

CITY OF CHERRYVILLE
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY SEPTEMBER 9, 2013
CHERRYVILLE COMMUNITY BUILDING

Present at the meeting, Honorable Mayor Robert Austell, Councilmember's David Kiser, Malcolm Parker, Brian Dalton, and Rick Campbell. City Manager Ben Blackburn, City Clerk Paige Green, City Attorney Palmer Huffstetler Jr., Police Chief Chad Hawkins, Fire Chief Jeff Cash, Finance Director Dixie Wall, Public Works Director Brandon Abernathy, and Water Plant Superintendent Patty Hall. Michael Powell was present for media coverage.

The Honorable Mayor Robert Austell called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers. Mayor Austell welcomed everyone and called on Rev. Eric Childers of St. Johns Lutheran Church for invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS:

Mayor Austell shared that there would not be a work session held for September. The next meeting would be the October 14th City Council meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Councilmember Kiser made a motion to approve both sets of minutes from the previous city council meeting and the work session meeting that was held in August. Councilmember Parker seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVISION:

Councilmember Dalton made a motion to approval the agenda as written. Councilmember's Kiser and Campbell seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

WORK SESSION UPDATE:

Mayor Austell shared that there were no votes taken at the previous work session meeting.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:

Dennis Neill of 407 Oak Grove Drive approached the podium and wanted to know when political signs could be put out. Rodney Bowyer of 305 Mark Street approached the podium and stated that he was told the political signs could go up anytime on private property and after October 5 they could be placed in right a ways.

Mr. Neill also wanted to know when the sidewalk construction was going to begin and it has already. Mr. Neill wanted to know when the paving was going to begin and it will very soon. Mr. Neill also took a picture of a hydrant in the city that was surrounded by tall grass. Mr. Neill had the picture blown up and passed it around for everyone to look at.

CEMETERY UPDATE:

Councilmember Campbell is the liaison for the Cemetery Committee and he gave an update on the work the committee has accomplished. He shared the following:

City Cemetery Update:

1. Life of the Cemetery: 20 to 25 Years Traditional or 25 to 30 years Traditional and Non-Traditional.
2. There were over 200 cremation graves added due to the new mapping project.
3. Three new rows of traditional graves were added to section EE due to the survey.
4. There is the possibility of adding several hundred more graves both cremation and traditional with the additional space found by the survey.
5. All new grave sites will be determined after the mapping project.
6. Mapping project is about 70% complete, will be completed this year.
7. Gates have been refinished with a power coating that will last for many years.
8. All areas will be utilized after the mapping is complete, even leasing space for benches and memorials.
9. After completion of the mapping and properly utilizing all the available space we have the opportunity to add 10 plus years to the life of the Cemetery.
10. The City would like to thank all the members of the committee along with the funeral home representatives and staff members for there dedication to this City service.

John Porter of Carpenter's Funeral and Crematory approached the podium and gave some statistics on cremations and how it will become more popular in the near future. Pete Craft of Cherryville Funeral Home also approached the podium and agreed with Mr. Porter that now is the time to make plans. Mr. Craft thanked the Council for their support of the cemetery.

CONSIDERATION OF GASTON/LINCON/CLEVELAND METROPOLITIAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING:

Mayor Austell explained the boundary expansion of the Metropolitan Planning Area and explained that he has served on this committee for many years and has been very vocal about the widening of Hwy. 279. The Lake Norman Rural Planning Organization has voted to move to the Gaston Metropolitan Planning Organization. Cherryville was in the Lake Norman RPO and Gaston MPO has voted to take the Lake Norman RPO. The new meeting for this group is coming up and Council needs to vote the current people on the boards into place so we will be legal when we go to the meeting. Councilmember Campbell made a motion to keep the same people in place. Councilmember Kiser seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous. City Manager Ben Blackburn also asked Council to take action on the Memorandum of Understanding in their packages. Councilmember Parker made a motion to accept the Memorandum of Understanding. Councilmember Parker seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

WATER PLANT UPDATE:

Patty Hall approached the podium and gave the following update on the water plant:

