APPROVED AS PRESENTED TO COUNCIL 01-24-25

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
January 6, 2025

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, January 6, 2025, 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, City Clerk Shannon Davis, and City Attorney Jimmy Graham. Department Heads in attendance: Building Official Ray Rogers, Economic Development Manager Shaun Culligan, Director of Engineering Angel Moore, Graduate Civil Engineer Chris Casey, Fire Chief Kristen Kennedy, Human Resources Director Stephanie Chastain, Library Director Tammy Henry, Municipal Court Clerk Ruby White, Parks and Recreation Director Todd Hughes, Police Chief George Staudinger and Utilities Director John Spraggins.

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

Mayor Lowe led the invocation.

Mayor Lowe advised there were no Request to Address Council.

Mayor Lowe stated that the Planning Commission Meeting for December 24, 2024 was canceled due to the Christmas Holiday.

Mayor Lowe called upon 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, January 7, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Public Safety Building.
2. Advised Council that the Phenix City Russell County Library Board will meet on Friday, January 10, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
3. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at 5:15 p.m.
4. Informed Council that the Martin Luther King Breakfast will be on Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 8:00 a.m.
5. Advised Council that the Downtown Redevelopment Authority will meet on Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.
6. Advised Council that the Board of Zoning Adjustments and Appeals will meet on Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
7. Informed Council that City Offices will be closed on Monday, January 20, 2025 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday.
8. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building.
9. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on Wednesday, January 22, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Public Safety Building.
10. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 5:15 p.m.
11. Informed Council that the Elected Officials Luncheon will be held on Thursday, January 30, 2025 at Martin Idle Hour Community Park at 11:30 p.m.

12. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on Monday, February 3, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building.
13. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Public Safety Building.
14. Advised Council that the State of the City Address will be held on Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.
15. Advised Council that the Housing Abatement Board will meet on Friday, February 7, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.
16. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 5:15 p.m.
17. Informed Council that City Offices will be closed on Monday, February 17, 2025 in observance of President's Day Holiday.
18. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building.
19. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Public Safety Building.
20. Advised Council that the Board of Zoning Adjustments and Appeals will meet on Thursday, February 20, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
21. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 5:15 p.m.
22. Reviewed upcoming Board Appointments.

Councilmember Carter inquired about the status of the City's workforce more specifically around those that maintain the trash and debris around the City streets. Human Resources Director Stephanie Chastain stated that they have added 15 additional employees this past year however; they are still shorthanded on employees and some areas are seeing increases where as others are losing additional employees. Ms. Chastain also stated that the statistics show that they may hire 15 one month but 13 of them quit by the next month, so it continues to vary. Ms. Chastain further stated that there is just no loyalty with some new hires; they realize that they have to work and then they quit. Director of Engineering Angel Moore stated that they will receive applications and setup interviews and some of them do not show for the interview or fail the drug test. Ms. Moore also stated that their employees' numbers have increased but they are still below on their total workforce. Councilmember Day inquired about drug testing with new employees. Ms. Moore stated that some fail at the new hire stage and then some are pulled for random testing and they are positive. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that with drug test results, they have to follow the law very strictly and let employee's go if they come back positive on the test. Councilmember Gordy inquired as to when employee's leave due to drug testing, do they communicate to the department that they are leaving or do they just not show up. Ms. Moore stated that some do not show up and then some call out and then do not return. Councilmember Gordy inquired if the City performs exit interviews. Ms. Chastain stated that they do conduct interviews if they can have the former employee come in to attend and that if the City fires them than the interview is not as detailed because they know why the employee had to be let go. Councilmember Gordy stated that if there were a pattern as to why employees are leaving, the Human Resources Department would be able to track that with the exit interviews. Mr. Hunter stated that the City has a very good system in place to track statistics on employee retention. Mr. Hunter also stated that he reviews all of the exit interviews and if the employee was let go, they tend to speak very negative about the department and so he has to review everything to ensure the truth is documented. Mr. Hunter further stated that the City is working with officials in Columbus Georgia on coming up with a model to address the new age of employee's and how to increase retention and how to serve and satisfy the generations of the people that they are employing now. Mr. Hunter stated that they have a very good program in place to monitor

employee retention information but that it continues to be a challenge so many businesses and municipalities with the overall work ethic. Mayor Lowe stated that throughout the country, the employees are trying to hostage the employers and unfortunately, it is working.

Councilmember Day inquired about Inmate Work Program where the City had six inmates to pick up the trash. Director of Engineering Angel Moore stated that they have two of them left, that it is a vicious circle for them, as soon as they pick them up, they have several excuses to delay working and it takes a while to just get them started, and that it is continuous delays. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that Russell County's model is different, where they have officer's with the inmates as they work and it is a more productive model than the day to day model.

Councilmember Carter stated that as she receives questions, she needs to be able to address the concerns of the Citizens in regards to the programs and the City's workforce retention. Councilmember Carter stated that she continues to pray for a workforce that will be able and willing to work and stay on the job because they know that Phenix City is a growing City and they are providing people with the information on how to apply and work for the City.

