

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
February 3, 2014

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

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Hartwell City Council was held Monday, February 3, 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 by Chief of Police Anthony Davis, everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag.

Mayor's Comments:

- Wish to thank the City's Police Department, Fire Department, and road crew for keeping the roads safe during the recent snow/ice event.
- Mayor and several members of council attended training in Atlanta recently.
- Former Chief of Police Cecil Reno was honored with a retirement reception last week. His years of service to the City began August 25, 1979 and ended December 31, 2013.
- City Manager is currently working on a retreat for Mayor and Council.

Hearing no corrections or additions to the minutes of the previous meeting, a motion was made by Councilman Ethridge to approve as recorded. Motion was seconded by Councilman Griggs and carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilman Hicks, seconded by Councilman Ethridge and carried unanimously to approve a request from Hart County Little League for the Opening Day Parade on March 29, 2014.

Mayor and Council heard a request from Chamber of Commerce Director Nicki Meyer for reallocation of funds currently designated for fishing tournaments. She stated that this would be a light year for fishing tournaments on Lake Hartwell due to rotation of lakes each year by tournament organizers, and she was requesting \$5,000.00 be reallocated to host the Triple Crown Watercross event in August, 2014. She also requested funding in the amount of \$425.00 for Fishing for Reel, and \$1,800.00 for American Bass Anglers. Ms. Meyer explained that she would also be requesting the same amount of funding from the County for these events. Following discussion, a motion was made by Councilman Griggs to approve the request for funding, totaling \$7,225.00. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously. Councilman Haynie explained that no additional funds were being allocated to the Chamber since the funds are already budgeted for fishing tournaments.

As Mayor Johnson gave an update on the proposed Pro Business Taskforce, he stated that he had received a number of diverse recommendations from many different sectors of the local economy, and hoped to have the initial group together by the beginning of next month. The taskforce is expected to consist of no more than 15 persons.

Mayor Johnson reported that the City Manager would try to have a formal list prepared later regarding the City's boards and committees.

Councilman Hicks reported that the City had the ability to add some type newsletter along with the mailing of the monthly bills to utility customers. He suggested the possibility of adding upcoming events, ordinance adoptions, trash collection schedules, etc., as a way to better communicate with constituents. It was also discussed that the City's website needed to be updated.

In discussing open records, the Mayor stated that County Commission Chairman Joey Dorsey had initiated some training at the County level regarding laws regulating open records, and has offered to have a joint venture with the City for use of the County's resources. The Mayor further stated that due to past circumstances and the continual changes at the state level, he felt this information should be made available to all boards, commissions, and authorities, as well as city council. The City Manager stated that he would get with the chairpersons of the City's boards, commissions, and authorities to make sure they have the proper basic training in those areas. He further stated that he and the city attorney could possibly meet periodically with these groups, as well as make themselves available in order to keep an open line of communication. Councilman Hicks added that the City Charter required that an oath be administered by the Mayor before an appointed member assumes office of a board, commission, or authority.

A motion was made by Councilman Griggs, seconded by Councilman Hicks, and carried unanimously to advertise for three vacancies on the Hartwell Downtown Development Authority (DDA). These three positions are up for reappointment, and although Interim DDA Director Henley Cleary reported that these current members have indicated a willingness to remain on the board, Council felt that others wishing to serve should also be given an opportunity.

Mayor Johnson reported that a local business, Total Body Fitness, a 24-hour gym, had offered a membership opportunity to city employees who wished to enroll. He felt such a wellness program would not only promote better fitness for employees, but could also possibly help with rising insurance costs. The City Manager stated that he wished to have an agreement worked out by the next council meeting, and it was his recommendation that the City split the membership cost with employees wanting to participate. Councilman Haynie commented that the proposed cost offered by Total Body Fitness was an extremely favorable rate, and the City would be splitting the cost only with those employees willing to participate.

A motion was made by Councilman Hicks to surplus old fittings and valves that are unusable by the City. Motion was seconded by Councilman MacNabb and carried unanimously.

As discussion ensued regarding the purchase of new Christmas decorations for the town area, the City Manager explained that prices were significantly lower if purchased this time of year. Mayor Johnson stated that possibly he, along with Mayor Pro Tem Tray Hicks, the City Manager, and Public Works Director, could sit down and look at options. The City Manager stated that the City had catalogues from different vendors from which to choose decorations, and selections and prices could be obtained and brought back before Council next month.

The City Manager reported that he had received confirmation that the City was eligible for the Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant (REDLG) Program regarding the proposed Oakview Crossing Development. A motion was made by Councilman Ethridge to authorize the Mayor to execute documents with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission for assistance with the REDLG application. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously.

Council Comments:

- Councilman Griggs approached the Mayor's seat and stated that in order to show the Mayor's leadership, he presented Mayor Johnson with a 'very small' wooden gavel. The Mayor thanked Mr. Griggs, stating that he now had a gavel.

City Manager Comments:

- Wished to thank Mayor and Council and the community for the outpouring of support during the recent loss of his mother.
- New fire engine should be delivered this week.
- Commend city employees for their efforts during the recent snow event.
- Generator installed and in operation at the Jailhouse Lift Station.

Public Comments:

- Mr. Ralph Kiser commented that he really liked the new Police Department uniforms.

There being no further business to come before Mayor and Council, a motion was made by Councilman Haynie to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:40 p.m. Motion was seconded by Councilman Hicks and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Turner  
City Clerk