

MEETING MINUTES
July 18, 2023

The members of the City Council of the City of Phenix City, Alabama met in a regularly scheduled council meeting on Tuesday, July 18, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers located within the Public Safety Building at 1111 Broad Street, Phenix City, Alabama 36867. Upon roll call, the following members of Council were present: Councilmember Arthur L. Day, Jr., Councilmember Vickey F. Carter, Councilmember Steve Bailey, Councilmember R. Griff Gordy, and Mayor Eddie N. Lowe. Also present were City Manager Wallace Hunter, City Attorney Jimmy Graham, and City Clerk Melony Lee.

Upon a quorum being established, Mayor Lowe called the meeting to order.

Pastor Don Abrams of Trinity United Methodist Church delivered the invocation as listed on the agenda.

Councilmember Bailey led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag.

Mayor Lowe called upon City Manager Wallace Hunter and Public Safety Director Ray Smith to introduce the new Chief of Police. Chief Smith reflected on his years of being the Chief of Police and explained the duties of a chief and his role as the Public Safety Director. Chief Smith introduced the new Chief of Police, George Staudinger. Chief Staudinger came forward to accept the position. Chief Staudinger was sworn in as the Chief of Police. Chief Staudinger thanked Mayor, Council, City Manager Wallace Hunter and Chief Smith for entrusting him as the new Chief of Police. Chief Staudinger stated that he is truly humbled and honored to accept the position and he will not take it lightly. Chief Staudinger also stated that he will lead the Police Department to the best of his ability. Mayor and Council congratulated Chief Staudinger.

City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that it has been an honor for him to watch the City grow and see employees train, grow, acquire, and succeed in higher positions. Mr. Hunter also stated that Public Safety Director Ray Smith has always wanted to be a police officer and has done a great job as the Police Chief. Mr. Hunter further stated that Phenix City has grown and will continue to grow with Chief Smith as Public Safety Director and Chief Staudinger as Chief of Police. Mr. Hunter stated that Assistant City Manager Steve Smith and Assistant Police Chief Gail Green Gilliam both passed away in 2020. Mr. Hunter also stated that positions had to be filled. Mr. Hunter further stated that Mr. Gamble has worked with the City for eleven years on the City's Attorney team. Mr. Hunter stated that before he introduces the new Assistant City Manager Chan Gamble, he would like for City Attorney Jimmy Graham and City Attorney James McKoon to speak on Mr. Gamble's new position with the City. Mr. Graham stated that Mr. Gamble loves his family and Phenix City. Mr. Graham also stated that Mr. Gamble is smart and a hard worker and will be a great asset to the City. Mr. McKoon congratulated Mr. Gamble on his new position. Mr. McKoon stated that he has had the pleasure of working with Mr. Gamble at their law office. Mr. McKoon also stated that he agrees with Mr. Graham that the City has gained a great asset. Mr. McKoon encouraged young adults to always surround themselves with people that will make them a better person. Mr. McKoon stated that is what Mr. Gamble has done for him and because of Mr. Gamble, he is a better lawyer and a better person. Mr. McKoon stated that he is so proud of Mr. Gamble and will miss him at the law office. Mr. Gamble came forward and thanked Mr. Hunter, Mayor, Council, Mr. Graham and Mr. McKoon for the opportunity to become the Assistant City Manager. Mr. Gamble stated that he is excited to continue to work with Phenix City and be a part of a great team. Mayor and Council congratulated Mr. Gamble on his new position.

Mayor Lowe presented the regularly scheduled meeting minutes of the July 3, 2023 Work Session and the regularly scheduled meeting minutes of the July 3, 2023 Council Meeting for approval. Councilmember Day moved to approve the minutes, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordy. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe stated there was no unfinished business to address at this time.

Mayor Lowe presented a Resolution No. 2023-139 to be ratified in reference to the purchase of Five (5) 2023 Ford Expedition Patrol vehicles purchased under State Contract T191L from Stivers Ford Lincoln, Montgomery, Alabama in the total amount of \$278,775.00.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-139

Councilmember Carter moved to ratify the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Bailey. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented a resolution in reference to authorizing Alabama Power Company to install two (2) 53 Watt LED Street Lights (5,200 – 7,200 Lumens – Type II – Gray) on 14th Place.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-140

Councilmember Day moved to approve the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordy. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented a resolution in reference to granting additional feet of existing easement to Georgia Power Company to better maintain the power lines located along the Chattahoochee River north of the end of the Riverwalk:

