

The City Council of the City of Harlem, Georgia met for their Regular Meeting on Monday, February 26, 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 Will Dasher; MEDIA: Skylar Andrews, The Augusta Press.

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 Dasher.

**Approval of the Agenda:** Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the Agenda 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.

**Approval of the Minutes:** Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to approve the following Minutes as written:

- Called Council Meeting; Thursday, January 11, 2024
- Work Session & Executive Session; Thursday, January 18, 2024
- Regular Council Meeting & Executive Session; Monday, January 22, 2024

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

**Consider Ordinance 2401 An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 16 Historic Preservation; Sec. 106-25(c)(3) Regarding Terms of Office and Sec. 106-29 (e) Terms of Appointment – 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading & Action:** City Manager Moore reported this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of Ordinance 2401. This ordinance is amending the term limits of the HPC (Historic Preservation Commission) from a three-year term to one year term. Terms shall begin on the first day of January and end upon the swearing-in of the individual assuming that Member's seat the subsequent year. A new section has been added for the new rotation for the existing Members. There are a couple of Members whose terms will end in June 2024, they will be reappointed to a six-month term to serve out the remainder of the year until an appointment is made in January for a Member to occupy that seat and serve a full one-year term. One Member term will end in June 2026, if the Member decides to serve the Member will be reappointed to a six-month term to serve out the remainder of the year, then reappointed in January. After no further discussion, Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to approve the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of Ordinance 2401 An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 16 Historic Preservation, Sec. 106-25 (c)(3) Regarding Terms of Office and Sec. 106-29(e) Terms of Appointment; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Approval of Encroachment Agreement for 375 N Louisville Street; Map & Parcel H02 036 with Lee Ann Meyer:** City Manager Moore reported an Encroachment Agreement is needed for the property at 375 N. Louisville Street, the Harlem Civic Center. The City is looking to sale the property and during the

NEW BUSINESS:

**Consider Approval of Encroachment Agreement for 375 N Louisville Street; Map & Parcel H02 036 with Lee Ann Meyer (cont'd):** review process staff found the corner of the Civic Center building is encroaching on Ms. Lee Ann Meyers property by 17 sq. ft. In order to get a clear title, an easement is needed. Whoever purchases the property the easement will follow the property. If someone wanted to take the building down or alter it, the easement would go away. City Manager Moore spoke with Ms. Meyer, and she was in approval. Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the Encroachment Agreement for 375 N. Louisville Street, Map & Parcel H02 036 with Lee Ann Meyer; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. Discussion: The City is looking to rezone the property; this will go to the Planning Commission in April for a recommendation for approval, then it will go in front of Council at April's meeting. Mayor Whitaker asked if the City would handle the sale of the property or if a realtor would manage it; City Manager Moore replied based on a prior meeting the sale of the property will be managed by the City. After no further discussion, the motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Temporary Alcohol Permit – Harlem Merchant's Association – Shamrock & Roll Special Event – March 16, 2024:** City Manager Moore reported the Harlem Merchant's Association (HMA) submitted a Temporary Alcohol Permit Application for the Shamrock & Roll Special Event to be held on March 16, 2024. There have been no issues at the prior events that HMA has held. City Manager Moore stated she sent a letter to GDOT (Georgia Department of Transportation) requesting for a portion of Highway 221 to W. Forrest Street to be closed for the Golf Cart Parade that HMA is having for the Shamrock & Roll Event; she has received the approval from GDOT (Georgia Department of Transportation) for the Golf Cart Parade. With no further discussion, Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the Temporary Alcohol Permit for the Harlem Merchant's Association Shamrock & Roll Special Event on March 16, 2024; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Bellavance. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. City Manager Moore will send the approval of the permit and the parade to Ms. McNaylor and Police Chief Lewis.

