

COUNCIL CHAMBER - CITY HALL - GADSDEN, ALABAMA
JUNE 9, 2020 - 11:00 A.M.

The City Council met on June 9, 2020, in regular session.

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Council President Toles. On roll call by the City Clerk, Iva Nelson, the following council members answered present: Toles, Williams, Worthy, Back, Wilson, Cannon and Reed. The clerk stated a quorum was present and the meeting was open for business. Mayor Guyton, Heath Williamson, and Chief Jaggears were also present.

The invocation was given by Heath Williamson.

The minutes of the last work session and council meeting held on June 2, 2020, were approved by unanimous vote.

Payment of the HTE System accounts for the week of May 29-June 4, 2020, were ratified by unanimous vote.

#200619-200796	General	\$746,025.19
----------------	---------	--------------

Deborah Gaither, Emergency Management Agency Director, encouraged everyone to be “weather aware” tomorrow due to potential storms. She provided an update on COVID-19 and announced a drive-through testing event at Riverview Hospital on Wednesday, as well as health department testing on Tuesday and Thursday. Ms. Gaither announced a testing event at Dwight Baptist Church on June 17. She noted reports are now being issued each Tuesday, with weekly conference calls on Wednesday.

RESOLUTIONS PRESENTED FOR CONSIDERATION

(1) The following resolution was introduced in writing for consideration:

RESOLUTION NO. R-125-20

AUTHORIZING APPLICATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF
THE ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS SAFER GRANT

(Authorizing Application and Acceptance - Assistance to Firefighters SAFER Grant - \$2,149,753.95 - For hiring 15 additional firefighters for 3-year performance period - No requirement to keep the firefighters after grant period and no local match required)

Councilman Cannon moved to adopt the resolution as introduced, which motion was seconded by Councilman Wilson and unanimously adopted.

(2) The following resolution was introduced in writing for consideration:

RESOLUTION NO. R-126-20

APPOINTING MEMBER TO GREATER ETOWAH 310 BOARD

(Appointing Danny Jackson, replacing Olivia Killian, for term expiring on April 1, 2026)

Councilman Wilson moved to adopt the resolution as introduced, which motion was seconded by Councilman Cannon and unanimously adopted.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Craig Scott, Library Director and Complete Count Committee member, gave an update on census response and mentioned the possibility of using geo-fencing services. He announced reopening of the main library branch next Monday, noting branch libraries will open in a couple of weeks.

PUBLIC

Savannah Miles and Shundrica Dozier (Black Lives Matter) presented a list of community concerns. Ms. Miles described her personal experiences and perspective on racism while growing up in Gadsden, attending Harvard University, and returning to Gadsden to advocate for racial and economic justice.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REMARKS

The Mayor and Council joined in commending protestors and law enforcement officers for the peaceful protest this past Sunday. Councilman Worthy thanked the Gadsden Police Department for their actions in de-escalating two situations with counter protestors. Councilman Back commended Black Lives Matter for their well-organized and important message, stating he feels they will be pleased with some of the answers to their concerns. Councilman Wilson apologized to Gadsden police officers for his response to counter-protestors during the event.

Councilman Williams referred to conversations that have taken place regarding potential reform and pointed out brutality should not reflect on good officers. He shared his views regarding the Civil War and monuments in the South. Councilman Williams said these symbols are remembrances of our nation's weakest moments and requested the Council President to convene the Public Safety Committee and consider removing or relocating the Emma Sansom statue and renaming Forrest Cemetery.

Councilman Cannon affirmed that God created everyone as equals and said he felt it would be a shame to take down a monument to a farm girl who committed no wrong. He also objected to renaming Forrest Cemetery due to its historical significance.

Councilman Back referred to integration, which he experienced, and stressed the need to pray for God to change people's hearts. He affirmed his belief system instilled by his parents, noting he strives to treat everyone as he wants to be treated.

Councilman Wilson expressed support for young people and their cause and suggested relocating the Emma Sansom monument to Forrest Cemetery. He agreed with renaming the cemetery, as well as Forrest Avenue. Councilman Wilson said he feels there is a way to honor ancestors and their history without creating pain for others. Councilman Cannon questioned if he felt other streets (Lincoln, Stonewall, etc.) should be renamed and Councilman Wilson advised Forrest Avenue is his top priority, and others could be considered individually.

Councilman Reed expressed confidence that the council will discuss issues and arrive at the best decision for all.

President Toles encouraged not losing energy in pursuing social reform and working in the community. She stressed the importance of working together, with priorities of individual, family, church and community. President Toles recalled non-violent marching in the 1960's and stressed the need for learning to prevent uneducated comments.

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was duly adjourned.

Iva Nelson, City Clerk (6-9-2020)