City of Cherryville Water Plant Update

The City of Cherryville Water Treatment Plant was built in 1964. The Water Plant was originally a 1.5 MGD Plant. In 1974 the plant was upgraded to a 3.2MGD Plant and two dual media filters were added. Our daily water consumption averages about 850,000 gallons a day. Our source of Raw Water comes from Indian Creek that is part of the South Fork Catawba River Basin. We have a 10MG Raw Water Storage Reservoir located directly behind the Plant. We have three Raw Water Pumps to control the Reservoir level and three Finished Water Pumps to control both elevated storage tanks. The elevated storage tanks are 750,000 gallons each. We have a 500,000 gallon Clear well on site to hold water to be pumped to the elevated storage tanks. We are a State certified lab. We are ruled and regulated by the State and EPA. All testing that is required that we cannot do in house has to be outsourced to an EPA certified lab. The results of the tests are sent to the State and EPA and the plant which are kept on file. We constantly test for contaminants every day. The State and EPA has stringent rules we have to comply with everyday. We have State inspection yearly and random visits frequently. We log required tests and keep the daily sheets on hand for State inspection at any time. Some of the tests we perform daily are bacteria, chlorine residual, pH, turbidity, jar tests, alkalinity, CO2, fluoride. We go out in the distribution system and collect samples for chlorine residual, bacteria, and all other tests we can run in house. We also check for other contaminants once a week and twice a week. We are regulated by EPA and the State to check for health hazard contaminants as follows:

VOC'S: ONCE A YEAR

TTHM'S & HAA5'S: EVERY YEAR, EVERY QUARTER

TOC'S: EVERY YEAR, EVERY QUARTER

SOC'S: EVERY 3 YEARS FOR 2 QUARTERS

INORGANICS: EVERY YEAR

ASBESTOS: EVERY 9 YEARS

RADIOLOGICAL: EVERY 9 YEARS

LEAD & COPPER: EVERY 3 YEARS (Citizen's Participation)

NITRATES: EVERY YEAR

If any sample tests above the MCL the State is notified and NOV'S are issued resulting in public notification and possible fines or both.

The City of Cherryville Water Plant has won awards for our drinking water in taste tests and the AWOP (Area Wide Optimization Program) awards. We strive everyday to bring the citizens of Cherryville the best water we can. Public Health is our main concern at the Water Plant. Remember we drink the water too!

Mayor Austell shared that new water lines are now in place to improve the quality of water in our City. Patty is also using a new formula to help clear up iron in the water. Mayor Austell shared how many complaints we had last year at this time compared to the number of calls we had this past year. That number in 2012 was 25 complaints, in 2013 there were 7 complaints. Some of those calls were tied to small lines. Mayor Austell asked Brandon if he thought we were providing a better quality of water and he did agree that we were now that some water lines had been replaced around town. We have

received many compliments from citizens about the improvement. Mayor Austell thanked both Patty and Brandon.

DISCUSSION OF ESTABLISHING A METHOD OF PAYING UTILITY BILLS WITH CREDIT CARDS:

Finance Director Dixie Wall approached the podium and explained a program that she would like the Council to consider for utility payments. Currently we have a credit card processor that is charging the City approximately \$6,300.00 annually. We also still have a bank account open for credit card use only. The cost is approximately \$3,800.00 annually. If the processor gets changed the bank account can be closed saving us those fees. Dixie explained that with the new processor a customer can call in and pay over the phone, log in online and pay their bill and it is in real time. As soon as a payment is made it is applied to the customer's account. This can be done 24/7 seven days a week. Customers can also receive a phone call reminding them that their bill is due and have an option at that time to pay over the phone. There would be a charge to the city of \$1.21 per customer for this program. The charge would be approximately \$3,600.00 annually. For use of the credit cards we are looking at two different options. One option is the City absorbs the fees costing the City \$1.41 per transaction or we can pass these fees onto the customer costing the customer \$2.50 per transaction. The City's rate is cheaper because we would get a discount. With the City paying the \$1.41 and using the number of credit cards used last year, it would have cost the city approximately \$3,500.00 annually for a savings of \$2,800.00. Councilmember Dalton shared that all customers still have the option of paying their bill and paying no fees. The option of using a credit card is a convenience to the customer. If a customer is out of town and forgot to pay their utility bill they would be able to call in and pay over the phone so that their utilities are not disconnected. Dixie shared that after checking with others that have this program, they have notice the cut off list has been cut in half. This is a benefit for the customers that would want to make two payments in a month to pay their bill from home at seven o'clock at night. Dixie shared that 97% of the credit cards taken are Visa and Master Card. Councilmember Dalton recognized that during certain times of the month the utility office is a very busy place and this would help with the busy times. Councilmember Dalton wants to close the bank account that is open currently for the use of credit cards and save those fees. To close this account would save approximately \$200.00 a month. Dixie Wall recommended that the City absorb the fees because it would encourage customers to pay with a credit card which means the city would get their money. Councilmember Dalton expressed his concern about absorbing the fees and the use of credit cards going up costing the city even more. Councilmember Dalton shared that with the rising cost of electricity the City needs to save all we can. Councilmember Parker feels like the City should break even. Mayor Austell shared that if the city is not breaking even and it is not beneficial then the Council can adjust it as time goes by. Mayor Austell also shared that he has had customers ask him when we would going to get the ability to pay online or over the phone. He is aware that a lot of others around us already have this in place. Councilmember Parker feels like the City should absorb the fees because we just passed on an increase that is killing our citizens and he is one of them his utility bills went up \$359.00 for one month for his house and business. Councilmember Dalton explained that the customer does not have to pay this, the choice if theirs.