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-141

Councilmember Gordy moved to approve the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Bailey. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented a resolution in reference to authorizing and directing the Mayor to enter into a Supplemental Agreement No. 2 for Utility Relocation and Construction with ALDOT for the Bridge Replacement on Seale Road over Cochgalechee Creek BIN 004291; Project No. STPPC-5717(252):

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-142

Councilmember Day moved to approve the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordy. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded:

YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None.
ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented a resolution in reference to authorizing the Mayor and City Manager to accept a proposal from Sain & Associates to provide Engineering and Inspection services for the resurfacing of Knowles Road / 4th Place and 43rd Street; Project No. STPPC-5721(250).

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-143

Councilmember Day moved to approve the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Carter. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented a resolution in reference to making application to the Bureau of Justice Assistance for the 2023 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) for financial assistance.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-144

Councilmember Carter moved to approve the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordy. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented a resolution in reference to authorizing and directing the Mayor, City Manager, and Police Chief to sign an MOU Agreement with Sexual Assault Support Center, Inc. dba The Center at 909.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-145

Councilmember Day moved to approve the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Bailey. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented a resolution in reference to entering into a Mutual Aid Agreement with Fort Moore for required support or services during an emergency or disaster.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-146

Councilmember Day moved to approve the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordy. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented two (2) Resolutions and Public Notices in reference to setting public hearing dates and fixing demolitions costs associated with the following properties located in Phenix City:

1. 708 Williams Avenue

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-147
PUBLIC NOTICE

2. 1205 2nd Street South

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-148
PUBLIC NOTICE

Councilmember Day moved to approve the resolutions and Public Notices, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Bailey. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented a resolution in reference to declaring personal property as surplus and disposing of for the nominal sum of \$1.00 and other valuable considerations to Battalion Chief Tommy G. Cox in recognition of his 25 years of public service.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-149

Councilmember Gordy moved to approve the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Carter. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented a resolution in reference to authorizing and directing the Mayor, City Manager, and the Police Chief to enter into a Mutual Aid Agreement with the City of Auburn, Alabama, for Professional Services utilizing both police departments.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-150

Councilmember Day moved to approve the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordy. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe declared that now was the time and place for a public hearing in reference to an Ordinance to Amend the Code of Ordinances of the City of Phenix City, Alabama, Chapter 14 – Buildings and Building Regulations; Article II Technical Codes; Division 1 Generally; Sec. 14-23 Adopted; Division 2 – Electrical Code; Sec. 14-57 – National Electrical Code Adopted by Reference; and Chapter 30 – Fire Prevention and Protection; Sec. 30-3 - International Fire Code Adopted. Mayor Lowe stated anyone wishing to address council regarding this ordinance should come forward and do so at this time. Neither hearing nor seeing anyone come forward to address council, Mayor Lowe declared the public hearing closed.

Mayor Lowe presented for second reading an ordinance to Amend the Code of Ordinances of the City of Phenix City, Alabama, Chapter 14 – Buildings and Building Regulations; Article II Technical Codes; Division 1 Generally; Sec. 14-23 Adopted; Division 2 – Electrical Code; Sec. 14-57 – National Electrical Code Adopted by Reference; and Chapter 30 – Fire Prevention and Protection; Sec. 30-3 - International Fire Code Adopted.

ORDINANCE NO. 2023-09

Councilmember Day moved to approve the ordinance, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordy. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAIN: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented one opening on the Equalization Board. Mayor Lowe stated that there were three nominations, Gerry Strong, Regina Mitchell, and John Kendricks. Mayor Lowe called for a motion. Councilmember Gordy moved to approve the three nominations of Gerry Strong, Regina Mitchell, and John Kendricks, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Carter. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented one opening on the Phenix City Public Building Authority. Mayor Lowe stated that current member Courtney Pritchett is willing to serve another term. Mayor Lowe called for a motion. Councilmember Day moved to reappoint Courtney Pritchett, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Bailey. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

Mayor Lowe presented for second reading an Application for an Off-Premise Beer License and Off-Premise Wine License, submitted by Family Dollar Stores of Alabama, LLC dba Family Dollar Store #30424 located at 1710 Crawford Road, Phenix City, Alabama. Councilmember Carter moved to approve the applications, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordy. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