**Consider Temporary Alcohol Permit – Harlem High School Alumni Association – Legend's on the Lawn Event – April 27, 2024:** City Manager Moore explained the Harlem High School Alumni Association is having a fundraiser to help with scholarships for high school seniors and they have submitted a Temporary Alcohol Permit Application for the event. The Legend's on the Lawn Event will recognize alumni that have contributed to the community. They will have a cocktail hour, dinner, speeches, and awards. A Temporary Alcohol Permit is required for the event. Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the Temporary Alcohol Permit for the Harlem High School Alumni Association Legend's on the Lawn Event April 27, 2024; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Resolution 2024-01 A Resolution to Amend the City Personnel Policy Sec. 16 Holidays Item (c) and Item (d) Regarding Hours Paid:** City Manager Moore currently reported the Public Safety Department (Police and Fire) employees are being paid their normal work hours whether they were scheduled to work or not work. This resolution is to amend the holiday pay for the Public Safety Departments (Police and Fire) and will affect a 40-hour employee if they must work on a holiday. If an employee had to work on the

NEW BUSINESS (cont'd)

**Consider Resolution 2024-01 A Resolution to Amend the City Personnel Policy Sec. 16 Holidays Item (c) and Item (d) Regarding Hours Paid (cont'd):** holiday, they would receive hour for hour for the holiday in addition to their regular pay for every hour worked on the holiday. The Public Safety Employees (Police and Fire) who work shifts and are not scheduled to work on the actual calendar holiday shall receive pay equal to eight hours of regular pay. After no further discussion, Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve Resolution 2024-01 A resolution to amend the City Personnel Policy Sec. 16 Holidays Item (c) and item (d) regarding hours paid; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Resolution 2024-02 A Resolution to Approve the Surplus of City Equipment – Fire Department:** City Manager Moore reported after discussion on the surplus of the Turn Out Gear at Work Session Thursday night, she amended Resolution 2024-02 by removing “Evans High School Firefighter Pathway Program” and replacing it with “CCBOE Firefighter Pathway Program”. The following items has been requested for surplus by the Fire Department:

- Sceptar 2 Pagers and Chargers (14) and a Motorola Minitor 2 pager and Charger that are still operational and can be donated to other fire departments (Schedule “A”)
- Sceptar 2 Pagers (5) and Chargers (8) that are no longer operational and will be destroyed (Schedule “A”)
- Out of Service Turn Out Gear to include Coats, Pants, and Boots and will be donated to the CCBOE Firefighter Pathway Program (Schedule “B”)

Councilmember Bellavance made the motion to approve Resolution 2024-02 a Resolution to Approve the Surplus of City Equipment – Fire Department; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Resolution 2024-03 A Resolution to Approve the Reimbursement of the Balance in the Revolving Loan Fund to the State of Georgia Department of Community Affairs:** City Manager Moore proposed to reimburse the balance in the Revolving Loan Fund to the State of Georgia Department of Community Affairs due to the City not being in compliance. The funds were from a 2009 Employment Incentive Program Grant for an economic development project for the financing of equipment purchased by Lucky Lady Pecans, Gifts & More; the grant was a grant to produce employment. One of the requirements is to do a loan every five years and the City has not done another loan. For the City to be in compliance with the Department of Community Affairs, the City needs to reimburse the funds. Once the City reimburses the Revolving Loan Fund and if there is a need for another loan, we will be in compliance. The balance in the fund as of January 31, 2024, was \$112,510.47 and additional interest will be added through February 29, 2024. After no further discussion, Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve Resolution 2024-03 A Resolution to Approve the Reimbursement of the Balance in the Revolving Loan Fund to the State of Georgia Department of Community Affairs; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Approval of the Harlem City Park Policies & Procedures, Fee Schedule, Rental Form, etc. – Effective March 1, 2024:** This is a proposal for Policies, Procedures, and Fee Schedule for the Harlem City Park. City Manager Moore stated City Attorney Nelson and herself are working on the rental form with a

NEW BUSINESS (cont'd)