Councilmember Parker feels like we are sticking it to the citizens by passing on the fee. Councilmember Parker made a motion to absorb the fees. There was no second and the motion died on the floor. Councilmember Dalton made a motion that we accept the program but that we do not accept the fees. Councilmember Kiser seconded the motion. The vote was 2 for and 2 against. Councilmember's Kiser and Dalton were for and Councilmember's Parker and Campbell were against. Mayor Austell broke the tie by voting that the City absorb the fees. He feels like this is something that can be looked at monthly and we can stay on top of what it is costing us and change it at anytime. Ben and Palmer shared with Mayor Austell that the motion was for the City to pass the fees on and he voted against. Mayor Austell then changed his vote for the City not to absorb the fees but to pass it onto the customer so that we can get the program in place. It can still be looked at and changes made at anytime. Councilmember Parker asked Dixie to make sure that the customers understand that there will be a cost for using a credit card. She assured him that they would know. Dixie will put a flyer in the utility bills. Councilmember Dalton asked Dixie to make sure the flyer states that there is no charge to come in and pay with a check our cash.

Mayor Austell shared that the meeting rules have changed and citizens can no longer speak from the floor on every agenda item. Citizens that wish to speak must do so under the agenda item "Citizens To Be Heard." Mayor Austell explained that he is not trying to be rude and not acknowledge citizens but the rules have changed. The new rules are on the web site for citizens to view.

CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATION FOR CITY ISSUED CREDIT CARD:

City Manager Ben Blackburn explained to the Mayor and Council that the City needed a major credit card for many reasons. There are times when we need supplies with different companies and we need a credit card. The City adopted a credit card policy on April 13, 2013 that is in place and is being enforced. Only the City Manager and the Finance Director can give access to the card. Councilmember Dalton agreed that the city does need a credit card. Councilmember Kiser made a motion that the city apply for a city credit card with a \$5,000 limit. Councilmember Dalton seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous. Mayor Austell asked if there were anymore discussion on getting a credit card. Councilmember Campbell stated that if we are going to go this route again and have a city credit card then he wants accountability given monthly, monthly not quarterly not yearly but monthly. Councilmember Campbell shared that if the Council did not know what the card was being used for then he did not want any part of it. Mayor Austell asked Lessa Workman in Accts. Payable if she would make copies of the monthly statements and put in their mailboxes. She told them that she would. Vote was unanimous.

CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENT TO CITY EMPLOYEE PERSONNEL POLICY:

Ben Blackburn shared that in section VIII of the Employee Personnel Policy is states **that upon the event of any regular status full-time employee's death, the City would provide one full year's salary, whether the employee was on or off-duty at the time of death. This salary is to be paid to the beneficiary of the employee. The City will also pay all of the unused vacation and comp-time earned by the employee at the time of death to**

the beneficiary. Mr. Blackburn asked Council to review this policy because all employees are a part of the Local Government Retirement System where there is a death benefit to an employee that has full time status that dies in their term of service or 180 days following their last day. The formula is based on the 12 highest months of pay for the past 24 months of employment. The amount will not be below \$25,000 or above \$50,000. With this being a part of our Personnel Policy there is a grey area that can be interpreted differently as it relates to that benefit is also offered by the City as well as the Local Government Retirement System. After reviewing this Mr. Blackburn asked the Council to consider deleting this portion of the EPP. Mr. Blackburn also shared that he would have this on the October Agenda. Councilmember Dalton asked if the way it is currently written that if an employee were to die, the City would also provide a year's salary above and beyond what the Local Government Retirement System would provide. Councilmember Dalton asked if the City had an insurance policy to support this policy? No the City does not have an insurance policy to cover this.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Councilmember Dalton shared that Mike Cooke has started a travel ball team and is very interested in community service. Mike and his team have worked very hard on the park across from the post office and Heritage Park on Jacob Street. Both parks look great and the city appreciates the hard work the team has put into them.

City Manager Ben Blackburn gave an update on the BB&T building. The roof and the sprinkler system are being looked at and we should know more soon.

Jeff Cash reminded everyone that the CFD would have its annual 911 service at the fire department at 9:00 am.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Austell asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Campbell made a motion and it was seconded by Councilmember Parker. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Adopted this 15 day of October, 2013

Robert D. Austell
Honorable Mayor, Robert D. Austell

Paige H. Green
City Clerk, Paige H. Green

(SEAL)