

Minutes
Forsyth City Council Meeting
February 6, 2023

Call to Order

Mayor Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation and Roll Call

Mayor Wilson led the Pledge of Allegiance. Pastor Billy Beard gave the invocation. In attendance for the council meeting was Mayor Eric Wilson, Councilmembers Mike Dodd, Julius Stroud, Greg Goolsby, Melvin Lawrence, Chris Hewett, and John Howard. Also in attendance for the meeting was City Manager, Janice Hall; City Attorney, Bobby Melton; and City Clerk, Regina Ivie. All members of council were in attendance therefore all unanimous votes will be six votes (Dodd, Goolsby, Stroud, Lawrence, Hewett, and Howard).

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Stroud made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the minutes from the council meeting held on January 17, 2023.

Mr. Goolsby made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Introduction of Main Street Coordinator, Takeimia Childs.

Ms. Hall introduced the city's new Main Street Coordinator, Takeimia Childs. She stated she's a lifelong resident of Monroe County, a graduate of Mary Person's High School.

Takeimia Childs expressed her appreciation for the opportunity as Main Street Coordinator; excited to learn more, and to help the downtown community.

Approval of an application for the sale of alcoholic beverages for Joseph W. Proctor Jr with the Monroe County Moose Lodge at 524 Cabiness Road.

Mr. Melton reviewed the application for the Monroe County Moose Lodge 2424, Inc.; tax parcel F32 001. The applicant, Joseph W. Proctor Jr seeks a wine-pouring license at 524 Cabiness Road. The legal advertisement was published in the Monroe Reporter on January 25, and February 1, 2023.

Mr. Goolsby made a motion to approve the application as presented. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of an application for the sale of alcoholic beverages for Michael C. Tyler with Outside Ventures, LLC at 87 E. Johnston Street.

Mr. Melton reviewed the application of Michael C. Tyler at a proposed location of 87 E. Johnston Street. The applicant seeks a license for the sale of alcoholic beverages (beer/malt beverages-pouring; wine-pouring; and beer/malt beverages-package, wine package; and distilled spirits/liquor package; and retail pouring distilled spirits). The legal advertisement was published in the Monroe Reporter on January 25, and February 1, 2023.

Mayor Wilson opened the public hearing per Mr. Melton's guidance in favor of or opposition to the application for Michael C. Tyler.

Ms. Hall stated currently there are two buildings on the property; previously two parcels now combined into one parcel. The smaller building on the lot is likely to be demolished; remodel the larger building on site. If the application is approved tonight Mr. Tyler will need a period to do the remodeling of the building. A plan will be developed, obtain funding, and present to planning and zoning any variances needed. Inventory is required for liquor package; he will not be able to meet that requirement until final plans are completed and the business is open. He will begin pay his license fees so that the license is active. Ms. Hall further stated the application indicated the incorrect address of 87 E. Johnston. Eighty-seven is the E. Adams address, 84 is the correct number for the E. Johnston address. The map parcel number is correct in the advertisement. 87 E. Johnston does not exist.

Mr. Chad Tyler spoke in favor of the application; he requested twenty-four months to complete the project.

Mr. Stroud made a motion to approve the application as presented, to allow twenty-four months to complete the project, and grant an exception to the inventory requirement. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of a street closure request from Forsyth Monroe Chamber of Commerce for the Forsythia Festival on March 10 – 12, 2023 and a 5K Race on March 24, 2023.

Mr. Stroud made a motion to approve the street closure requests as presented. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Appointment of Debbie Menard and Rebecca Stone to the Bicentennial Committee.

Mr. Stroud made a motion to appoint Debbie Menard and Rebecca Stone to the bicentennial committee. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Gilda Stanberry

- **Hotel/Motel Tax Increase**

Ms. Stanberry reviewed that the legislative process is complete for the increase of the hotel/motel tax to 7 percent. The 60/40 split with the city and convention & visitors bureau would adjust after the ordinance is approved by council. Mr. Hewett made a motion to advertise to amend the hotel/motel tax percentage. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

- **Convention & Visitors Bureau presentation**

Ms. Helen Walker expressed her appreciation to Councilmember John Howard, and Kerri Swearingen for their dedication and support while serving on the Convention & Visitors Board.

- **Bicentennial Update**

Ms. Stanberry reviewed ideas presented at the second meeting of the bicentennial committee. The date has been set for September 23 & 24, 2023. Officers need to be elected, finances set up, a logo needs to be set up. In closing Ms. Stanberry requested a contribution to the bicentennial committee of \$5,000.

Mr. Hewett made a motion to contribute \$5,000 to the bicentennial committee. Seconded by Mr. Dodd.

