APPROVED AS PRESENTED TO COUNCIL 05/20/25

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
May 5, 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, May 5, 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 Carter Green, 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 Shannon Davis, and City Attorney Jimmy Graham. Department Heads in attendance: Chief Building Inspector Ray Rogers, Economic Development Manager Shaun Culligan, Director of Engineering Angel Moore, Graduate Civil Engineer Chris Casey, Finance Director Labrita King-Copeland, Staff Accountant Pam Smith, Fire Chief Kristin Kennedy, Golf Manager Mike Barber, Human Resources Specialist Eliza Phillips, IT Director Mike Bauer, Library Director Tammy Henry, Municipal Court Clerk Ruby White, Parks and Recreation Director Todd Hughes, Police Chief George Staudinger, Assistant Police Chief Joseph Weierick, and Utilities Director John Spraggins.

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

Councilmember Green led the invocation.

Mayor Lowe called upon Leah Webb with the State Line Horseman's Association to address Council as listed on the Agenda. Ms. Webb was unable to attend the meeting therefore, her daughter Shelby Dunn came forth to address Council on her behalf. Ms. Dunn read a letter addressed to Council regarding the Twin City Arena and the historic significance and reasons why it should remain. Ms. Dunn stated that the City took away any possible memories that her child will have around the arena. Councilmember Day inquired if Ms. Dunn lives in Phenix City. Ms. Dunn stated that she does live in Phenix City. Councilmember Day stated that his constituents want to know why the park cannot be used as it was many years ago as the original park. Councilmember Day also stated that he grew up close to the parks area and that they used to have ball fields, swimming pool and other activities located in the park. Councilmember Day further stated that the name of the park was Rosemont Park. Ms. Dunn stated that when the ball field was removed from Rosemont Park, it was relocated to the City and therefore, how is it fair that the arena is not left or moved to another location. Councilmember Bailey inquired about the reservation dates that the association has requested. Councilmember Bailey also stated that he understood where all parties where coming from with the comments on the arena. Councilmember Bailey further stated that he was not sure how long it would take to move the arena to another location. Ms. Dunn stated that the Cattlemen's Association and the Farmer's Association have agreed to provide support in raising funds because they all want it to remain here. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that they needed to speak to the facts and called upon Parks and Recreation Director Todd Hughes. Mr. Hughes stated that State Line Horseman's Association contacted his office in February 2025 and had a meeting in March 2025. Mr. Hughes also stated that during the meeting they all discussed 4H and other programs that have been held at the arena and the amount of repairs that the arena was in need of at that time in order to reopen. Mr. Hughes further stated that he discussed with them the City's plan to build a community center where Citizens could hold a multitude of events. Mr. Hughes stated that he contacted the 4H program and they stated that they had not had a program in Russell County in seven years and that the last volunteer 4H event was held at someone else's property. Mr. Hughes also stated that the City's purpose is to improve the park and not to take it away from anyone. Mr. Hughes further stated that the planning and implementation for the new development would take some time. Mr.