City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that he bothers him that there is trash in the City and that they know that people are coming from other areas and dumping in locations around the City and that they will be caught. Mr. Hunter also stated that he has been communicating with City residents and churches to encourage them to gather groups to help in order to keep the trash out of the City. Mr. Hunter further stated that the Building Code Department have been working diligently to provide warnings and citations to the businesses that are not keeping their property clean. Mr. Hunter stated that they have to get the City cleaned and it will take adding more flock cameras to catch the ones that are dumping and that this will be enforced.

Councilmember Carter stated that a citizen that would like to invest in District 2 in Phenix City to possible build additional homes approached her. Councilmember Carter also stated that she took the possible investor around the district to view possible locations. Councilmember Carter further stated that District 2 is the oldest part of the City, that many of the senior citizens have passed that have left their property to their children or sold the property, and that the property may not be taken care, as the original owner would have done. Councilmember Carter stated as she was touring the area with the citizen, they went by a dead end area and they spoke to a business owner and he stated to her in front of her constituent that she cared too much. Councilmember Carter also stated that it was hard for her to understand how to take the comment that she cared too much because the City has to continue to do what is necessary to make Phenix City better and she believes she lives in one of the best City's. Councilmember Carter further stated that she serves the City because she does care.

City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the COVID pandemic caused so many issues with people, giving free money to everyone which caused so many to not want to work once it was over. City Manager Wallace Hunter also stated that it is a huge challenge to back from the results that it caused.

Councilmember Bailey stated that it is never a good idea to pay someone for not doing anything. Councilmember Bailey also stated that it lowered the expectation and that even the people that did work may have become envious of those people that were paid not to work.

Councilmember Carter inquired about the new Garbage Service vendor. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that they will start services on February 1, 2025 and that the public has been notified of the start date and services that they will be providing as well as where to go for

additional information. Mr. Hunter also stated that they would follow the same process to communicate to the public regarding when the new meters are in place.

Councilmember Bailey inquired about the Moon Lake upgrades. Parks and Recreation Director Todd Hughes provided an update on the planning and implementation of the project work. Councilmember Bailey stated that he had spoken to some citizens in District 1 and explained that the funds that were allocated are not enough to complete everything that they want to have done; therefore, the City is adding funds to ensure as much of the items requested could be completed.

Councilmember Bailey inquired about planning for the project along 14th Street to Five Points. Director of Engineering, Angel Moore stated that they have submitted the engineering plans to ALDOT for review. Ms. Moore stated that it has been a slow process however; she has been consistently following up with the consultant and ALDOT.

Councilmember Bailey inquired about the process for selecting properties and structures that need to be condemned. Building Official Ray Rogers that the Code Enforcement Officers and Citizens report issues with properties and the Building Code Department investigates. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that many of the properties are held up in person's estates and that will slow the process for declaring them condemned.

Councilmember Bailey inquired as to what will be done with the old garbage cans that will be replaced when the new trash service begins. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the former company stated that they would assist the City with removing the cans, however he cannot depend on that support and so the new company will also be assisting with picking up cans that cannot be used.

Councilmember Bailey inquired about the process of an extension or adjustments of a water bill and if there were any circumstances that would allow for the adjustment. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that for extenuated circumstances like a medical emergency, the Utilities Department would setup a payment plan with the resident. Utilities Director John Spraggins provided an overview of how the department determines the average usage when investigating an issue with a citizen's bill and for any extenuated circumstances; they work with the citizen on a payment plan.

Councilmember Day stated that he has had citizens call to inquire about their bill and he gathers information on whether it may be a leak or not before he reaches out to submit the issue to the City Manager's Office.

Councilmember Day inquired about the transition of changing the water meters. Utilities Director John Spraggins provided an overview and status of the work and any issues.

Councilmember Day inquired about the water leaks that are being addressed by Warr Grading. Utilities Director John Spraggins stated that since the work has begun, there have been additional leaks identified and they are working to ensure the emergency (the worst) leaks are added to the list first and then the remaining. Mr. Spraggins also stated that there are so many leaks and the City is working along with Warr Contracting to address them all.

Councilmember Day inquired about the sewage plant upgrades. Utilities Director John Spraggins provided the overview of the items that have been done, what has yet to be completed, and that the new equipment that has come in, is scheduled to begin installation later this month.

Councilmember Day inquired about the current litigations with the River Keepers. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated they would be in the legal process for a while.

Mayor Lowe went over the agenda items.

Councilmember Day moved to go into Executive Session to discuss Good Name and Character for 30 minutes, from which the meeting would adjourn. Councilmember Carter seconded said motion. All were in favor.

Council went into Executive Session at 5:07 p.m.

Council came out of Executive Session at 5:27 p.m.

Mayor Lowe stated that there being no further business to address, the meeting thus adjourned until January 21, 2025.