Mr. Stroud amended the motion to contribute \$7,500 to the bicentennial committee. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of surplus equipment from the fire department.

Mr. Hewett made a motion to approve the surplus equipment as presented. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of a right of way service contract with Southern Line Contractors, Inc.

Mr. Hewett made a motion to approve the right of way service contract with Southern Line Contractors, Inc as presented. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of a revised memorandum of understanding between Georgia Department of Transportation and the City of Forsyth.

Mr. Dodd made a motion to approve the memorandum of understanding from the Georgia Department of Transportation as presented. Seconded by Mr. Stroud; the motion carried unanimously.

Review of a proposal by W. James Green.

Ms. Hall reviewed that Mr. Green's proposal relates to the south interceptor sewer line project that was completed in 2012-2013. The sewer line is from Blount Street through the edge of Mary Battle's property on Blount Street to the back edge of property that Mr. James Green now owns, at 276 MLK, and through the back of other properties south of Mr. Green's property. Mr. Green purchased 276 MLK in 2015, he was not the owner of the property at the completion of the project. Ms. Hall stated that she has been working with him for quite some time. Mr. Green contends that the contractor did the project used a portion of property not within the construction easement and the area is unlevel and has sunken. Numerous meetings were held with Mr. Green, the contractor, city employees, and H2O personnel; no resolution could be agreed upon. Mr. Green has obtained pricing to do the repairs to the property. City employees aren't allowed to work on private property. Ms. Hall reviewed the proposal Mr. Green provided for repairs.

Mr. Green feels the issue was mishandled in the beginning, and a mistake done by the contractor of the project. Mr. Green requested the city pay for the expense of the repair; he stated he will cover the cost of the fence replacement.

Mr. Stroud made a motion to reimburse Mr. James Green \$7,500 for the earthwork repairs to 276 MLK. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Mike Bilderback

Mr. Bilderback stated he had previously contacted Mayor Wilson and couple councilmembers regarding the illegal sale of the treatment plant. He mentioned he read where an easement for the plant had been purchased for \$30,000+; apparently there is interest in the plant, the discharge point. Mr. Bilderback mentioned speaking previously about vacating the sale; he doesn't understand in his opinion why council would pay 30k+ when it could have been vacated for less than 10k. He's hopeful the city is more than just the discharge. He questioned if the sale was vacated would there be further interest in the property. No private individual needs a 5mdg plant; it belongs in the hands of a municipality.

Mayor Wilson stated he sees great potential of the city to take charge of our future city water needs with the easement. We had expressed our interest in years even back to when Mr. Bilderback was chairman. The city's engineer saw potential for the easement after the property was transferred.

Councilmember Howard left the meeting at 6:56 p.m. At this time there were five members of council in attendance therefore, all unanimous votes will be five votes (Dodd, Goolsby, Stroud, Hewett, and Lawrence).

Walter Goodson

Mr. Walter Goodson reviewed a letter in response to his prior requests for a bias crime report. He inquired as to what categories qualifies for a bias crime report. He provided a copy of a letter from Ms. Hall where she had provided a response to his request; each councilmember received a copy of the letter. He asked repeatedly why he doesn't qualify for a bias crime report.

Ms. Hall provided a sequence of events of calls she made on his behalf to the GBI. Mr. Goodson does not understand why he does not qualify for a bias crime report.

Mr. Goodson reviewed an incident at his property where he states an officer choked him; the officer falsified the incident report, turned his body camera on and off. He referenced a prior conversation with Chief Harris. Mr. Goodson stated he should be able to go to his law enforcement agency to get a bias crime report; the city's agency has failed him time and time again. Additional incidents were discussed by Mr. Goodson; harassment by an officer on his property after attendance of a meeting, another instance with a man on probation at his house with three warrants was not arrested, and an issue on MLK Day of him spinning his tires. He expressed complaints regarding open records requests. He inquired again as to why he doesn't qualify for a bias crime report.

Public hearing to consider an ordinance to amend section 2-1 of the city code regarding council meeting dates.

Mr. Melton stated the ordinance comes before to council to amend Section 2-1 of the city code. Regular meetings of city council will be held on first and third Monday each month at 6:00 p.m. except when a federal or state holiday is that day. The meeting is to be held on the next calendar day that is not a holiday. The legal advertisement was published in the Monroe Reporter on January 18, and January 25, 2023.

Mayor Wilson opened the public hearing for comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed amendment. There being no comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed amendment Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Goolsby made a motion to approve the ordinance to amend section 2-1 of the city code regarding council meeting dates as presented. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval to advertise to change the definition of a microbrewery.