City Attorney Jimmy Graham presented a claim against the City of Phenix City, filed by Jimmy Weaver. City Attorney Graham stated that the claim states that on December 8, 2022 and April 6, 2023 Mr. Weaver experienced sewer backup that overflowed into his yard due to a stoppage in the City's sanitary main. City Attorney Graham recommended approving the claim in the amount of \$250.00 due to the City having no knowledge of the stoppage at Mr. Weaver's residence in December 2022 and discovering a blockage in April 2023. Councilmember Day moved to approve the City Attorney's recommendation to approve the claim in the amount of \$250.00, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordy. Upon said motion being put to a vote, the following vote was recorded: YEAS: Councilmembers Day, Carter, Bailey, Gordy, and Mayor Lowe. NAYS: None. ABSTAINS: None. The motion thus passed.

City Manager Wallace Hunter called upon Human Resources Director Stephanie Chastain, City Engineer Angel Moore, Fire Chief Kris Kennedy and Chief of Police George Staudinger to give a synopsis on the nation's labor shortage and how it is affecting Phenix City.

Human Resources Director Stephanie Chastain stated Alabama has one of the highest worker shortages Nation-wide. Ms. Chastain reviewed the noted causes of the workforce shortage since the Covid 19 Pandemic. Ms. Chastain stated that because of the City's workforce shortage, it may take longer than usual for some departments to complete task around the City. Councilmember Day thanked Ms. Chastain for the update. Councilmember Day encouraged Citizens to be patient if it takes longer for service request to be completed.

City Engineer, Angel Moore, stated that the Public Works Department has twenty one vacant positions. Ms. Moore also stated that the department is in need of licensed CDL drivers. Ms. Moore stated that the CDL drivers are the ones that operate the asphalt trucks and limbs and debris truck and items cannot be picked up or roads repaired without the CDL drivers. Councilmember Day asked if the City is getting any help from the State to cut grass on the City's Right of Ways. Ms. Moore stated that the City has not received any help from the State. Councilmember Bailey asked if CDL drivers are paid at a higher wage. Ms. Moore stated that CDL drivers are paid at a higher rate.

Fire Chief Kris Kennedy stated that the Fire Department is short eleven positions total. Chief Kennedy also stated that seven of those positions are line positions that respond to emergency calls and the other four are administrative positions. Chief Kennedy further stated that the Fire Department has a recruiting school that is scheduled to start in August. Councilmember Day asked for an update on the building of the City's new training facility. Chief Kennedy stated that the project is coming along very well but she does not have an estimated date of completion. Councilmember Bailey stated that the right people will need to be in the right position in order for positions to be filled and remain filled.

Chief of Police George Staudinger stated that the Police Department is allotted to have ninety three sworn officers but currently the department has sixty five which means they are short twenty eight sworn officers. Chief Staudinger also stated that two candidates are in training but three current officers are in line to retire within the next year. Chief Staudinger also stated that the department is short four dispatchers as well. Chief Staudinger further stated the City has the best retirement and the best benefits package available to employees. Chief Staudinger stated that the Police Department's salary is competitive to other Cities similar in size to Phenix City.

City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that it is important that the Citizens understand what position Phenix City is in concerning the workforce. Mayor Lowe stated that the City is not making excuses but wanted to explain the position that we are in and asked for understanding.

Councilmember Carter congratulated Police Chief Staudinger and Assistant City Manager Chan Gamble on their new positions. Councilmember Carter thanked Chief Staudinger and Mr. Gamble for their continued service to the community. Councilmembers Day, Bailey and Gordy all congratulated Police Chief Staudinger and Assistant City Manager Chan Gamble and thanked them for their service. Councilmember Bailey thanked all City Employees for what they do for the City.

Councilmember Gordy stated that Phenix City had three youth baseball teams that participated in the 2023 USSSA World Series. Councilmember Gordy also stated that the 10U team placed as runner-ups in their division and the 9U All Star Team is the 2023 USSSA World Series Champions.

Todd Hughes, Parks and Recreation Director, stated that for Phenix City's 100 year celebration, the City will have a celebration on August 9, 2023 with a concert that starts at 7:00p.m.

Mayor Lowe stated that Phenix City is a great place to live and work. Mayor Lowe challenged Citizens to build their City up and not tear it down. Mayor Lowe encouraged everyone to support one another and to be a lifter and not a leaner.

Mayor Lowe thanked CTV-Beam for following the Council to different locations and for bringing the council meeting to the Citizens of Phenix City, Alabama.

There being no further business to address, the meeting thus adjourned until August 1, 2023.