The City Council of the City of Harlem, Georgia met for their Regular Meeting on Monday, June 26, 2023, at the Public Safety Building at 7:00 p.m. with Mayor Roxanne Whitaker presiding.

Present: COUNCIL: Mayor Roxanne Whitaker, Mayor Pro tem Gregg Stokes, Councilmember Daniel Bellavance, Councilmember Al Reeves, and Councilmember John Thigpen; STAFF: City Manager Debra Moore, City Clerk Leona Holley, and City Attorney Barry Fleming; MEDIA: Stephanie Hill, The Augusta Press.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Whitaker at 7:00 p.m.

The Invocation was given by City Attorney Fleming.

The U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps Color Guard led the Pledge of Allegiance and presented the Colors.

Approval of the Agenda: Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to approve the Agenda as presented; 2nd by Councilmember Thigpen. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Approval of the Minutes: Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the following Minutes as written:
• Work Session & Executive Session; Thursday, May 18, 2023
• Regular Meeting; Monday, May 22, 2023
The motion was 2nd by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Special Recognition – Reginald B. “Reggie” Ford – 30 Years of Service: Mayor Whitaker presented Reginald B. “Reggie” Ford with a Certificate of Recognition for his thirty years of exemplary service for the City of Harlem and its citizens. Public Works Director Robert Fields expressed his gratitude to Mr. Ford for his service to the city and for being a dedicated employee.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Consider Ordinance 2307 An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 108 Land Use; Sec. 108-240 Permitting Requirements – 2nd Reading & Action: Community Development Director David Jenkins explained Ordinance 2307. This amendment deals with appeals relating to sign permit applications. Ordinance 2307 clarifies that any appeal of a denial or revocation of a sign permit by the Community Development Director is filed with the City Clerk for an appeal to the City Council. Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the 2nd Reading of Ordinance 2307, an ordinance to amend Chapter 108 Land use, Sec. 108-240 permitting requirements; 2nd by Councilmember Bellavance. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Consider Ordinance 2308 An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 108 Land Use; Sec. 108-244 Violations, Inspections and Removal – 2nd Reading & Action: Community Development Director David Jenkins explained Ordinance 2308. This amendment deals with appeals relating to an order to remove a sign issued by the Community Development Director. Ordinance 2308 clarifies the removal process and adds
UNFINISHED BUSINESS (cont’d):

Consider Ordinance 2308 An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 108 Land Use; Sec. 108-244 Violations, Inspections and Removal – 2nd Reading & Action (cont’d): wording that fully describes the appeals process for any person wishing to appeal a sign removal determination of the Community Development Director. Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the 2nd Reading of Ordinance 2308 an ordinance to amend Chapter 108 Land Use, Sec. 108-244 violations, inspections, and removal; 2nd by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Consider Ordinance 2309 An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 108 Land Use; Sec. 108-3 Definitions and Sec. 108-271 Exterior Walls – 2nd Reading & Action: Community Development Director David Jenkins explained Ordinance 2309. This amendment adds a definition for ‘virgin brick’ and establishes a suggested brick color palette for new commercial construction for certain sections of the city. Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the 2nd Reading of Ordinance 2309, an ordinance to amend Chapter 108 Land Use, Sec. 108-3 Definitions and Sec. 108-271 exterior walls; 2nd by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. Discussion: Councilmember Thigpen thanked City Manager Moore and Mr. Jenkins for their work on the correction of the ordinance. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Other: N/A

NEW BUSINESS:

Fort Gordon Light Study – Lighting Ordinance for Consideration of Implementation – Action: City Manager Moore explained the proposed exterior lighting ordinance for the City of Harlem. Recently a light study was done for Fort Gordon and the study is recommending a military lighting overlay district within 2-miles of military training areas on Fort Gordon. The focus area within the City of Harlem is where land is primarily rural residential and agricultural; this would be on the south side of Harlem. The proposed recommendation is designed to reduce light pollution at night to protect the night-time training at Fort Gordon and to promote a safe night-time environment for residents. City Manager Moore stated this is in line with what Columbia County has. Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to table the Fort Gordon Light Study – Lighting Ordinance until the July 2023 Council meeting for consideration; 2nd by Councilmember Thigpen. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Other: N/A