Mr. Stroud made a motion to advertise to the change the definition of a microbrewery. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Requisitions Greater than \$6,000

Davis Plumbing \$32,215.00

GoForth Williamson, Inc \$24,195.00

GoForth Williamson, Inc \$16,050.00

Hutchinson Auto Mall \$60,000.00

West Chatham Warning \$10,373.33

Wade Ford, Inc \$46,569.76 & Equipment Related to \$9,000.

Ms. Hall stated the vehicle for the fire chief was sold at Hutchinson Auto Mall dealership. The vehicle is now being purchased from Five Star, same cost.

Mr. Stroud made a motion to approve the requisitions with the change of dealership for the fire Chief's vehicle. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

City Manager's Report

Ms. Hall provided the following report:

- Nominations for 2023-24 GMA District 6 Officers are now being accepted. Information regarding Expression of Interest sent out last Monday to everyone.
- Final inspections were performed on the two USDA emergency projects this morning and USDA was pleased with the completion of the projects. Final payment will be made to PF Moon for these projects. The projects were Filter 5&6 and the Air Piping.
- Electric department has worked the past 3 Thursday evenings checking and repairing streetlights. They have found several that were not operating at all or not operating properly and are repairing those as they find them. Should be complete with the complete ride through in couple of weeks and then will have a crew work one evening a month to make sure all are operating properly. If you see a streetlight that needs to be repaired, please call City Hall or use SeeClickFix to report the issue.
- The utility pole inventory project has begun. Once complete, we will have all information regarding each utility pole in our system.
- Plant Vogtle tour paperwork is due February 15 if you plan to take the tour on February 23. Please see Lisa C or Regina to sign up and complete your paperwork. Holly must have at least 5 and no more than 9 to take the tour.
- A local citizen reached out to request permission to put out homemade signs recognizing Malik Herring as being from Forsyth. We took this on as a Main Street promotion and will getting signs made to post around the square.
- Travis Huff has been promoted to public works supervisor and is doing a good job learning that new role.
- Issues with grapple truck may have resolved themselves – at least for now. Truck has been up and running for 2 weeks without issues.
- Working with Regional Commission to submit Assistance to Firefighters Grant for fire department.

- We have vacancies in public works, police department, and H2O is hiring as well if you know of anyone looking for a job.
- Continue to experience long lead times on various materials that we use on a regular basis. Most recently it is on the service wire that we use – currently at more than 8-week lead time for orders.
- New Christmas tree for City Hall was delivered last week.
- Attended 2 training classes last weekend in Atlanta. One on Open Records and the other on Revitalizing Neighborhoods which included presentations on creating and using Land Bank Authority and Housing Revitalization.

City Attorney Report

Mr. Melton stated an alcohol license application for Old Mill Market (beer & wine pouring) will be presented at the February 20, 2023, meeting.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Wilson recognized Malik Herring of the Kansas City Chiefs for his participation in the recent super bowl. Mayor Wilson reviewed a recent call with GMA for the Legislative Policy Council where it's being discussed about housing opportunities and solutions. ACCG and GMA are working together to ensure the city's decisions are being preserved.

Council Board Reports

Mr. Hewett stated Hospital Board will be having a business after hours event on February 23rd.

Mr. Lawrence stated he's on the Convention & Visitors Bureau; the recent meeting went well and he's learned so much so far.

Mr. Goolsby stated the board for the Monroe County Development Authority meets Tuesday, February 14th.

Mr. Stroud stated the bicentennial committee is a diverse group, he's proud of the direction of the committee, and more to follow.

Mr. Dodd reviewed briefly a recent Regional Commission meeting. He also stated at the Golf Board irrigation was discussed, the roads, and the parking lot. Mr. Dodd also mentioned the Tree Board needs board members.

Additional Business

Mr. Goolsby expressed interest in an Ad Hoc committee; revitalization zone. He would like to serve on the committee, as well as Julius Stroud. He recommended Hal Clarke from Planning and Zoning Board. He recommended Commissioner Davis also. He feels there is great opportunity for the committee. Revitalization of existing neighborhoods, and blight would be discussed.

Mayor Wilson appointed Greg Goolsby as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee as well as the members you mentioned; Julius Stroud, Hal Clarke, and Commissioner Davis. Mr. Hewett offered to join the committee also.

Public Comments

No one came forward for public comments.

Executive Session

Mr. Hewett made a motion to enter executive session at 7:37 p.m. to discuss pending litigation and personnel. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Hewett made a motion to leave executive session at 8:07 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Stroud; the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Goolsby made a motion to appoint Regina Ivie, City Clerk as Assistant City Manager at a Grade 40 Step 1 on the city's approved pay scale. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence; the motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss the council meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.