

COUNCIL CHAMBER - CITY HALL - GADSDEN, ALABAMA
FEBRUARY 15, 2022 - 12:30 P.M.

The City Council met on February 15, 2022, in regular session.

Due to the length of two executive sessions following today's work session, the meeting was called to order at approximately 12:30 p.m. by Council President Toles. On roll call by the City Clerk, Iva Nelson, the following council members answered present: Toles, Williams, Worthy, Back, and Wilson. Councilmen Cannon and Reed were absent. The clerk stated a quorum was present and the meeting was open for business. Mayor Guyton, Heath Williamson, Lee Roberts and Chief Jaggars were also present.

The invocation was given by Brian Harbison.

On behalf of the Emergency Management Agency, Fire Chief Wil Reed reported on current Covid-19 statistics. He noted no fire department staff is out due to Covid and PUI investigations continue to decrease. In response to inquiries from Council members, Chief Reed expressed hope that the joint mental health program with Judge Hassell will begin soon and one medic has returned to work. He added another medic will probably not return due to illness. Councilman Wilson referred to misinformation and clarified that the new fire station at Banks Park was already planned and funded before American Rescue Plan funds became available. He noted discussions are upcoming with the Fire Chief and Personnel Director regarding the firefighter pay issue.

The minutes of the Special Called Council meeting on February 1, 2022, and the Education and Recreation Committee, Work Session, and Council meetings held on February 8, 2022, were approved by unanimous vote.

Payment of the HTE System accounts for the week of February 4-10 were ratified by unanimous vote.

#213735-213789	General	\$334,153.77
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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The following ordinance, which was introduced for first reading at last week's meeting, was presented for consideration:

ORDINANCE NO. O-01-22

AMENDING SECTION 6-45 OF THE CITY CODE
REGARDING ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

(Amending City Code Section 6-45 - Relating to applications for Alcoholic Beverage License - Requiring criminal background report from ABI or FBI to not be older than 6 months - Removing criminal investigation verbiage from administrative review process)

Councilman Williams moved to adopt the ordinance, which motion was seconded by Councilman Back and unanimously adopted.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

President Toles stated this was the time and place as advertised to conduct the following public hearings:

(1) The floor was opened to allow anyone to speak for or in opposition to a resolution ordering the abatement of nuisances on property at 253 Tabor Road, William F. and Mary E. Rollins being the last known owners. Brian Harbison, Building Inspector, stated no improvements have been made since procedures began in September 2021, and recommended abatement. He added the house has been used to harbor animals. Steve Daniel stated he has pictures and described deplorable conditions, noting the resident stays there every night with no utilities and circumvents the condemnation in effect. He reported there are 27 cats and added City animal control officers, nuisance inspectors, and the fire department have come out due to complaints. Steve Grogan described rodent problems and the resident's actions to trap them and release them elsewhere. Sally Grogan said the resident hides the animals from animal control and they are in very poor condition and need help, especially one dog she has observed. The following resolution was introduced in writing for consideration:

RESOLUTION NO. R-65-22

ORDERING ABATEMENT OF NUISANCE

(Ordering Abatement of Nuisance - 253 Tabor Road - District 7 - William F. and Mary E. Rollins)

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

(2) The floor was opened to allow anyone to speak for or in opposition to a resolution approving the issuance of an alcoholic beverage license for Barneys Roadhouse at 4405 Journey Place. No one spoke. The following resolution was presented for consideration:

RESOLUTION NO. R-66-22

APPROVING THE ISSUANCE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE LICENSE

(Heavenly Blessings, LLC - Barneys Roadhouse - 4405 Journey Place in District 6 - Restaurant Retail Liquor License)

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

(3) The floor was opened to allow anyone to speak for or in opposition to a resolution approving the issuance of an alcoholic beverage license for Tre Ragazzis Italian Café at 1001 Rainbow Drive, Suite D. No one spoke. The following resolution was presented for consideration:

RESOLUTION NO. R-67-22

APPROVING THE ISSUANCE OF
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE LICENSE

(Tonis Italian Specialities, LLC - Tre Ragazzis Italian Café - 1001 Rainbow Drive, Suite D, in District 4 - Retail Beer and Table Wine, on or off premises)

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

(Councilman Williams left the meeting at this time.)

RESOLUTIONS PRESENTED FOR CONSIDERATION

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

RESOLUTION NO. R-68-22

AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURE OF CORONAVIRUS
STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS

(Authorizing Expenditure of American Rescue Plan funds - \$50,000.00 - The Love Center - For meal assistance or other services in response to negative economic impacts of Covid-19)

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. R-69-22

AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURE OF CORONAVIRUS
STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS

(Authorizing Expenditure of American Rescue Plan funds - \$50,000.00 - Metropolitan Area Noon Nutrition Association (MANNA) - For meal assistance or other services in response to negative economic impacts of Covid-19)

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

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Kerry Payne, Personnel Director, affirmed that the new fire station was funded in the General Fund and money was shifted to provide Covid pay and raises for employees. He encouraged people to apply for job openings in various departments and noted \$3,000 incentives were designated for the next ten police officers hired, with five being paid. Mr. Payne read W-2 salaries for various firemen, noting the average is \$57,000. He noted the upcoming meeting will examine pay structure and hours worked, and said a couple of former firemen are considering returning. Mr. Payne announced a ribbon cutting for the East Gadsden Community Center at 1:30 p.m. on March 1. In response to Councilman Worthy’s inquiry, Mr. Payne estimated firemen starting pay to be in the \$13 per hour range. A discussion followed and it was noted that many factors affect the formula used to figure hourly salary. Councilman Worthy objected to the number of hours that must be worked for firemen to earn high salaries and requested a report including that. He also suggested hiring civilian employees to write routine police reports. At the request of Councilman Worthy, Fire Chief Reed explained the number of hours worked over a three-week period, as well as various incentive pays. Councilman Wilson also commented on the complicated system, and said he is glad to see progress on the meeting. Mr. Payne agreed with the need for employees to receive competitive wages and work less hours. President Toles said overtime is excessive and employee pay and benefits must be balanced with fiscal responsibility.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REMARKS

Councilman Worthy congratulated Ashton Gray for a great Black History program at The Venue on Sunday. He referred to complaints about the park on Joseph T. Robinson Street near Tuscaloosa Avenue, which is owned by the Board of Education. He said he met with school representatives yesterday and hopes that repairs and improvements can be made. Councilman Worthy referred to “dirty politics” and untrue rumors circulating about him, describing recent encounters with a citizen and policemen.

Councilman Back agreed that firemen pay is complex and expressed support for paying more to policemen and firemen, especially if Gadsden is losing employees to other cities. He encouraged responding to the rapidly changing job market, while balancing the long-term effect of providing raises.

Councilman Wilson commended the owners of Barney’s Roadhouse, who upheld their agreement to bring sales tax payments current, which allowed the City to approve their alcoholic beverage license.

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

Iva Nelson, City Clerk (2-15-22)

FOURTH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM - BID OPENING
FEBRUARY 15, 2022 - 2:00 P.M.

The City Clerk received bid proposals as advertised for the following bid:

Bid No. 3467 - Noccalula Falls Train Track Replacement Project

STX Corporation	\$949,814.00
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Copies of the bid will be forwarded to the City Engineer, and a recommendation will be made to the Council.
