

The City Council of the City of Harlem, Georgia met for their Regular Meeting on Monday, January 22, 2024, 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 Tom Watkins.

The Regular Council Meeting was opened by Mayor Whitaker at 7:00 p.m.

The Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance was given and led by City Attorney Watkins.

**Approval of the Agenda:** Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to approve the Agenda as presented; 2<sup>nd</sup> 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/Regular Council Meeting; Thursday, December 21, 2023

The motion was 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Mayor Whitaker acknowledged and welcomed former City Attorney, Judge Barry Fleming, former Columbia County Commissioner, Candidate for Georgia House of Representatives District 125 Gary Richardson, and Mr. Terry Norman, Candidate for Columbia County Coroner.

**District 4 Quarterly Update – Commissioner Alison Couch:** Commissioner Couch gave a quarterly update from the county:

- N. Fairview Dr/Hwy 221 – The county and city officials met recently to discuss the improvements for the intersection in conjunction with Clary Cut Road and Old Union Road. The county is working on proposed designs. N. Fairview Drive has been approved for repaving for the 2024 calendar year.
- Sewer Line Project for Harlem – The project continues to progress; property acquisition is almost finished. Construction of the sewer line will begin, and this will open up large pieces of land for development in the future.
- District 4 Sports Park – Search began for land for the District 4 Sports Park.
- Exit 190 Closure has been postponed. The closure has been rescheduled to February 8-12, 2024.
- Early Voting for the Special Election to fill Georgia House of Representative District 125 seat began today and will go through February 9, 2024.

**Special Recognition – Barry Fleming:** Mayor Whitaker and Council presented Barry Fleming with a Certification of Appreciation plaque for his 20+ years of service and dedication as the City Attorney for the City of Harlem. Mr. Fleming served on the Georgia House of Representatives District 125 seat and was sworn in as Columbia County Superior Court Judge on January 10, 2024. Judge Fleming expressed his

**Special Recognition – Barry Fleming (cont’d):** gratitude to the Mayor and Council for the Certificate of Appreciation plaque and for allowing him to represent the City of Harlem.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

**Consider Appointment of City Attorney:** Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to appoint Adam Nelson as the City Attorney; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Appointment of URA Board of Directors:** Mayor Whitaker recommended Steven Pokrywka to fill the vacant seat of Gary Holley on the Urban Redevelopment Agency Board of Directors. Mr. Pokrywka has a background in development. Mayor Whitaker introduced Mr. Pokrywka to Council. Mr. Pokrywka gave a brief history of his background. Councilmember Thigpen made a motion to appoint Steven Pokrywka to serve on the URA Board of Directors; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Proclamation – STAR Student Teacher Recognition Day:** Mayor Whitaker presented the Proclamation for the STAR Student Teacher Recognition Day. The STAR Student Teacher program for this year is on Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. to be held at the Harlem Baptist Church Fellowship Hall. This is the 63<sup>rd</sup> year of the program and is sponsored by the Harlem Women’s Club. Councilmember Bellavance made the motion to approve the Proclamation for the STAR Student Teacher Achievement Recognition Day as presented; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Adoption of the Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan:** Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to approve the adoption of the Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Adoption of the CCFR Medical Protocols and EMT Training for Fire Department Personnel:** Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the adoption of the CCFR Medical Protocols and EMT Training for the Fire Department Personnel; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. DISCUSSION: Councilmember Thigpen commented he had a lengthy discussion with Assistant Fire Chief Kevin Stokes and all his questions were answered. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Ordinance 2401 An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 106 Historic Preservation; Sec. 106-25(c)(3) Regarding Terms of Office – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading & Action:** Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to approve the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of Ordinance 2401 an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 106 Historic Preservation, Sec. 106-25 (c)(3) Regarding Terms of Office; 2<sup>nd</sup> By Councilmember Thigpen. DISCUSSION: The ordinance is still being

NEW BUSINESS (cont'd):

**Consider Ordinance 2401 An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 106 Historic Preservation; Sec. 106-25(c)(3) Regarding Terms of Office – 1st Reading & Action (cont'd):** reviewed to amend the wordage. This ordinance will come back for a 2nd reading with the amendment. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Setting a Date & Time for Quarterly Work Session and Topics for Discussion:** Councilmember Thigpen made a motion to approve Friday, February 16, 2024, for the Quarterly Work Session; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Public Comment:**

Terry Norman – 770 Payne Drive, Harlem, GA: Mr. Norman introduced himself to the Council and stated he is a candidate for the Columbia County Coroner.

**Reports:**

- **Council:** No reports.
- **Mayor:** Mayor Whitaker reported the Christmas Festival was beautiful and she appreciated all the work that went into the festival. Mayor Whitaker commented that she attended the Harlem Merchants Association (HMA) meeting recently and the HMA ShamRock-N-Roll festival with the golf cart parade will be in March.
- **Department Reports:** No reports.

**Announcements:**

February 6	Planning & Zoning Meeting; 6:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
February 8	STAR Student Program; 6:00 p.m.; HBC Family Life Center, 155 S. Louisville St.
February 8	Historic Preservation Commission Meeting; 6:30 p.m.; Public Safety Building
February 14	Urban Redevelopment Agency meeting; 9:00 a.m.; City Hall
February 16	City Council Quarterly Work Session; 8:30 a.m.; City Hall
February 19	City Offices closed in observance of President's Day
February 22	City Council Work Session; 7:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
February 26	City Council Regular Meeting; 7:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building

**Other:**

**Easement Agreement – 275 Recreation Drive; Taylor and Kristen Camp:** Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the Purchase and Sale Agreement between Taylor and Kristen Camp and the City of Harlem and to execute the Easement for 275 Recreation Drive; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Amendment for the City Manager's Contract to include Pay Increase:** Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the Amendment to the City Manager's Contract to include a pay increase; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Reeves. DISCUSSION: Mayor Whitaker commented in the original contract for City Manager Moore there was nothing placed in the contract to compensate for pay increases. The City Manager has not received an increase in three years. Mayor Whitaker apologized to City Manager Moore for this oversight. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Executive Session:** Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to go into Executive Session; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. Executive Session opened at 7:24 p.m. City Attorney Adam Nelson attended the Executive Session.

Councilmember Reeves made the motion to come out of Executive Session; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. Executive Session closed at 8:19 p.m.

City Attorney Watkins reported that there were four personnel matters and one legal matter 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; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Thigpen. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

With there being nothing further before Council for discussion, Councilmember Bellavance made the motion to adjourn the meeting; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leona H. Holley,  
City Clerk