on Railroad Street, including the old Rio's Restaurant building. She reported that the property owner had offered the property for a sum of \$19,000.00, and TORCH was also seeking a loan from the bank. She further explained that the old weigh station would be used as a weight management station for health and wellness, and the funds for the Railroad Street Project would also be used to start construction of a farmers market, with the expected creation of approximately 33 jobs. Councilman Ethridge moved that the request be tabled for further discussion. Motion died due to lack of a second. Councilman Haynie made a motion to approve the loan. Councilman Haynie then withdrew this motion and moved to approve the loan contingent upon approval of a bank loan for TORCH. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously. Upon discussion, Mary Beth Focer questioned Council regarding the correct owner of the Railroad Street property in question. She stated that Quality Industries, not Bennie Ray Anderson, owned the property according to a deed on record. Councilman Hicks, who is employed by Quality Industries, remarked that there was a lease with Best Powder associated with the property, but not Quality Industries. The City Attorney stated that before the City, or any bank, would release funds, any deed would have to be cleared. As the vote was called, motion was carried 3 to 1, with Councilman Ethridge opposing and Councilman Hicks abstaining.

A motion was made by Councilman Hicks to contract with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission for assistance in proceeding with an application for grant funds from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for the proposed Railroad Street project. Motion was seconded by Councilman Haynie and carried unanimously.

City Manager Comments:

- As part of the sidewalk improvement project, work has been in progress on a portion between the sidewalk and curb on Franklin Street, with sod and pavers expected to be completed in a few days, weather permitting.

Council Comments:

- Councilman Hicks reported that all full-time City firefighters would be certified EMT's at the end of the month. City Manager David Aldrich added that he wished to thank Mayor and Council for funding this for the firefighters, stating that it would be a great benefit to the community.
- Councilman Haynie reported that there was great participation and great weather this past weekend for the bike riders. He also wished to brag about the work by City employees on the sidewalk on Franklin Street.

Citizen Comments:

- Mr. Lonnie Robinson expressed appreciation to Mayor and Council and the community for always supporting the youth.
- Chamber of Commerce Director Nicki Meyer gave a shout-out to City employees and all volunteers during the Challenge of the Centuries Bike Ride over the past weekend, as well as other events. She also stated that the Music Festival held over the weekend at the Long Point Recreation Area was wonderful and filled with people.
- Ms. Freddie Glaze stated that good things are going on in the county and city, but nobody wanted to mention the bad things. She complained of the actions of the county and city police and stated she was going to have Governor Nathan Deal to investigate the city and county. As she continued to speak after the Mayor informed her that her two minutes were up, Council adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:20 p.m., with Officer Greg Brown attempting to escort Ms. Glaze from the council chambers as she continued to speak.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Turner
City Clerk

