

COUNCIL CHAMBER - CITY HALL - GADSDEN, ALABAMA
JULY 25, 2023 - 11:00 A.M.

The City Council met on July 25, 2023, in regular session.

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Council President Back. On roll call by the City Clerk, Iva Nelson, the following council members answered present: Latham, Smith, Avery, Back, Wilson, Minatra and Robinson. The clerk stated a quorum was present and the meeting was open for business. Mayor Ford, Heath Williamson, Lee Roberts and Chief Jaggears were also present.

The invocation was given by Councilwoman Latham.

The minutes of the Public Works Committee, Work Session, and Council meetings held on July 18, 2023 were approved by unanimous vote.

Payment of the HTE System accounts for the week of July 14-20 were ratified by unanimous vote.

#225837-226016	General	\$1,553,604.21
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Mayor Ford presented the following commendations:

- (1) Expressing thanks to Fire Chief Wil Reed for his service as Interim Emergency Management Agency Director
- (2) Recognizing the Huntley-Gilbert-Bennett family for selecting Nocalula Falls for their reunion event on July 28-29

RESOLUTIONS PRESENTED FOR CONSIDERATION

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

RESOLUTION NO. R-443-23

AUTHORIZING A SPECIAL USE PERMIT FOR AT&T

(Authorizing Special Use Permit - AT&T Wireless - To install their equipment and modify existing wireless telecommunication facility located at 500 Clayton Boulevard)

In response to Councilman Wilson's inquiry, David Andrews (Center for Municipal Solutions) advised Gadsden adopted an ordinance prior to State legislation regarding small cell, which was not preempted. He noted cell providers have not received Broadband funding, which is intended to primarily benefit rural areas.

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

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

RESOLUTION NO. R-444-23

AUTHORIZING DIRECT DEPOSIT FROM METLIFE

(Authorizing receipt of direct deposits from MetLife Insurance Company - To facilitate City's continued receipt of dividend payments)

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

ORDINANCE - FIRST READING

The following ordinance was introduced in writing and read by President Back:

ORDINANCE - AUTHORIZING CONVEYANCE OF PROPERTY AT 1601 CANSLER AVENUE

Since no action was taken in this meeting, the ordinance will be placed on the agenda of the next regular meeting for consideration.

NEW BUSINESS

(1) Councilman Wilson introduced the following ordinance in writing for consideration:

ORDINANCE NO. O-46-23

AMENDING FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET

(Amending FY2023 Budget - Transferring \$15,000.00 from Department 6800 Part-Time Employees line item to various Building Department accounts - To prevent shortfall due to increased number of nuisance cases)

Councilwoman Minatra moved to suspend the rules to immediately consider the ordinance as an item of new business. The motion was seconded by Councilman Robinson and approved by the following vote:

AYES: Latham, Smith, Avery, Back, Wilson, Minatra, Robinson

NAYS: None

Councilman Wilson moved to adopt the ordinance, which motion was seconded by Councilwoman Latham and unanimously adopted.

(2) Councilman Wilson introduced the following resolution in writing for consideration:

RESOLUTION NO. R-445-23

AUTHORIZING APPLICATION AND ACCEPTANCE FOR JAG GRANT

(Authorizing Application and Acceptance - Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program FY2023 Local Solicitation - \$45,054.00 - To purchase: camera system with thermal capability; camera system with WIFI connectivity and pole adapter; 28 infrared laser and white light illumination systems)

President Back received unanimous consent to immediately consider the resolution as an item of new business. Councilman Wilson moved to adopt the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilwoman Minatra and unanimously adopted.

(3) Councilman Wilson introduced the following resolution in writing for consideration:

RESOLUTION NO. R-446-23

AUTHORIZING AGREEMENT WITH CIVICPLUS

(Authorizing Agreement - CivicPlus - \$18,150.17 for initial term - For SeeClickFix 311 CRM mobile app - Term beginning at signing and ending 9-30-24, with automatic renewal of one-year terms)

President Back received unanimous consent to immediately consider the resolution as an item of new business. Councilman Wilson moved to adopt the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilwoman Minatra and unanimously adopted.

(4) Councilman Wilson introduced the following ordinance in writing for consideration:

ORDINANCE NO. O-47-23

AMENDING CITY CODE ARTICLE IV. - DOGS AND CATS

(Amending City Code Chapter 10, Article IV. - Requiring dogs and cats over six months of age to be spayed or neutered - Providing for fines of \$100.00 for first offense, \$250.00 for second offense, and \$500.00 for third offense)

Councilwoman Latham moved to suspend the rules to immediately consider the ordinance as an item of new business. The motion was seconded by Councilman Smith and approved by the following vote:

AYES: Latham, Smith, Avery, Back, Wilson, Minatra, Robinson

NAYS: None

Councilman Wilson moved to adopt the ordinance, which motion was seconded by Councilwoman Minatra then unanimously adopted.

