



CITY OF CHARLESTON

**City Council Meeting
September 12, 2023**

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Mayor pro tem, Jackie Whiteside at 6:30 PM. Councilman Clark Dugan, Councilman Rick Toon, Councilwoman Monica Goodin, City Manager Greg Luehmann, former City Manager Philip Halter, City Attorney Tabatha Graham, City Clerk Ali Morris, Chief of the Department of Public Safety, Robert Hearnnes Jr., Officer Percy Owens, Officer Wes McDermott, and Officer Austin Henson were present. Mayor, Patrick Farmer was absent.

Consideration of Prior Meeting Minutes: At this time, the mayor pro tem asked if everyone had a chance to read over the previous meeting minutes as there were two sets. Councilman Toon asked if we had appointed anyone to the board to organize an event around the upcoming solar eclipse. Mr. Halter told him no, not yet. The valves for the water plant were also in question. Mr. Halter said that the valves have arrived but have yet to be installed. Councilman Toon then asked if Mr. Ivy's police report had been completed since the last meeting. The City Attorney and the Chief of the Department of Public Safety both confirmed that it had been completed. Councilman Toon then made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 8, 2023, meeting and from the August 24, 2023, Public Hearing/Special Call Meeting. Councilman Dugan seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The minutes were approved.

Report of City Business: At this time Mr. Halter said as he was the City Manager only part of the month, he would defer to Mr. Luehmann. The City Manager reported that a house fire occurred on Hunter Street, which was a total loss, and the property has already been cleaned up. Since then, three additional house fires have occurred, also resulting in total losses. Councilman Toon then asked the Chief of Police if the firefighters have been showing up and if we need to seek additional assistance. Chief Hearnnes responded yes; we just do not have very many. Councilman Toon asked if some sort of advertisement needed to be made to try and recruit additional help. Chief Hearnnes said he has spoken to Sikeston, and the ops takes months. Councilman Toon reminded everyone that it is difficult when most of the firefighters are also police officers, as so much additional work is involved.

Mr. Luehmann then went on to mention that the Chamber of Commerce meeting is scheduled for September 21st and he and Mr. Halter both plan to attend.

A kick-off meeting will be held on September 19th with Horner-Shifrin to discuss moving forward with the lead survey project.

Mr. Luehmann reported that the roof replacement on the City Hall building had been completed. Some unexpected work was added to replace the decking, which cost an additional \$2,000, but the project was still under budget.

The media for the water plant filters were ordered, have arrived, and will be installed soon.

Coon Insurance provided this years' quotes for both revenue loss coverage and cyber liability coverage. Nothing increased.

Mr. Luehmann concluded his report by stating he has met with the City Attorney to discuss the abundance of overgrown lots and confirmed our current ordinance that is already in place allows us to continue with the process of getting these issues resolved.

At this time, Mr. Halter announced that he was tendering his resignation as Greg is doing a great job of taking things over and he feels that his assistance is no longer needed. Mr. Halter said he has enjoyed working with everyone and that it is amazing how much goes on at City Hall that people are unaware of. He suggested that the council members stop in and visit more often. Councilman Whiteside thanked Mr. Halter and said he has done a great job. The other council members also thanked him. Mr. Luehmann said Mr. Halter has been great to work with. Mr. Halter handed his written resignation letter to the mayor pro tem, Jackie Whiteside.

Before moving on, Councilwoman Goodin mentioned that she would like to see the ordinances that the city has, and how many. It was explained to her that they are available online via the city's website, and also at City Hall in the ordinance book. Councilman Toon asked if we have to keep every ordinance, even when one is passed to authorize a purchase. City Attorney, Tabatha Graham, replied yes, we have to keep them all, but the ones published in the ordinance book are just the laws, not the authorized purchases.

Councilwoman Goodin asked if now was a good time for her to address the tax funds the city distributes to the Chamber of Commerce. She recommended a binding legal agreement between the organizations receiving the tax dollars and the City. Mr. Halter said this was an excellent idea and we would look into it. Goodin then suggested the organizations (CHARM and the Chamber of Commerce) report on a regular basis how the money is being spent. This holds everyone accountable. Goodin then said she brought a list of suggestions and passed them around to the other members. These will be discussed at the next council meeting.

Old Business: The mayor pro tem read the next item on the agenda, which was to discuss the resignation of the mayor. Patrick Farmer came into City Hall on August 18th and told the City Manager that he and his family were moving and that he was resigning as Mayor. Mr. Halter spoke on everyone's behalf and said they hated to see him resign but understood his reasoning.

Councilman Toon made a motion to accept Patrick Farmer's resignation as Mayor. Councilman Dugan seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed.

Councilwoman Goodin then made a motion to accept Mr. Halter's resignation as Assistant City Manager, effective Friday, September 15, 2023. Councilman Toon seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed.

New Business: The first item was consideration of **Bill NO. 3939 / Ordinance NO. 3080-An Ordinance Amending and Establishing Water, Sewer, and Trash Rates**. It was clarified that an ordinance was passed last year, establishing an increase in the bills each year going forward for the next few years. A new ordinance was needed to represent the breakdown of the increase. The bill will be raised by one dollar. A motion was made by Councilman Toon to approve Bill NO. 3939/Ordinance NO. 3080. Councilman Dugan seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The ordinance passed.

Next, **Resolution NO. 1110** was necessary to update the signature cards at the banks after hiring Greg Luehmann as the new city manager. This added Mr. Luehmann to the accounts and removed Mr. Halter. This is a required step each time a change is made to the staff. A motion was made by Councilman Dugan to approve Resolution NO. 1110. Councilwoman Goodin seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed. The resolution passed.

Mrs. Barbara Stovall was on the agenda to discuss hosting a Christmas tree lighting ceremony across from the Bowden Center like she did last year. She said they had a good turn out last year and asked for permission to put a tree up again. Councilman Toon made a motion to approve the Christmas tree lighting. Councilwoman Goodin seconded the motion. All were in favor. None were opposed.

Mrs. Stovall said she is looking at having the ceremony on December 2nd around 6:00 PM. Mr. Halter asked for her to touch base with David Harris (Director of Public Works) to discuss the electrical lines in that area. Mrs. Stovall said they did that last year as well.

Recognition of Visitors: Kenny Hulshof, Hudson Byrd, Captain of the Sheriff's Department, Barry Morgan, Mississippi County Sheriff, Britton Ferrell, Charleston DPS Dispatcher, Casey Carlisle, Talisha Mays, and several local juveniles were present.

Mr. Kenny Hulshof addressed the council and said he wasn't planning on speaking tonight, but based on the fact that he is a member of the CHARM group and a founding member of the revitalization movement, he wanted to assure the council that they welcome full transparency and would be happy to provide financial reports as often as necessary. He reminded everyone that their meetings are always open to the public and they are a non-profit organization.

Councilman Whiteside thanked the young kids in attendance for coming and said he hoped they learned something. Talisha Mays said she is helping to teach them about politics and voting and is starting with the basics so they can hear what is going on in their community. Mr. Whiteside said this was a short meeting and welcomed them all to come back.

Adjourn: At this time the mayor pro tem asked if there was a motion to adjourn the regular meeting as they needed to go into a closed session. Councilman Toon made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting. Councilman Dugan seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 PM.

Attest:



City Clerk



Presiding Officer



City Clerk



Mayor