



**REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
6:30 P.M., Tuesday, August 16, 2022
Bennettsville Public Safety Complex**

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER Mayor Prince
2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Gregory Scott
3. ROLL CALL
Mayor Prince stated all Council members are in attendance.
4. APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES
 - A. Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, July 19, 2022-Mr. Taylor made a motion to approve the minutes for Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, July 19, 2022. Mr. Davis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
5. PUBLIC REQUESTS/ PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
 - A. Employee Anniversaries- Tammy King, Finance, 25 years; Lori O'Tuel, Purchasing, 10 years; Richard Lanthier, Fire, 5 years
 - B. Annual Employee Anniversaries-Angela Ward, Finance, 24 years; Tomeka Campbell, Tourism, Parks & Rec., 3 years; Roger Hale, Public Works, 3 years; Jerusha McArthur, Tourism, Parks & Rec., 3 years; Ronald Hamer, Electric, 2 years; Jaharra Graves, Tourism, Parks & Rec., 1 year; Donald Morgan, Water Treatment, 1 year
 - C. Hospitality Tax Report- City Auditor, Robert Milhous provided a detailed analysis by doing an audit of the Hospitality Tax Fund. Milhous looked at expenditures of the city from May 1, 2011, through April 30, 2021. He stated that "We perform procedures on other financial transactions in other city funds to determine if this set of transactions were or could have been paid or reimbursed by the City's Hospitality Tax Revenues in accordance with the with state law." He then went on saying "Collectively, these procedures were agreed to by the city management and were performed solely for you and specified parties listed in this report to assist you in evaluating how the city used Hospitality Tax Revenue in compliance with laws and ordinances and whether funds are owed back to the City Special Revenue Hospitality Tax Fund."
In 2003, the city adopted an ordinance to impose a local hospitality on the sale of certain prepared meals and beverages sold in establishments within the city limits. The city maintains a separated bank account and reports it activity and special revenue and is labeled as Hospitality Tax. The areas in which the funds can be used, includes tourism related buildings, tourism related cultural, recreational or historical facilities; beach access and renourishment; highways roads, streets and bridges providing access to tourism destinations; advertisements and promotions related to tourism development; water and sewer infrastructure to serve tourism related demand; control and repair of flooding and drainage within our own tourism related lands' poor areas; and site preparation for items in section including, but not limited to demolition, repair, and or construction. A second section in the state of code which the city follows and that dealing with hospitality revenues being used for operation and maintenance of those items related in the previous six items noted above, plus the use of public safety and other emergency related operations surrounding those tours and related facilities and activities. Milhous looked at the funds of the city including the Hospitality Tax Fund, General Fund, Capital Project Funds, and Water and Sewer Utility Fund.
Milhous stated, "The expended more for tourism related items and related activities than it received in Hospitality Revenue," For the ten fiscal years, a total of \$2,859,223 of Hospitality Tax Revenue, with the interest on the account, was available for expenditures. Based on the information provided, a total of \$2,417,219 was expended directly by the city for tourism related items. Additionally, \$1,371,858 was incurred in operation and maintenance related expenditures, such to the limitation that state law provides. It is

defined in the report that is limited to 10% of the previous year's Hospitality Tax Revenues, supporting those operations and maintenance activities, which include public safety, emergency preparedness, and those types of activities. All combined, total expenditures in the 10-year period totaled \$3,789,077. Milhous said it resulted in a deficiency of Hospitality Tax Revenue compared to the expenditures that were eligible to be spent by said revenues. "Therefore, based on owed back to the city Special Revenue Hospitality Tax, fund," he said. Council members were given a copy of the report.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jerry Cross- President of Popz USA spoke about the natural gas line provided by the city disrupted at the facility. They contacted a contractor who said it was the city's gas line that was not working properly. A city crew was called, and after looking at the situation, they determined the issue was from his side and not the city's. Popz USA officials continued to work with contractors trying to figure out how to get their operations up and running again. Cross had others to look at the issue, as well. It was said that the problem was due to a from the City of Bennettsville. The city checked it twice and said it was not their fault. The third time Cross had the city come out; he had some other contractors to show the city what kind of problems they were having. Cross said this resulted in seven days of lost production. This resulted in a cost of \$319,718.66.

Council members were given a document detailing what happened. Lastly, Cross said several calls were made to the city with no answers. He felt the City of Bennettsville owes the company something for lost production. Mayor Prince said the Administrator Max Alderman would reach out to the company about the issue.

Pearlie Lawson-Marlboro County Council Elect commend the council for the things they are doing to clean up the demolished and abandoned homes in the city limits and she is glad to see that their using the funds in order to make this happen. Her reason for being there was to ask if there is any possibility that "Marlboro County Council members and City Council can do something together on the Image Committee and extend the abandoned buildings that you are using within the neighborhoods, but also look at those abandoned buildings that's right downtown Bennettsville. This coming into the city, there is several buildings that needs attention. It would be good if the funds are available to transform these buildings into something useful or beneficial to the city." She went on to saying, she wasn't sure how the city use their American Rescue Fund moneys, but "she hope that if you have not allocated all your funds for major projects, then, a portion of your funds can also be allocated to look at those lighting and abandoned homes right downtown and some of those commercial buildings." Lastly, she ended by saying, "she would love the opportunity to work with this council on any projects like that and become one and jointly. We have been a part so long, but I want to offer myself as a resource and learn from you on what you are doing."