Hughes provided the additional timeline of meetings with the architect and the plans for the park. Mr. Hughes stated that they should have the plans from those discussions in the next thirty days. Mr. Hughes also stated that there was never a discussion in regards to getting rid of the horse arena. Mr. Hughes further stated that they did meet with the architect to discuss the timelines for planning the new development. Mr. Hunter stated that the goal is for the park to be developed into a location where all members of the community could enjoy it and the rental of the facility will be managed by the City of Phenix City. Mr. Hunter also stated that the park is not to be dominated by any certain group or organization. Councilmember Day inquired that when the arena was rented through the Exchange Club, where there were fees involved. Mr. Hunter stated that the renters paid fees to the Exchange Club. Mr. Hunter also stated that the City needs to investigate all of the types of associations and clubs that rented the arena in the past and ensure they are going through Parks and Recreations Department moving forward. Mayor Lowe stated that the City is not taking anything away from the Citizens or the children of this community. Mayor Lowe also stated that the only goal of the Council is to make the park open and available to all Citizens. Councilmember Bailey inquired if it was the plan to have the arena relocated to a different location. Councilmember Bailey stated that he would like to see that the arena is either located at the current location or at another location and to also have the facility updated to the correct standards. Mr. Hunter stated that the City plans to add several venues to the park for all Citizens to be able to use. Mr. Hunter also stated that it would take time for this kind of change. Mr. Hunter further stated that the Citizens in that area should be able to rent the venue as well as all Citizens. Councilmember Bailey stated that he does not want to see that something that is currently existing in the park be taken away when the new changes are made. Mr. Hunter stated that it will not be taken away but delayed due to the new development. Mr. Hughes stated that the current plans with the architect are to not move the arena from its current location. Ms. Dunn stated that the issue is that the City is planning to put a wedding venue in the area and that they will not be able to have the horse shows on the same day. Mr. Hunter stated that everyone would have the opportunity to reserve dates for his or her events. Assistant City Manager Chan Gamble stated that the lease with the Exchange Club was not terminated but rather the City did not renew the lease agreement. Mr. Gamble also stated that the City honored the lease terms until the lease was up for renewal. Mr. Gamble reviewed the timeline for the actions that took place at the Public Hearings that were held where the Citizens have the right to attend. Ms. Dunn stated that they were not told about the meetings. Mr. Gamble stated that the meetings were posted as a Public Notice on the City's website and social media platforms as well as the Citizens Newspaper. Mr. Gamble also stated that at Public Hearings, Citizens are allowed to speak and have a discussion on the topic of the hearing. Mr. Gamble further stated that there have been no resolutions or plans for the upgrades at this time and everything is still in the planning stages. Mr. Gamble stated that it is premature to criticize the Council on this issue. Mr. Gamble also stated that due to the current safety concerns he does not believe that the Enforcement Department would allow an event to be held at the arena until it has been upgraded and that it includes any events on the property. Mr. Gamble further stated that they appreciate the attendees at the meeting but that it was premature to discuss plans for the arena. Mr. Gamble briefly reviewed the original Austin Sumbry Park timeline and everything that was available to the Citizens at that time. Mr. Gamble stated that when the arena was built, it was not built by or for the Exchange Club. Mr. Gamble recommended that everyone should take a pause and wait for the final plans to be presented before judging the outcome. Mayor Lowe stated that it is not true that they are taking the arena away and that he did not want that to be the perception. Mayor Lowe also stated that there are no plans to prevent anyone from using the park. Councilmember Day stated that he represents the Citizens of District Three and if they did not want the arena in the park, they could signed a petition and present it to Council. Mr. Hunter stated that when Austin Sumbry asked for the park it was during a time when African Americans were not allowed in all areas, that is no longer the situation, and that it is the true history of the property. Mr. Hunter also stated that the City wants

to make the park a location where it is fair for everyone as a Phenix City Citizen to be able to use regardless of which district they are in. Mayor Lowe stated that the Council like many other Councils have tried to correct history's mistakes and that the Citizens that were at the meeting have the same rights to have the same options at the park as anyone else. Mayor Lowe also stated that in today's environment they want to ensure it is inclusive to everyone. Councilmember Bailey thanked Mr. Gamble for speaking to Council regarding the history and facts. Councilmember Bailey stated that the Council has not had any discussions between them on the park planning. Councilmember Bailey also stated that based on what he has heard at the meeting, they have not decided to keep or remove the arena from the future development because it is still in the planning stages but that either way, they will still have the opportunity to use the arena. Councilmember Bailey recommended that the Citizens give the City time to come up with the plan. Mayor Lowe stated that this Council has acted ethically with morals to do the right thing in all of the years that they have been together. Mayor Lowe also stated that if they make a mistake, they would admit it and correct it. Mayor Lowe thanked Ms. Dunn and attendees for addressing Council on their concerns.

Mayor Lowe called upon Director of Engineering Angel Moore, to discuss the actions taken by the Planning Commission at their April 22, 2025 meeting.

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, May 6, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Public Safety Building.
2. Informed Council that Meadow Lane Character Celebration will be held on Thursday, May 8, 2025 at 1:30 p.m.
3. Informed Council that Chattahoochee Valley Community College will hold their Commencement Ceremony on Friday, May 9, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.
4. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 5:15 p.m.
5. Informed Council that the Alabama League of Municipalities 2025 Convention will be held on May 13, 2025 through May 16, 2025 in Huntsville, Alabama.
6. Advised Council that the Board of Zoning Adjustments and Appeals will meet on Thursday, May 15, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
7. Informed Council that the 2nd Annual Mental Health Awareness will hold their walk on Saturday, May 17, 2025 at 8:30 a.m.
8. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on Monday, May 19, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building.
9. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Public Safety Building.
10. Informed Council that City Offices will be closed on Monday, May 26, 2025 in observance of Memorial Day Holiday.
11. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, May 27, 2025 at 5:15 p.m.
12. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on Monday, June 2, 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, June 3, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Public Safety Building.