(5) Councilman Avery related historical information regarding the first City Hall on N. 5th Street and current City Hall building at 90 Broad Street and introduced the following resolution in writing for consideration:

RESOLUTION NO. R-447-23

AUTHORIZING PURCHASE OF PROPERTY

(Authorizing Purchase of Property and Building at 200 Broad Street from Regions Bank - \$2,800,000.00 - For relocation of City Hall - Note: Regions Bank will lease back approximately 4,300 square feet - Rate of \$12.00 per rentable square foot for Years 1-5 - Rate of \$14.00 per rentable square foot for Years 6-10)

Mayor Ford noted the current City Hall was built with a \$2.7 million bond issue, which would be the equivalent of \$27 million today. He thanked Regions Bank for being a corporate partner and recognized Paul Stivender for his assistance. The Mayor expressed appreciation to Tena King for her work in the negotiation and recognized John Moore for his work toward a development plan for the current City Hall location.

President Back received unanimous consent to immediately consider the resolution as an item of new business. Councilman Avery moved to adopt the resolution, which motion was seconded by Councilman Wilson and unanimously adopted.

(6) Councilman Avery introduced the following ordinance in writing for consideration:

ORDINANCE NO. O-48-23

AMENDING FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET

(Transferring \$2,800,000.00 from general fund unassigned fund balance account - For purchase of Regions Bank property located at 200 Broad Street)

Councilwoman Latham moved to suspend the rules to immediately consider the ordinance as an item of new business. The motion was seconded by Councilman Wilson and approved by the following vote:

AYES: Latham, Smith, Avery, Back, Wilson, Minatra, Robinson

NAYS: None

Councilman Avery moved to adopt the ordinance, which motion was seconded by Councilwoman Latham and unanimously adopted.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Probate Judge Scott Hassell summarized needs of the mentally ill and provided an update on the Mobile Crisis Assistance Team (MCAT). He thanked the City for its partnership of \$250,000 and explained the three-prong initiative that includes education, prevention, and intervention. He summarized services provided by the Community Health Officer, hospitals, and other individuals. Judge Hassell introduced Community Health Officer Ricky Johnson. Mayor Ford and President Back joined in commending Judge Hassell for his leadership.

Ruth Moffatt (Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) summarized pursuit of grants and partnership with non-profit agencies to address mental health issues.

PUBLIC

Robert Avery recalled connections of Gadsden with the Edward Byrne grant and a complaint-line system recognized by the Alabama League of Municipalities and the National League of Cities. He referred to his earlier request for a meeting with Mayor Ford (to include Council President and Finance Committee Chairman). Mr. Avery said he has received no response to his second request submitted on July 10, along with his topic and potential dates.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REMARKS

Council members expressed appreciation for the update provided by Judge Hassell, as well as the work of Community Resource Officer Johnson and the team members. Municipal Court Judge Jonathan Welch and DEI Director Ruth Moffatt were commended for their efforts to address homelessness and the mentally ill.

Council members commended the work of Eddie Nichols, who provided an update on the Megan Kelly Dreamcenter in today's work session. Councilwoman Minatra announced Sunday's back to school event.

Councilman Robinson expressed excitement at the coming SeeClickFix app and relocation of City Hall.

Councilman Wilson noted the City's unassigned fund balance will remain over \$20 million, equivalent to four months' operating expenses, after the purchase of the Regions property. He congratulated Fred McGriff, Baseball Hall of Fame inductee.

Councilman Smith and Councilwoman Latham expressed excitement to be a part of what's going on and seeing work being performed throughout the city. They both acknowledged the positive chemistry among the elected officials and the leadership and networking of the Mayor and his team. Councilwoman Latham encouraged everyone to embrace change.

Mayor Ford: thanked a number of departments for their work during and after the recent storm; noted plans to turn four community centers adjacent to schools and the track at Gadsden City High School over to the Board of Education; noted plans to reduce the number of parks maintained by the City, as advised by Goodwyn Mills Cawood; announced tonight's community meeting regarding the Eastern Bypass; explained the State Legislature had placed Etowah County in Congressional District 3, rather than District 4, but had kept the county intact; noted clearing along Highway 411 is allowing the river to be seen; announced resolution of the soccer league dilemma, noting the City will coordinate soccer at the Gadsden Sports Park and RUST will move to the sports complex in Rainbow City; thanked Zoning Administrator Tina Cody for her service and announced Tracci Cordell will replace her; noted community meetings will begin in the fall; noted the cost of moving to a new city hall will pay for itself with development that will change Gadsden.

Councilman Avery announced upcoming events, including the Job Corps Community Relations Council job fair on July 27, the Head Start parent orientation on August 3, the Parent Symposium August 12, Carver Community Revitalization Committee's First Saturday, and a District 3 meeting the third Tuesday in August. He noted the clean-up event that was planned for last Sunday will be held August 27. Councilman Avery said he received great information at the National League of Cities event in Tacoma, WA. He encouraged everyone to help their neighbor with storm cleanup and announced the creation of a Better Together Gadsden Commission, which will assist with Grow Gadsden surveys. Councilman Avery thanked everyone for their prayers and concerns for his dad, who has experienced difficulties in recovery from surgery.

President Back expressed concern for Councilman Avery's dad. He noted the time for tonight's informal meeting regarding the Eastern Bypass. He agreed that City Hall is sitting on very valuable property and predicted great changes for Gadsden. President Back thanked his lifetime friend, Paul Stivender, for facilitating the acquisition of the bank property. He thanked Tina Cody for her service to the city, as well as her recently retired husband, Captain Paul Cody.

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

Iva Nelson, City Clerk (7-25-23)
