

**WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES  
October 16, 2023**

The members of the City Council of the City of Phenix City, Alabama met at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time for the regularly scheduled Work Session on Monday, October 16, 2023, in the Council Chambers located within the Public Safety Building at 1111 Broad Street, Phenix City, Alabama 36867. Upon roll call, the following members 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, Assistant City Manager Chan Gamble, City Clerk Office Manager Shannon Davis, and City Attorney Jimmy Graham. Department Heads in attendance: City Engineer Angel Moore, Finance Director Labrita King-Copeland, Fire Chief Kristen Kennedy, Golf Manager Mike Barber, Human Resource Director Stephanie Chastain, IT Director Mike Bauer, Library Director Tammy Henry, Municipal Court Clerk Ruby White, Parks and Recreation Director Todd Hughes, Public Safety Director Ray Smith, Police Chief George Staudinger, Utilities Director Charles Woody and Graduate Engineer John Spraggins.

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

Councilmember Gordy led the invocation.

Mayor Lowe called upon Renee D. Alford to address Council, as listed on the agenda. Ms. Alford came forward to address Council. Ms. Alford stated that she is representing the neighborhood of Raven Oaks on Misty Forest Drive in Phenix City and would like to speak on the speeding and reckless driving that has been occurring on their segment of the road. Ms. Alford also stated that the posted speed limit is 25 miles per hour which is frequently ignored. Ms. Alford further stated that the lack of sidewalks makes the stretch of road even more dangerous and places family's safety at a higher risk. Ms. Alford stated that very recently, there were brick mailboxes that were knocked down by the speeding vehicles and some of the residents have had their mailboxes hit several times. Ms. Alford also stated that she is addressing Council out of concern for the safety of the residents and the children that live on this street. Ms. Alford further stated that they would like to have speed bumps installed on the road and that the residents are willing to pay for the cost. Director of Engineering Angel Moore provided a map that shows the areas of the subdivision that are annexed into the City. Ms. Moore stated that Alabama State Law states that there must be an annex on both sides of the road for the City to be able to take over the maintenance of the right of way and that currently only one side has been annexed into the City limits. Ms. Moore also stated that she will contact Russell County Engineer Shawn Blakely to discuss what the County and the City can do to address these issues. Ms. Moore further stated that she will contact Ms. Alford once she has spoken with County Engineer Shawn Blakely. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the City will not put speed bumps on the road. Ms. Moore stated that the City is not allowed to place speed bumps on City Streets as they could potentially cause damage to emergency vehicles and cause accidents. Councilmember Day stated that he was recently in that area and noticed a mailbox that had been knocked down and he explained to the resident that it was the County's responsibility to address the issue. Police Chief George Staudinger stated he was sorry that Ms. Alford is having to deal with these issues in her neighborhood. Chief Staudinger also stated that if it was a City maintained road that the City will not put down speed bumps for liability reasons. Chief Staudinger further stated that he is not going to give excuses but rather look for solutions to assist with these issues. Chief Staudinger stated that the solution includes enforcement and collaboration with the City Police Department, Russell County Officers, Sheriff and Alabama State Troopers. Chief Staudinger also stated that they would concentrate their efforts to try and get the neighborhood some relief from the speeding.

Chief Staudinger further stated that they had placed flashing speed signs in residential and school areas to help with the common problem throughout the City of speeding. Chief Staudinger stated that he will look into adding one of the flashing speed signs to Misty Drive and that it will flash when they are speeding over the threshold that they can set which is currently 25 miles per hour. Chief Staudinger also stated the signs have the ability to take a picture so that the Police Department can try and determine who is speeding. Chief Staudinger further stated that he hopes the signs will deter speeders and give them some relief. Chief Staudinger stated that the signs will provide a time that the speeding is occurring and that this will help the Police Department narrow down the times to be able to concentrate their efforts during those peak periods. Chief Staudinger also stated that outside of the City limits, the City's Police Officers are not allowed by State Law to issue speeding tickets, but that they can issue tickets for other offenses like reckless driving and reckless endangerment and these are some areas that they can address the speeding issues. Chief Staudinger further stated that they were aware of the issues to an extent but not to the level that it is currently ongoing and that he has done some research that shows there have been seven mailboxes hit in the last 15 years. Councilmember Gordy asked if the County Engineer mentioned anything regarding the maintenance of the road. Chief Staudinger stated that he is doubtful that the County will allow speedbumps but that he has not yet had that discussion with them. Councilmember Gordy inquired as to whether the speed limit can be changed. Chief Staudinger stated that it can be changed by the County. Mayor Lowe thanked Ms. Alford for coming to speak to Council.