14. Informed Council that Troy University will hold their Commencement Ceremony on Friday, May 6, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
15. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, June 10, 2025 at 5:15 p.m.
16. Informed Council that Parks and Recreations Department will hold the Annual Youth Fishing Rodeo on Thursday, June 12, 2025.
17. Informed Council that the Mayor's Ball Golf Tournament will be held on Friday, June 13, 2025.
18. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on Monday, June 16, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building.
19. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday, June 17, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at the Central Activity Center.
20. Advised Council that the Board of Zoning Adjustments and Appeals will meet on Thursday, June 19, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
21. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet on Tuesday, June 24, 2025 at 5:15 p.m.
22. Informed Council that the Mayor's Ball will be held on Saturday, June 28, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
23. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on Monday, June 30, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building.
24. There were no upcoming Board Appointments.

Councilmember Green stated that she attended the Mother Daughter Brunch at Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center on Saturday, May 3, 2025 and that it was a great outcome. Councilmember Green also stated at the event, many of the participants inquired about Summer Youth Programs within the City. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that Parks and Recreations Director Todd Hughes and Library Director Tammy Henry would speak on their events for the Summer. Mr. Hughes stated that the Summer Camps would begin on May 27, 2025 at the Roy Martin Center. Mr. Hughes also stated that they have additional half-day programs at C-Club and Spencer Recreations. Mr. Hughes further stated that all of the programs are full with exception of Spencer Recreation that has a couple of spots open. Mr. Hughes stated that the Summer Camp's would take several field trips. Mr. Hughes also stated that the Central Activity Center has several programs and senior pool day for the summer months. Mr. Hughes further stated that they are hopeful that all of the pools will be open by Memorial Day. Mr. Hughes stated that on June 12, 2025 they will hold the Annual Youth Fishing Rodeo and that it is free for kids to fish. Mr. Hughes also stated that if anyone would like to register, to visit pcparksandrec.recdesk.com. Mr. Hughes further stated that 4th of July activities will begin at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, July 4, 2025 at the Phenix City Amphitheater. Councilmember Day inquired if fish are added to the lake prior to the event and Mr. Hughes responded yes they restock for the event. Ms. Henry stated that all of the programs that the Library is offering this summer are free to all of the public. Ms. Henry also stated that on June 5, 2025 the Library will hold their Block Party, which is a Kick Off to the Summer Reading Program. Ms. Henry further started that every Thursday at 2:00 p.m. they will have a performer at the Library. Ms. Henry stated that every Friday the Library will show a movie. Ms. Henry also stated that the Library offers programs for children, teens and adults from June 5, 2025 to July 25, 2025 and that everyone is welcome. Ms. Henry further stated that the Phenix City Housing Authority received a grant for books and they are bringing the remainder of them to the Library for the Block Party to giveaway. Councilmember Green stated that she wants to see the Block Party advertised. Ms. Henry stated that they have been advertising for the last two months. Ms. Henry also stated that last year 700 registered for the Summer Reading Program, 600 completed and this year they are expecting 1000 to register. Councilmember Day stated that

Citizens in the City and the County use the library. Councilmember Green thanked Ms. Henry and Mr. Hughes for everything they are doing. Councilmember Green stated that Citizens are consistently asking her about programs that the City offers and she wants to ensure that they are aware. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that the Parks and Recreations and the Library Departments have children programs year round and that includes during the evening during the school year. Mr. Hunter also stated that the staff does a lot of mentoring with the children during those times. Mr. Hunter further stated that he visits the programs and stated that they were doing great work especially at the Library. Mr. Hunter stated that once the school year ends, so many of these children have nowhere to go and that the City facilities is their only option. Mr. Hunter also stated that there is still a shortage of lifeguards for the City Pools and at a national level. Mr. Hunter further stated that they are in competition with Columbus on hiring lifeguards as they are also under a lot of pressure to open up their pools. Mr. Hunter stated that lifeguards are critical and an example from back when it was allowed for pools to be open without a lifeguard and a child drowned. Mr. Hunter also stated that they never want that to happen again therefore if there is no lifeguard available a pool will not be opened. Councilmember Day inquired that when a child is dropped off at the Library, what the polices around that situation. Ms. Henry stated that children are not allowed to be at the Library without a parent or adult over the age of 18. Mr. Hunter stated that it was dangerous for children to be left alone and the City cannot be responsible so the policies are in place to protect the children. Mr. Hughes stated that when there are children at the Parks and Recreations Programs, the doors are locked.