Public Comment:

Columbia County Commissioner Alison Couch: Commissioner Couch gave a brief update for the county:
1. The contract between Columbia County and Gold Cross EMS was renewed; Columbia County will be taking over dispatch.
NEW BUSINESS (cont’d):

Public Comment (cont’d):

2. The resurfacing project for White Oak Road, Sawdust Road and County Line Road has started this week. The contractor has 250 calendar days to complete the project.
3. Representatives from the City of Harlem and Columbia County have scheduled a walk-through of the Harlem City Park to discuss plans for future maintenance and to identify SPLOST projects.
4. Update from Stacy Gordon for the Water/Sewer Utilities: The Harlem Euchee Creek Interceptor is 98% complete with the design. The completion of the project will increase sewer capacity in the Harlem area from 0.25 million gallons to 2.3 million gallons. The Sawdust Road waterline is 95% complete with the design. Columbia County is in the planning stages of a sewer line inflow and infiltration study on the south side of Milledgeville Road in Harlem. Columbia County completed an upgrade to the Booster Pumping Station and Ground Storage Tank on Old Louisville Road. Columbia County has been working with an engineering firm and they have completed the water and sewer master plan that makes 20-year projections for the county. Columbia County is working on relining manholes in Harlem.

Commissioner Couch has asked for North Fairview Drive to be reconsidered for paving for the LMIG study. They have recently done a traffic count study on North Fairview Drive; she has asked for this to be looked at again once school starts back. The resurfacing of Harlem Grovetown Road is expected to take place in the year 2025. Mayor Whitaker commented on the use of electric vehicles and how that will affect the gas tax. Commissioner Couch stated she will bring that up to the Commissioners. City Attorney Fleming stated the gas tax is going to be based on how many people will have electric vehicles and charging areas. The more electric vehicles on the road, the gas tax will go down; there is a surcharge on tags for electric vehicles.

Reports:

- **Council Reports**: Mayor Pro tem Stokes and Councilmember Bellavance reported on their recent trip to the GMA Convention in Savannah and the training they attended.
- **Mayor Report**: Mayor Whitaker reported she attended the Mayor’s Reading Club class at the GMA Convention. Mayor Whitaker stated she would like to look into doing a Reading Trail at the Walking Trail. Mayor Whitaker reported the new Dollar General store has opened.
- **Department Reports**: City Manager Moore reported on project updates. The Oliver Hardy Court resurfacing project has been completed. The walk-through and the final inspection could be done this week. The go ahead has been given to Public Work Director Robert Fields to proceed with the entrance signs.

Announcements:

- **July 4** City Offices Closed – Independence Day
- **July 4** Freedom Run organized by Tommy Stolte; 9:00 a.m.; Harlem City Park
- **July 7** Summer Movie Night – “Shrek”; 8:30 p.m.; Harlem Library Plaza
- **July 11** Planning & Zoning Meeting; 6:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
- **July 12** Urban Redevelopment Agency Meeting; 9:00 a.m.; City Hall
Announcements (cont’d):

July 13                          Historic Preservation Commission Meeting; 6:30 p.m.; Public Safety Building
July 17                          Called Meeting – Property Tax Hearing; 6:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
July 20                          Property Tax Hearing; 7:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
July 20                          City Council Work Session; 7:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
July 24                          Property Tax Hearing; 7:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
July 24                          City Council Regular Meeting; 7:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
July 28                          Summer Movie Night – “Karate Kid”; 8:30 p.m.; Harlem Library Plaza

Executive Session: Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to go into Executive Session to discuss Real Estate and Personnel; 2nd by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. Executive Session opened at 7:37 p.m.

Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to come out of Executive Session; 2nd by Councilmember Bellavance. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. Executive Session closed at 9:15 p.m. (Councilmember Reeves left the meeting at 8:46 p.m.)

City Attorney Fleming reported that there were two real estate matters and three personnel matters discussed and no final action was taken. Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to authorize the Mayor to sign the affidavit affirming this report; 2nd by Councilmember Thigpen. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

With there being nothing further for discussion, Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to adjourn the meeting; 2nd by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. The meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leona H. Holley
City Clerk