

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

November 3, 2014

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Hartwell City Council was held on Monday, November 3, 2014 in the council chambers of city hall, 456 E. Howell Street, Hartwell. Members present included Mayor Brandon Johnson, Councilmembers Arthur Craft, Bill Griggs, Tray Hicks, Tony Haynie, Mike MacNabb, and Billy Ethridge. Others present included City Manager David Aldrich, City Attorney Robert Leverett, City Clerk Jean Turner, Members of the Press/Media, and interested citizens.

Mayor Brandon Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m., followed by the invocation given by City Manager David Aldrich. Following the invocation, the Mayor led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag.

Mayor's comments:

- The downtown Halloween Monster Mash event went very well this past Friday, with a good time had by children and families.
- American Legion Post 109 is continuing to gather wreaths to place on markers of fallen soldiers. This event is called "Wreaths Across America" to pay tribute and honor to veterans by placing wreaths on the gravesite of every veteran.

Hearing no additions or corrections to the minutes of the October 6th council meeting, a motion was made by Councilman Ethridge to approve as recorded. Motion was seconded by Councilman Griggs and carried unanimously.

Several Hart County High School 9th grade students presented their results of a study of the Hart State Park. The students, members of the High School's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Program, gave a video presentation of their on-site research of the Park. From their study, the students had suggestions for possible improvements or additions to the Park, which included nature trails, putt-putt golf, snack bar, kayak rentals, a zip line, music concerts, etc. Following the presentation, Mayor Johnson thanked the group for taking time to attend the council meeting and share their study.

A motion was made by Councilman Griggs to approve a request from the Chamber of Commerce for street closings for the annual Christmas Parade scheduled for December 5th from 6:45 to 8:00 p.m. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously. As reported by Chamber Director Nicki Meyer, the theme for this year's Parade is "Salute our Hometown Heroes."

Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Director Henley Cleary presented a quarterly report of DDA activities. Upon request of the DDA, a motion was made by Councilman Haynie to approve street closings for the annual Christmas Tree Lighting to be held November 28th. Motion was seconded by Councilman Hicks and carried unanimously.

Mayor and Council heard the first reading of Ordinance No. 14-03-11 regarding adoption of the City's 2015 budget. As stated by the Mayor, and as shown in the Ordinance, the tax millage is proposed to remain the same at 11.3.

Upon recommendation of the City Manager, a motion was made by Councilman Haynie to accept the low bid from Williamson & Company for conducting the City's annual audit. Motion was seconded by Councilman Griggs and carried unanimously. The amount of Williamson's proposal was \$18,000.00 per year for years 2014, 2015, and 2016.

A motion was made by Councilman Hicks, seconded by Councilman Craft, and carried unanimously to accept the low bid of \$8,886.80 from Georgia Fire & Rescue Supply for a thermal imaging camera for the Fire Department. It was noted that this was a budgeted item.

A motion was made by Councilman Hicks to approve an addendum to an Agreement with Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) regarding the proposed Oakview Crossing Development. Motion was seconded by Councilman Haynie and carried unanimously. The term of the Agreement is amended to read: "The term of this Agreement shall be from February 20, 2014 to May 21, 2015." GMRC was authorized by Council earlier this year to execute application documents for a Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant (REDLG) for financial assistance for the proposed Oakview Crossing project.

A motion was made by Councilman Ethridge, seconded by Councilman Hicks and carried unanimously to accept the low bid of \$21,822.00 from Hach Company for upgrade of the monitoring and recording turbidity system at the Water Treatment Plant. It was also noted that funding would come from SPLOST funds since this is an upgrade to the Water Treatment Plant.

A motion was made by Councilman Griggs to approve the following streets selected by the City Manager and Public Works Director for resurfacing under the DOT's Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG) Program for 2015: Winding Way, Race Street, Cunningham Dr., Patterson Street, and W. Franklin Street. Motion was seconded by Councilman Ethridge and carried unanimously.

City Manager Comments:

- Met with the Downtown Development Authority regarding revisions to the City's Sign Ordinance, with updates to the Ordinance an on-going process.

Council Comments:

- Councilman Hicks expressed his opinion on ballot questions to be considered in the upcoming election. He stated that the community had the ability and opportunity to grow, and he fully supported ESPLOST. He also felt the question of Sunday alcohol sales in the city was a matter of freedom of choice, but stated that the community needed those tax dollars derived from such sales. Referring to the last two years, he reported that the City had received over \$380,000 in income from the sale of alcohol. He further stated that if religious beliefs are such that citizens did not believe in Sunday sales, he fully supported their vote of "no," but otherwise, he would ask that citizens vote "yes."
- Councilman Ethridge thanked the Street Department for a wonderful job on repair of the last two washed-out pipes.

- Councilman MacNabb agreed with Councilman Ethridge, also expressing his appreciation to the Street Department for what they do.
- Councilman Haynie expressed thanks to the High School students for their presentation of Hart State Park.
- Both Councilmen Craft and Griggs urged everyone to go out and vote in tomorrow's election.

Citizen Comments:

- Mary Beth Focer questioned if there were any updates on TORCH. She had questions concerning the legal ownership of the building on Railroad Street, and also stated that Chamber of Commerce Director Nicki Meyer laughed in her face when she mentioned her concern of a conflict of interest with Councilman Tray Hicks' involvement with the proposed TORCH Railroad Street Project.
- Councilman Hicks explained that his name was on a lease, and his employer, Best Powder, LLC, purchased the scales from Hartwell Lumber Company, pays taxes on the scales and pays the lease to Bennie Ray Anderson of Hartwell Railroad, but does not own the building on the property. He added that there were no secrets, and he had not participated or voted on any issues regarding TORCH.
- Ms. Nicki Meyer stated that Ms. Focer had requested, and was allowed, to review all documents concerning TORCH. She stated also that everyone else was welcome to look at the same information.

There being no further business to come before Mayor and Council, a motion was made by Councilman Griggs to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:05 p.m. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Turner
City Clerk