Wes Parks- Stated he was glad to hear the report of the Hospitality Taxes on the Agenda. He requested a copy of the report under the Freedom of Information, as well as access to the financial audit reports for the fiscal years ended April 30, 2020, and April 30, 2021. He looks forward to receiving the information as requested.

Ricky Wilt-attended the meeting about his residence, which is 200 Beauty Spot Rd. He received a letter request from annexation on his land and "because I am in the county, and I am right on the edge of the city but one of the top selling points because it is in the county. So, I really do not want to annex my property."

7. SECOND READING AND PASSAGE IN FULL OF ORDINANCES

No Business

8. FIRST READING AND ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCES

No Business

9. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS

No Business

10. GENERAL BUSINESS DISPENSED BY MOTION

A. Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) Factor- The annual tax information was received from the Marlboro County Auditor on June 27,2022 and with this information and the actual tax rollback revenue received during FY 2021-2022 we have calculated a new LOST Factor of 0.001879. This factor and the FY 2022-2023 Millage rate will be sent to the County Auditor for City Tax Computation for the next tax billing cycle.

Approving Action: A motion to revise the LOST Factor from 0.002359 to 0.001879. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Mr. Abraham. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Annexation Request for 731 Craig Circle- Included in the packet is an Agenda item from Planning and Zoning requesting annexation of 731 Craig Circle. Holly Swann will review the details.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Annexation request for 731 Craig Circle and Authorization for staff to prepare the Ordinance for Annexation. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Mr. Abraham. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Annexation Request for 200 Beauty Spot Road- - Included in the packet is an Agenda item from Planning and Zoning requesting annexation of 200 Beauty Spot Road. Holly Swann will review the details.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Annexation request for 200 Beauty Spot Road and Authorization for staff to prepare the Ordinance for Annexation. Mr. Taylor tabled motion. Seconded by Mr. Abraham. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Annexation Request for 760 Craig Circle- Included in the packet is an Agenda item from Planning and Zoning requesting annexation of 760 Craig Circle. Holly Swann will review the details.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Annexation request for 760 Craig Circle and Authorization for staff to prepare the Ordinance for Annexation. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Scott. The motion passed unanimously.

11. REPORTS AND INFORMATION PRESENTATION
No Business

12. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL AND CITY ADMINISTRATOR
No Business

13. NON-AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

Mayor Prince stated “we have all been impacted by the announcement of Mohawk. Losing 600 jobs that have impacted families. There was a strategic planning meeting held last Thursday with a lot of agency representation that would provide information and services to even presentations on jobs that are available in neighboring counties that fit their skill sets.” She went on saying, do not forget to tell the people that work there, do not quit. If you quit, before the plant shuts down, you will not be eligible for unemployment. On August 30th and September 1st the county is planning to host a special session for all employees at the Prince Recreation Center so they can come and meet different agencies and people to give them some feedback and advice on jobs, and resumes. Lastly, the second annual Kids Fest was a success, over 300 book bags were given out with well packed school supplies.

Mr. Taylor stated that the community has certainly lost big with Mohawk closing. He thanked Ms. Lawson for coming and sharing her concerns. Lastly, he said our community is going to hurt from this for some time.

Mr. Scott stated he would like to thank all city workers for what they do day to day. We have workers that must work in hard conditions sometimes, but we really appreciate what they do. We have had some employees that had death in their families, his heart goes out to them. Lastly, Scott stated “The last Special Meeting was good because somethings were solved, but some things were not, like the ordinance and I think we should go back and get back into that ordinance because we talked about forms that have to be filled out, contacting law enforcement, and we really never got procedure about how we go about doing that and I think we should have another go at it and go in more detail.

Ms. Weaver wanted to publicly thank Chief Miller and employees for picking up trash on Sunday morning. She wanted to know who is responsible for reading water meters because her bill went up. She went out to her meter, and it was covered in a lot of dirt, and she could not read the meter. She cleaned it out and now her bill has doubled. She would like for someone to check into that. Next, she asked, “Will we continue to have meeting here or will we ever move back to city hall?” “If we stay here, can we get some

type of cloth or whatever. Make it look a little bit professional.” Next, the city webpage. The update status? People have been asking about recycling. Can the red bins be used again? Make the recycling area bigger? Lastly, she told Laura Smith she had been watching the DataMax and she see the revenue of \$43,000.00.

Mr. Davis thanked city workers for their hard work. He went on thanking Ms. Pearlie Lawson for waiting to join in with the city to get things done. He stated that it is important when people can work together. Lastly, he wanted to know when council would be able to walk and see what buildings downtown belong to the city, so we can make use of them for our kids.

Mr. Abraham congratulated “Police Department Spotlight, Staff Sergeant German.” He also mentioned his concerns about speeding and hustling in different areas. Next, he would like to be apart of the next active shooter class. Lastly, he thanked Ms. David, Barbara, and Ms. Gregg for coming to the meeting. They all live in District 5. He thanked the staff for all they do.

Mayor Prince stated they are still working on the city, county, and DOT meeting. Lastly, she requests to schedule the Active Shooting Class for different departments or groups of people.

14. ADJOURN
Mayor Prince

Public Comment Policy:

Citizens desiring to speak at any regular meeting must provide a written request to notify the City Clerk prior to the agenda deadline. Citizens interested in commenting at a regular meeting, shall sign in to speak and limit comments to no more than 3 minutes.

Mission Statement:

To utilize all available resources for the development of plans, programs, and projects to improve services to the citizens of Bennettsville and establish and maintain an active role in economic and community development.