

COUNCIL CHAMBER - CITY HALL - GADSDEN, ALABAMA  
JUNE 16, 2020 - 11:00 A.M.

The City Council met on June 16, 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, Lee Roberts and Chief Jaggars were also present.

The invocation was given by Kent Back.

The minutes of the last work session and council meeting held on June 9, 2020, were approved by unanimous vote.

Payment of the HTE System accounts for the week of June 5-June 11, 2020 were ratified by unanimous vote.

#200797-200970	General	\$1,076,812.70
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Deborah Gaither, Emergency Management Agency Director, provided an update, noting an increase in COVID-19 cases. She expressed concern that large gatherings occurred over the weekend. Ms. Gaither announced a testing event tomorrow at Dwight Baptist Church and said testing is provided by appointment at the health department on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings. A night-time testing event at the health department and one at Antioch Family Life Center are being planned.

RESOLUTIONS PRESENTED FOR CONSIDERATION

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

RESOLUTION NO. R-127-20

APPOINTING AND REAPPOINTING  
MEMBERS TO ZONING BOARD

(Appointing David Leeks to replace Maurice Wright for term expiring on May 18, 2021 - Reappointing David Freeman and Charles Trotter for terms expiring on May 18, 2023)

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. R-128-20

AUTHORIZING AGREEMENT WITH JBW&T, INC.

(Authorizing Agreement - JBW&T, Inc. - \$59,798.18 - To provide construction engineering and inspection services for ADA Compliant Sidewalk Improvements Project - ALDOT Grant, with City's 20% match being \$11,960.00)

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

#### ORDINANCE PRESENTED FOR FIRST READING

An ordinance authorizing conveyance of property at 107 7<sup>th</sup> Street North in East Gadsden to Lolitheia Ealy was presented in writing for the first reading. Since no action was taken, the ordinance will be placed on next week's agenda for consideration.

#### PUBLIC

Lance Bristow spoke in favor of separation of church and state, as well as issues presented by Black Lives Matter. He referred to Blues Lives Matter and experiencing the riots in Los Angeles, stating he feels as if he's personally under attack in light of current events.

Ellis Brock said he feels the people of Gadsden should be able to vote on disposition of the Emma Sansom monument. He expressed hope that it will stay here as a part of everybody's history.

Frank Leatherwood stated opposition to the removal of any monument and renaming of city cemetery, streets, parks, etc. He noted monuments from other eras of history have been defaced, as well as Confederate. Mr. Leatherwood denounced slavery and racism and stated the importance of learning from history and teaching future generations.

#### MAYOR AND COUNCIL REMARKS

Councilman Williams thanked everyone who presented comments and affirmed the vast majority of people denounce bad acts, such as the murder of George Floyd. He said he feels the impact of symbols that memorialize hatred of black people are a blind spot to many. Councilman Williams said he's not advocating destruction of the Emma Sansom monument, only placement in an appropriate area. He said this is an opportunity for society to not hold on to symbols, engage in dialogue and move forward.

Councilman Back urged following the expertise of the EMA Director and medical professionals to slow the spread of COVID-19. He thanked the Public Works Department for their work with less employees and asked for the public's patience. Councilman Back announced a community meeting at 5:30 p.m. on June 29 at the First Baptist Family Life Center. He encouraged listening to others and looking inward as a means to achieve substantive change.

Councilman Cannon affirmed his belief in God, prayers, and the pledge to the flag, and encouraged protestors to demonstrate peacefully. He referred to many communications requesting to leave the Emma Sansom monument in place, with one wishing to move it to a museum. Councilman Cannon said history cannot be erased and encouraged everyone to come together to build up our city, respect our police officers, and take advantage of available job opportunities.

Councilman Wilson expressed disappointment in peoples' social media responses and labeling him an "outsider." He cited his many connections to the community through residence and relatives, some of whom are Civil War veterans buried in Forrest Cemetery. He referred to correspondence and questioned how Facebook comments could constitute a petition. Councilman Wilson related later history of Emma Sansom, as well as General Forrest and said he had only suggested that the present location was not the best place for the monument. Councilman Wilson referred to the racial percentage of his district (49 black/49 white/2 other) and is speaking what he thinks is right.

Councilman Reed noted the council is a body of different opinions, but is still one body. He announced this year's July 4 fireworks display will involve smaller shells, in compliance with State Fire Marshall guidelines.

Councilwoman Toles commended the Black Lives Matter group for their participation in today's discussion, and acknowledged the concern about police nationwide. She referred to those who love to see a fight and a divide and encouraged conversation and work to change the system, which is more important than changing a symbol. President Toles urged everyone to be involved in their community.

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

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Iva Nelson, City Clerk (6-16-20)

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