

CITY OF HARTWELL
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
March 7, 2016

PRESENT: Mayor Brandon Johnson, Councilmembers Billy Ethridge, Mike MacNabb, Tony Haynie, Bill Griggs, Arthur Craft, and Tray Hicks. Others present included 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 on Monday, March 7, 2016 in the council chambers of city hall, 456 E. Howell Street, Hartwell, Georgia. The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Brandon Johnson. Following the invocation given by Mayor Johnson, everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag.

Upon request of Mr. Tom Habel for a 30-day continuance of his rezoning issue, a motion was made by Councilman Hicks to table the rezoning issue for 30 days. Motion was seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously. Due to this action by Council, agenda items number 6 and 7 were removed from this meeting's agenda.

As Mayor Johnson reported that he had a late request from Mr. David Little to be placed on the agenda to address Mayor and Council, a motion was made by Councilman Haynie to add Mr. Little to the agenda. Motion was seconded by Councilman Hicks and carried unanimously.

Mayor's Comments:

- Wish to thank City Manager David Aldrich and city employees for the infrastructure work going on around town, while keeping traffic moving and keeping the area clean.
- Although it has been heard that the Mayor was planning to run for the Office of State Representative, Mayor Johnson stated that this was not true and he was committed to being Mayor for the foreseeable future.

Hearing no additions or corrections to the minutes of the February council meeting, a motion was made by Councilman Griggs to accept as recorded. Motion was seconded by Councilman Haynie and carried unanimously.

Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Director Henley Cleary gave an update of DDA activities. As part of her report, Ms. Cleary stated that a joint effort with Hart County for the "Keep Hartwell/Hart Beautiful" cleanup campaign would be held April 2nd. All trash picked up will be taken to convenience centers in the county. She also reported that the First Saturday events will again be held this year beginning May 7th at the Swamp Guinea Restaurant on Reed Creek Highway.

Following a brief discussion regarding 2016 scheduled DDA events, a motion was made by Councilman Hicks to approve the June 24th annual Dancin' on Depot, October 31st Mayor's Monster Mash, and the November 22nd Christmas Tree Lighting, with additional events to be decided upon later, as they are scheduled. Motion was seconded by Councilman MacNabb and carried unanimously. Benson Street resident David Little asked for consideration that the Mayor's Monster Mash be held on another day rather than Halloween night. He stated that residents of Benson Street are being slammed with "Trick or Treaters" when this event is held on Depot Street on Halloween night. Mayor Johnson stated that this request would be taken under advisement.

Chamber of Commerce Chairman Chuck Whelan gave a report on committees of the Chamber. These committees included the Education Committee, Leadership Hart (with a class graduating on April 5th), Governmental Affairs Committee, Economic Development, and Membership Committee, with over 100 volunteers serving on these committees.

A recap of Chamber events was presented by Chamber of Commerce Director Nicki Meyer. Ms. Meyer reported that a Music Video is being filmed this week by an Athens Video Production Company, and a North Carolina Movie Production Company with a crew of about 50 will be filming a movie in the area in April. She also stated that approximately \$700,000 was generated during the months of September and October, 2015 from the Redneck Island film crew of about 85. Home building, real estate, furniture retailers, restaurants, etc. had a banner year during 2015 compared to the previous year.

A motion was made by Councilman Griggs to ratify approval of materials from HD Waterworks Supply in the amount of \$10,982.00 for the Carter Street water main upgrade project. Motion was seconded by Councilman Ethridge and carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilman Craft, seconded by Councilman Ethridge, and carried unanimously to approve 2015 budget amendments as submitted.

Hart Youth Development Resource Association (HYDRA) Director Catrina Hicks reported that the 4th annual Lake Hartwell Music Festival would be held Saturday, May 28th at the end of Old Hwy. 29 (Long Point). She requested that the City again provide in-kind services during the event, such as trash pickup. A motion was made by Councilman Haynie, seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously to provide in-kind services as requested.

Mr. David Little urged Mayor and Council to make a greater effort to keep the public better informed. He stated that not all items on the meeting agendas are explained properly, and he would like to have the public comment added back on the agenda. Mayor Johnson replied that he would take this under serious consideration.

City Manager Comments:

- Due to a problem with buzzards roosting in the city, a noise cannon has been purchased, which appears to be working by scaring them away.
- One more dilapidated house was demolished the previous Friday, which was located on Reynolds Street.
- Crack sealing has occurred on various streets in an effort to preserve the longevity of the streets.
- It is apparent that there will need to be a policy and premium change in the City's health insurance.
- Downtown projects are going well, and the Johnny Street project continues to move forward.

As Councilman Haynie reported that there had been questions regarding the process of tearing down houses, the City Manager explained that the process begins with determining ownership of the property in violation of such things as abandoned automobiles, overgrown lots, or dilapidated structures. Certified letters are forwarded to property owners regarding a violation, and owners are given a certain amount of time to remedy the problem. If the violation is not remedied, citations are issued for property owner to appear in court. The Judge will typically give the property owner a specific amount of time to resolve, and should abatement of the violation not occur, the Judge will give the City authorization to abate the problem. If the property violation is abated by the City, property owner is billed, and if owner refuses to pay, a lien is placed on the property. The City Attorney concurred with this summary of property violations, also reiterating that the property owner is provided an opportunity to address and abate the problem.

Councilman Hicks stated that he fully supported the Mayor's previous decision to remove public comments from the agenda. He further stated that citizens are given the opportunity to be placed on the agenda as long as the request is received in ample time and the topic pertains to the city. Also, citizens are given the opportunity to comment on agenda topics, which he felt did not eliminate public comments at all.

Councilman Hicks reported that everything was moving along with Hart State Park and a meeting will be held the following week with the Corps of Engineers to review concerns of the Corps. He also reported that a meeting was

held recently with Retail Strategies, which the Mayor will give an update. As further stated by Councilman Hicks, this Council has worked hard and continues to work hard for the community's growth, as well as the volunteers. Currently, almost every fast food restaurant is being remodeled, and a hotel is adding additional rooms.

Mayor Johnson reported on the status of Retail Strategies, a consulting firm hired by the City and Hart County Industrial Building Authority to try and recruit new commercial business. The Mayor stated that the firm had been working to collect important data needed to assist in the recruiting effort and had now begun the recruiting process, with positive feedback being received.

Councilman Craft commented on the dilapidated house removed last week as mentioned by the City Manager, stating that the property should be back on the City's tax roll in the near future due to two new houses proposed to be constructed on the site.

Councilman Griggs informed everyone that Representative Doug Collins would be speaking on Thursday, March 10th at the Carnesville Civic Center located at 961 Hull Avenue, Carnesville, Georgia at 10:30 a.m., and at 12:00 noon at the American Legion Post 109 located at the Hartwell Golf Course off U.S. Hwy. 29 South, Hartwell. Post 109 is sponsoring this event for the purpose of discussing veterans, and attendees should rsvp to Mr. Bill Fogerty.

There being no further business to come before Mayor and Council, a motion was made by Councilman Hicks to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:55 p.m. Motion seconded by Councilman Craft and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Turner
City Clerk