Mayor Lowe called upon Myra T. Jefferson to address Council, as listed on the agenda. Ms. Jefferson came forward to address Council. Ms. Jefferson stated that she has a problem regarding the ditch that is located by her home that has not be cleaned out by the City. Ms. Jefferson also stated that in 2022 when she spoke to Councilmember Day, he ensured that the ditch would be maintained by the City. Ms. Jefferson further stated that this year, she has been speaking with the Public Works Department and the City Clerk's Office throughout the year and that it has been stressful for her and that she hopes that they can come to a conclusion. Ms. Jefferson stated that the problem is that the ditch is on City property and that this year she has been requesting that the ditch be cleaned out. Ms. Jefferson also stated that she and her husband work hard to keep their property nice and that the ditch is a bad reflection on them and that if the ditch was not so deep, her son would cut it. Ms. Jefferson further stated that another concern was a gas line that runs in the ditch. Ms. Jefferson stated that there had been a gas leak in the ditch and the City did come out and fix it. Ms. Jefferson also stated that she has been told from several City Employees and the Mayor that the City no longer cuts the ditch due to a shortage in staffing. Councilmember Day stated that Ms. Jefferson has contacted him numerous times to discuss this issue and he has provided the information on the staffing shortages and therefore has asked the City's Director of Engineering Angel Moore to address the issue. Mayor Eddie Lowe inquired for Ms. Jefferson to state what he told her when they spoke. Ms. Jefferson stated that Councilmember Day informed her that they have cleaned the ditch out but only a portion was cut near the street and not in the ditch. Ms. Jefferson also stated the workforce shortage was inexcusable. Mayor Lowe stated that Councilmember Day expressed the same workforce issue with her as he had in their conversation. Mayor Lowe also stated that while it is not an excuse, the reality is that the shortage is prohibiting the City from doing the extensive clean out of the ditches as they once were able to do. Mayor Lowe further stated that the City does not have the workforce availability at this time. City Manager Wallace Hunter asked Ms. Jefferson to allow the City Engineer Angel Moore to address the Council on this issue. Ms. Moore stated that in May 2023 the City crew sprayed and cut the ditch and the shoulder of the road. Ms. Moore also stated that since that time, the City does not have enough workforce to continue the maintenance and that their focus has to be on safety issues on the major routes in the City. Ms. Moore further stated that for the entire City, she only has four men to cut and weed the right of ways in the City limits.

Councilmember Bailey stated that the men are not only cutting and weeding but also picking up trash at the same time. Councilmember Day inquired as to how many workers the Public Works Department is short at this time. Ms. Moore stated that normally they have as many as 30 on right of ways but currently she only has four and that is what she is dealing with every day. Ms. Moore also stated they have residents that are going out and cutting the ditches themselves and that she does not have any issue with them taking care of the maintenance. Ms. Moore further stated that they can ensure visibility but that they cannot respond to every call to go out and cut the grass. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the City is cutting the shoulders of the roads throughout the City. Mr. Hunter also stated that a lot of people may not understand what is happening with our City as well as other Cities with the workforce shortages and that the City is doing what they can do. Mr. Hunter further stated that due to many people choosing not to work due to drugs and other issues, it is affecting all Cities and that some people do understand it and some choose not to understand. Mr. Hunter stated that with the fall season, they are hopeful to have more applications submitted and additional manpower to fill the vacancies. Mr. Hunter also stated that when citizens see City workers, they are not just PubWorks workers but Utilities and other departments taking care of Utility issues and City Parks with the manpower that they have. Mr. Hunter further stated that he has been consistently driving throughout the City and has noticed that the shoulders have been cut. Mr. Hunter stated that he has noticed the ditches, where the property owners are cutting them to assist with keeping everything looking good. Mayor Lowe stated that every organization has to work with what they have and currently the City just does not have workforce and that the City has been communicating this information for over a year and a half to citizens. Mayor Lowe thanked Ms. Jefferson for coming to speak with Council.