**Consider Approval of the Harlem City Park Policies & Procedures, Fee Schedule, Rental Form, etc. – Effective March 1, 2024 (cont'd):** with a waiver. Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the Harlem City Park Policies and Procedures, Fee Schedule, and Rental Form; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. DISCUSSION: Councilmember Thigpen commented after the time changes for the spring/summer there will be a need to charge for rental of the fields with the lights; City Manager Moore explained she is going by what Columbia County Parks and Recreation were charging for the park. She is not sure when the lights are coming on, it has been reported lights are being turned on and they stay on for a while. This is a starting point, and if something needs to be discussed or changed, we can bring it back to look for further review. City Manager Moore explained our Public Works Director is working very diligently to make sure the lights are working correctly. He has spoken with a couple of the Police Officers in regard to the park, and has shown them the timer, how to turn the lights off manually and has given them a key to the timer. Councilmember Thigpen stated another problem that might happen is where people think the fields are first come first serve; City Manager Moore replied whenever someone reserves the field, they will receive a receipt to show they have reserved the field. After no further discussion, the motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Consider Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement – Renewal – Effective March 1, 2024 to March 1, 2028:** City Manager Moore reported the current Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement expires on March 1, 2024. This is a four-year agreement for the term of March 1, 2024 to March 1, 2028. This agreement is between Columbia County, GEMA (Georgia Emergency Management Agency) and the City. Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement renewal effective March 1, 2024 to March 1, 2028; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Public Comment:**

- Russell Ingram – 155 W. Forrest Street – Potential Use of Land by FFA: Addressed Council pertaining to his property at 155 W. Forrest Street which was formerly owned by his grandparents Mr. and Mrs. Jack Hatcher. Mr. Ingram would like to honor his grandparents by starting a Community Garden and to partner with Harlem High School's FFA (Future Farmers of America). This would allow for agricultural education-related purposes. Mayor Whitaker commented that Mr. Ingram will need to speak with the Principal at the Harlem High School or someone from the Board of Education to get approval to allow the FFA students to do this.

**Reports:**

- **Council:** None.
- **Mayor:** Mayor Whitaker reported City Manager Moore and herself meet with Johnson, Laschober & Associates (JLA) on the redesigning and renovations of the Harlem City Park; they will be providing a basic plan of what is needed for the park as well as an expanded plan. JLA have asked for a stakeholder committee to be formed to help with insight into what is needed for the park.

**Reports (cont'd):**

Mayor Whitaker reported she forwarded the Columbia County Consolidation Corporation Report to Council.

- **Department Reports:** City Manager Moore reported she has received the renewal information on the city's health insurance and there is no increase on the medical; there will be a small increase on the dental. City Manager Moore reported Ms. Reynolds with Johnson, Laschober & Associates reached out to her asking for several items and information; the information that was requested was for plats and information for the utilities, these items have been provided.

**Announcements:**

March 5	Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting; 6:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
March 13	Urban Redevelopment Agency Meeting; 9:00 a.m.; City Hall
March 14	Historic Preservation Commission Meeting; 6:30 p.m.; Public Safety Building
March 21	City Council Work Session; 7:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
March 25	City Council Regular Meeting; 7:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building

Mayor Whitaker announced the following community events:

March 9	Small Business Expo – sponsored by Amber King; Harlem Library Plaza
March 16	HMA's Shamrock & Roll; Harlem Library Plaza
March 30	Harlem Hoppenings – sponsored by Impact Church; Harlem City Park

**Other:**

**Consider HPC Commission Appointment:** Mayor Whitaker made a recommendation to appoint Brett Rogers to serve on the Historic Preservation Commission. Mr. Rogers has been a resident of Harlem since July 2018 and is a history teacher. Mayor Whitaker welcomed and thanked Mr. Rogers for attending tonight's meeting. Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to appoint Brett Rogers to the Historic Preservation Commission; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Executive Session:** N/A

With there being nothing further for discussion, Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to adjourn the meeting; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Bellavance. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leona H. Holley  
City Clerk