Councilmember Bailey inquired about the status of fixing water leaks throughout the City. Councilmember Bailey stated he is receiving calls and some of the Citizens are saying that they want to damage their meters in order to move up on the priority list because they felt like the oldest leaks were not being addressed. Councilmember Bailey also stated that he advised them not to damage the meters and that he explained the situation in regards to status of the work on the leaks. Assistant City Manager Chan Gamble stated that they are continuing to make progress on the work to fix the leaks. Mr. Gamble provided an overview of the two full crews that are working on the leaks. Mr. Gamble stated that there were eight job interviews for Utility positions today. Mr. Gamble also stated that based on the upcoming resolutions, that there are other critical health and safety issues that also need to be addressed. Councilmember Bailey stated that the Citizens that are calling are the ones that have had their leaks the longest. Mr. Gamble stated that a good indicator to the amount of leaks that have been fixed is the level of water loss for the City. Mr. Gamble also stated that there has been a significant reduction in water loss since the work has begun. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that they are currently having a Cost of Service Study being conducted by Thornton and Jackson in regards to replacement of many of the water lines under the City and that there are hundreds of miles under the City with a hundred plus year old water system. Mr. Gamble reviewed the upcoming work and cost that are needed for the upgrades to the Waste Water Treatment Plant and the processes that are in place for water safety. Mr. Gamble stated that the overall satisfaction rating for the new garbage company, 121 Disposal is high and that they have received great feedback.

Councilmember Gordy inquired about the Irrigation System upgrades for the Golf Course. Golf Manager Mike Barber provided an overview of the completion status. Mr. Barber stated that the work has progressed down to the last green and that they are estimating that the work will be done by Sunday, May 11, 2025. Councilmember Gordy inquired about the holes in the greens. Mr. Barber stated that they are attempting to fix them however, with the age of the greens; they will need to be replaced. Councilmember Day inquired on how the sprinklers work on the course. Mr. Barber stated that they are automatically set to come on at night.

Councilmember Day inquired about the updated status of Crowell Park. Director of Engineering Angel Moore stated that it is a work in progress and she provided an overview based on the memo she provided to Council. Ms. Moore also provided an overview of the work that has been completed in the grass at the right of ways and easement in the area. Councilmember Day inquired about the work being done on the backside of Crowell Park. Ms. Moore provided the pictures and spoke of the work being performed. Ms. Moore stated that the drains have been cleared and moving forward they have scheduled quarterly maintenance on the drain in addition to maintenance if there are any major rain storms that may occur. Ms. Moore also stated that they are doing everything they can to fix the damage from the storms however, if there is another major storm with a lot of rain, there is nothing that can be done to prevent flooding as the area is in a flood zone. Councilmember Bailey stated that with a major rain, the river will back up again and the water will not be able to get out of the flood zones. Mr. Hunter stated that their hopes are that by opening the storm drains it will help with the flooding if it occurs. Councilmember Day inquired as to how FEMA plays a role in this effort. Ms. Moore provided the information provided by FEMA for any future assistance and that currently there are no grants available. Ms. Moore also provided costs and grants that maybe available and provided copies of the estimates. Mr. Hunter stated that while the updates that the City is making to Crowell Park will not stop flooding, it should reduce the stress on the land by opening the drains. Mr. Hunter reviewed additional financial impacts on future work. Councilmember Bailey inquired if any of the residents of Crowell Park would be able to acquire flood insurance. Ms. Moore stated that she doubts they would be able to get flood insurance coverage at this point. Mr. Hunter stated that they couldn't be the ones to determine absolutely if the residents could or could not receive flood insurance. Councilmember Day thanked Ms. Moore for her presentation.

Councilmember Day inquired about the process once a property is condemned and a bid from the contractor has been accepted. Chief Building Inspector Ray Rogers stated that the contractor has 45 days to clean the property and that if it is not completed, the City can then resend the bid.

Mayor Lowe went over the agenda items.

Mayor Lowe stated that there being no further business to address, the meeting thus adjourned until May 19, 2025.