Mayor Lowe called upon Angel Moore, Director of Engineering, to discuss the actions taken by the Planning Commission at their October 10, 2023 meeting.

Mayor Lowe called upon Acting City Clerk Shannon Davis who discussed the following with Mayor and Council:

1. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday, October 17, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. at the Public Safety Building.
2. Advised Council of the Downtown Redevelopment Authority Meeting to be held on Thursday, October 19, 2023 at 3:00p.m.
3. Advised Council of the CPC Board of Zoning Adjustment and Appeals Meeting to be held on October 20, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.
4. Informed Council of the Ft. Moore Oktoberfest to be held Friday, October 20, 2023 through Sunday, October 22, 2023.
5. Informed Council of the NAACP Annual Freedom Fund Gala to be held on Saturday, October 21, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
6. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, October 24, 2023 at 5:15 p.m.
7. Informed Council that Halloween is on October 31, 2023.
8. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on Monday, November 6, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building.
9. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday, November 7, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. at the Public Safety Building.
10. Informed Council that the City Offices will be closed on Friday, November 10, 2023 in observance of Veteran's Day Holiday.
11. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 5:15 p.m.

12. Advised Council of the CPC Board of Zoning Adjustment and Appeals Meeting to be held on November 16, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.
13. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on Monday, November 20, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building.
14. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday, November 21, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. at the Public Safety Building.
15. Informed Council that City Offices will be closed on November 23, 2023 and November 24, 2023 in observance of Thanksgiving Holiday.
16. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, November 28, 2023 at 5:15 p.m.
17. Reviewed upcoming board appointments.

City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the Nation as a whole is still experiencing labor shortages and some jobs take priority over others. Mr. Hunter also stated that pesticides have been sprayed to slow growth of weeds. Mr. Hunter further stated that he cannot reiterate enough that the City does not have enough manpower to cut the ditches at this time. Mr. Hunter stated if we do it for one we have to do it for all. Mr. Hunter also stated that once the manpower increased, other projects in the City will be completed.

Councilmember Bailey stated that when we had the workforce the ditches were cleaned out and now we do not have the workforce.

Councilmember Carter asked the Chief of Police George Staudinger and Public Safety Director Ray Smith if it was possible to add extra patrols especially in the areas that are dimly lit for children during Halloween hours between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. on October 31, 2023 this year as they have done in the past years. Councilmember Carter stated that last year the City did not have any instances during the fall activities and that she wanted to ensure that there were no issues this year.

Councilmember Carter stated that she received a call regarding the Harvey Glance Statue and inquired if the City was involved with this project. Mayor Lowe stated that when Mr. Glance passed away City Manager Wallace Hunter immediately made plans to put up signs and a plaque in Mr. Harvey's memory. Mayor Lowe also stated that some citizens did not like the signs and some did like them and that the plaque was stolen. Mayor Lowe further stated that the statue in question was discussed at the Russell County level and that the City has nothing to do with the planning. Mr. Hunter stated that the individual that is over the project for the statue is not employed at the City or Russell County. Mr. Hunter also stated that the City put up pictures and also had a parkway named in his honor as Mr. Glance was the greatest athlete in Alabama. Mr. Hunter further stated that the individual that is over the project is looking for donations to support the statue with Auburn University and even in Columbus and that he and the City will continue to keep the public updated on the status. Mr. Hunter also stated that if the statue is created that it will be placed in the City limits and at that time, the City will be involved.

Councilmember Carter stated that in District 2 they are still experiencing issues with the tires being dumped. Councilmember Carter also stated that we need to try to come up with additional solutions to prevent this issue from reoccurring.

Mayor Lowe went over the agenda items.

City Attorney Jimmy Graham reviewed the claims with Council.

Councilmember Day moved to go into Executive Session to discuss Good Name and Character for thirty minutes, from which the meeting would adjourn. Councilmember Gordy seconded said motion. All were in favor.

Council went into Executive Session at 4:45 p.m.

Council came out of Executive Session at 5:15 p.m.

Mayor Lowe stated that there being nothing further to discuss, the meeting adjourned until 3:00 p.m., Monday, November 6, 2023.