

The City Council of the City of Harlem, Georgia met for their Regular Meeting on Monday, March 25, 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 Al Reeves, and Councilmember John Thigpen; STAFF: City Manager Debra Moore, City Clerk Leona Holley, and City Attorney Tom Watkins; MEDIA: Skylar Andrews, The Augusta Press.

The Work Session 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 Whitaker asked for a motion to table item #7, “Consider Garbage Contract Extension Proposal with Coastal Waste & Recycling” for further information. Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the Agenda with the tabling of Item #7 “Consider Garbage Contract extension Proposal with Coastal Waste & Recycling”; 2nd 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:

- Council Quarterly Work Session & Executive Sessions; Friday, February 16, 2024
- Work Session & Executive Session; Thursday, February 22, 2024
- Regular Council Meeting; Monday, February 26, 2024

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

Alison Couch, District 4 County Commissioner – Quarterly Update: Commissioner Couch gave a quarterly update for Columbia County District 4:

- Incorporation/Consolidation will likely not go through Legislative Session in Atlanta this time and the county will continue to explore questions and details for the incorporation/consolidation.
- Paving Projects – Resurfacing of Harlem-Grovetown Road is set to start in 2024; this is for outside the city limits of Harlem. North Fairview Drive is expected to be repaved in late summer of 2024; this will extend into the city limits.
- Wrightsboro Road and Louisville Road – adding right turn lanes to help with congestion. Data has been pulled for accidents at the intersection and the county has agreed there is a safety issue in this area.
- Clary Cut Road/Old Union/N. Fairview Dr./Hwy 221 – the project design for the realignment is being worked on. Commissioner Couch stated she has been presented a couple drafts of the project but nothing to bring back to the city yet.
- Vision 2035 Plan – The review for the Plan is every 5 years and this will start in the next budget cycle for the county. The plan is for the growth and development of Columbia County. The county will be reaching out to the city and general public to get input to help develop the plan.
- Revitalization of Gordon Highway – Looking at bringing water and sewer to Gordon Highway.
- Multi-purpose Park – The county is still searching for land for the multi-purpose park.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Consider Beer & Wine License Application for Family Dollar: Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the Beer & Wine License Application for Family Dollar; 2nd by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. DISCUSSION: City Manager Moore stated the Family Dollar applicant, Clifford Thomasson, is in attendance as well as Decisions Consultant Tommy Jackson if Council has any questions. Councilmember Thigpen stated there are concerns from the residence on N. Hicks Street of seeing people drink in the parking lot and asked if there are any plans for a barrier or privacy fence being placed behind the building at Family Dollar. Consultant Jackson replied he consulted with the Corporate Office on the concerns from Council's Work Session. They want to work with the local law enforcement and have them police the parking lot, but there will be no drinking because the Beer & Wine License is for off-premises consumption. Mr. Jackson stated the corporate office is willing to do what is needed. City Manager Moore stated the privacy fence that is on the property now is beside a residential structure; the city would like a privacy fence to be put up behind the Family Dollar building to tie in with the existing fence. Mr. Jackson stated he is waiting to hear back from the corporate office on the fence. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Consider an IGA with Columbia County for the Delivery of the "Clary Cut Road – Old Union Road Alignment with Roundabout on 221" – Approved Band 3 TIA 2 Project: Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve the IGA with Columbia County for the Delivery of the "Clary Cut Road-Old Union Road Alignment with Roundabout on 221"; 2nd by Councilmember Reeves. DISCUSSION: City Manager Moore stated the IGA is for Columbia County to be able to deliver the project for the City of Harlem. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Consider Proclamation for the Recognition of the Month of April 2024 as Harlem Safe Digging Month: Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to approve the Proclamation for the Recognition of the Month of April 2024 as Harlem Safe Digging Month; 2nd by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Consider Proclamation – Arbor Day April 26, 2024 in the City of Harlem: Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to approve the Proclamation for Arbor Day, April 26, 2024, in the City of Harlem; 2nd by Councilmember Thigpen. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Consider Resolution 2024-04 A Resolution Recognizing April 21 – 27, 2024 as Georgia Cities Week: Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve Resolution 2024-04 A Resolution recognizing April 21 – 27, 2024 as Georgia Cities Week; 2nd by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

NEW BUSINESS (cont'd):

Consider Resolution 2024-05 A Resolution to Approve FYE 12/31/2023 Interdepartmental Budget Amendments & Additional Amendments for the Park and Public Works Building Projects:

Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve Resolution 2024-05 A Resolution to approve the FYE 12/31/2023 Interdepartmental Budget Amendments and Additional Amendments for the Park and Public Works Building Projects; 2nd by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. DISCUSSION: City Manager Moore stated this is for the purchase of the North Harlem Elementary school property for the park.

Consider Garbage Contract Extension Proposal with Coastal Waste & Recycling: Item was tabled. Mayor Whitaker encouraged the Council if they have questions or concerns to forward them to City Manager Moore.

Consider Resolution 2024-06 A Resolution to Approve FYE 12/31/2023 Interdepartmental Budget Amendments of the ARP-SLFRF Fund: Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to approve Resolution 2024-06 A Resolution to approve the FYE 12/31/2023 Interdepartmental Budget Amendments of the ARP-SLFRF Fund; 2nd by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

Public Comment: None.

Reports:

- **Council Reports:** N/A
- **Mayor Report:** Mayor Whitaker reported the HMA Shamrock & Roll had a good turnout. The Small Business Expo was cancelled due to the weather. The Harlem High School baseball program honored the 50th Anniversary of the 1974 State Baseball Championship team, as well as teams from 1978, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1983, and 2023 at the Harlem High School baseball field Saturday, March 23rd.
- **Department Reports:** City Manager Moore reported the Walking Trail sign has been ordered for. She has reached out to the Cemetery Board Committee to let them know the city is looking at placing bollards up for the three openings that comes into the city park from the cemetery; they are aware the city is looking at doing this within the next month. Public Works Superintendent Octavious Beard is getting quotes on the bollards.

Announcements:

April 2	Planning & Zoning Meeting; 6:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
April 4	Historic Preservation Commission Meeting; 6:30 p.m.; Public Safety Building
April 10	Urban Redevelopment Agency Meeting; 9:00 a.m.; City Hall
April 18	District 7 Spring Meeting; 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.; Enterprise Mill at 1450 Greene St., Suite 600, Augusta
April 18	City Council Work Session; 7:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
April 21-27	Georgia Cities Week; Librarian Amanda Ham is working on a Storybook Walk for Georgia Cities Week

Announcements (cont'd):

April 22 City Council Regular Meeting; 7:00 p.m.; Public Safety Building
April 26 Arbor Day; Walking Trail; time will be announced closer to date

Executive Session: Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to go into Executive Session; 2nd by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. Executive Session opened at 7:29 p.m.

Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to come out of Executive Session; 2nd by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. Executive Session closed at 8:49 p.m.

City Attorney Watkins reported there were two personnel matters and two legal 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 Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

With there being nothing further for discussion, Councilmember Reeves made the motion to adjourn the meeting; 2nd by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leona H. Holley
City Clerk