

REGULAR BOARD MEETING
CITY HALL BOARD ROOM
June 15, 2021
5:00 P.M.

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT THE MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN/ALDERWOMEN MET IN THE ABERDEEN CITY HALL BOARD ROOM WITH THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS PRESENT:

MAYOR CHARLES SCOTT, ALDERMAN ROBERT DEVAULL, ALDERWOMAN LADY B. GARTH, ALDERMAN EDWARD HAYNES, ALDERWOMAN CAROLYN ODOM, ALDERMAN JOHN ALLEN, MELISSA MOORE, CITY CLERK, BARBARA VASSER, DEPUTY CITY CLERK, AND CITY ATTORNEY ROBERT H. FAULKS.

Invocation: Mayor Charles Scott.

ROLL CALL

A motion was made by Alderwoman Odom, seconded by Alderman Devaull to approve the proposed Minutes dated June 1, 2021. On a roll call vote, Alderman Devaull, Alderman Allen, Alderman Haynes and Alderwoman Odom voted "Aye". Alderwoman Garth voted "Nay".

A motion was made by Alderman Allen, seconded by Alderwoman Odom to pay all bills submitted by proper vendors as recorded on the Docket of Claims dated June 15, 2021. On a roll call vote, Alderwoman Odom, Alderman Allen and Alderman Devaull voted "Aye". Alderwoman Garth voted "Nay". Alderman Haynes voted "Aye" with the exception of the bills for the Aberdeen Park and Recreation Department.

An Auditor from Alexander Thompson Arnold PLLC, presented Auditor Reports for Aberdeen Common City and Aberdeen Water and Sewer Departments (year ended September 30, 2020), and for Aberdeen Electric Department (year ended June 30, 2020). The Auditor commented that the financial reports were generally "clean" and that the financial condition was "healthy" again for the City, with one finding referencing the Electric Department. A motion was made by Alderman Allen, seconded by Alderwoman Odom to accept the Auditor's Reports for the Aberdeen Common City, Aberdeen Water and Sewer Department and the Aberdeen Electric Department as presented by Auditor. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderwoman Odom, seconded by Alderman Devaull to accept the recommendation of Project Engineer Dustin Dabbs and to authorize the purchases and to order the materials from the lowest bidder listed on the line item components list and the written quotes received for the General Young Park Project. The quotes were presented by Park and Recreation Department Director Michelle Stewart. Dabbs/ Dabbs Corporation will draft the advertisement for bidders for items that require publication for the General Young Park Custom Shade Structure Project. On a roll call vote, Alderman Devaull, Alderman Allen and Alderwoman Odom voted "Aye". Alderwoman Garth and Alderman Haynes voted "Nay".

A motion was made by Alderman Allen, seconded by Alderwoman Odom to contribute or donate funds of \$5,000.00 to the Aberdeen Main Street for beautification along Aberdeen's Commerce Street and sidewalks and to promote the City of Aberdeen. On a roll call vote, Alderman Devaull, Alderman Allen and Alderwoman Odom voted "Aye". Alderwoman Garth voted "Nay". Alderman Haynes voted "Nay" because "I can't see where the money is coming from, to pay for it".

A motion was made by Alderman Haynes, seconded by Alderwoman Garth to allow a group of volunteers to create a Memorial Garden in front of the City Police Department building in honor of Aberdeen Police Chief Henry Randle. On a roll call vote, Alderman Devaull, Alderwoman Garth, Alderman Haynes and Alderman Allen voted "Aye". Alderwoman Odom voted "Nay" to the placement of Chief Randle's name being permanently affixed to the City building.

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A motion was made by Alderman Allen, seconded by Alderwoman Garth to authorize Dustin Dabbs/ Dabbs Corporation to reexamine the site and to update the specifications for the Walters Drive Drainage Project. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderwoman Garth, seconded by Alderman Devaul to allow permission to volunteers to manicure and clean up the shrubs and to re-do the numbers at the entrance of the Oddfellows Rest Cemetery. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderman Allen, seconded by Alderwoman Odom to set the salary for the new Chief of Police at \$55,000.00, effective the date of the election of the new Chief of Police. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderwoman Garth, seconded by Alderman Devaul to observe the July 4, 2021 (Independence Day) Legal Holliday on Monday, July 5, 2021, in accordance with the Proclamation from Governor Tate Reeves. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderman Haynes, seconded by Alderwoman Garth to pay City employees Janet Parks and Barbara Vasser overtime compensation for working on Saturday (July 3, 2021) due to the Special Election and the Independence Holiday. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderwoman Garth, seconded by Alderman Devaul to approve the employment of Jamerius Hayden as a Machine Operator in the Aberdeen Street Department at a rate of pay of \$13.00 per hour. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderwoman Odom, seconded by Alderman Devaul to advertise for persons interested in being employed as a Mayor's Secretary. On a roll call vote, Alderman Devaul, Alderman Allen and Alderwoman Odom voted "Aye". Alderwoman Garth and Alderman Haynes voted "Nay".

Mayor Scott asked General Manager LaMarcus Thompson to share with the Board his ideas about upgrading the Electric Department building. Mr. Thompson suggested construction of a new building for the Electric Department, possibly located in the Stinson Industrial Park. Mr. Thompson will be sharing more information and proposals with the Board in the future. He also stated that TVA had expressed its interest in assisting in doing whatever is needed to help with the planning.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Garth, seconded by Alderman Haynes to give approval to General Manager LaMarcus Thompson to discuss with TVA planning and construction of a new building for the Aberdeen Electric Department. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderman Haynes, seconded by Alderwoman Garth to approve a 10% pay raise and promotions for Caleb Angle and Constance McFarland for completing their certification training. General Manager Thompson stated that Constance McFarland is promoted to Lineman Apprentice and Caleb Angle is promoted to Lead Lineman. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

No motion or vote was done regarding the "Establishment of Aberdeen and Official Relationship with the Rural Community Development Club (RCDC)". This item was tabled for discussion at a later date when more information is provided.

Mayor's Input

Mayor Scott asked the Board if they have any questions about the Audit Report of the Common City, Aberdeen, Mississippi for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2020, and the Electric Department, Aberdeen, Mississippi for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020. The Audit Report was done by Alexander Thompson Arnold PLLC. Matt Wood, CPA was asked by Mayor Scott to explain the findings of the Audit Report to the Board. Mr. Wood stated the City of Aberdeen ratio was above 25%, and that was considered a healthy clean audit.

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Mayor Scott congratulated City Clerk Melissa Moore for attending and completing the Elections Training Seminar and receiving her Certificate of Training by the State of Mississippi, Secretary of State Office.

Mayor Scott shared with the Board that he had met with Mr. Clayborn of the Create Foundation to re-connect with the McFarland Fund. This fund is an Educational Trust Fund that assists local entities and charities. The next McFarland Fund meeting will take place within the next few days

Mayor Scott recognized LuEllen Childress on her efforts on behalf of the Incubator Program. This program is defined as "Aberdeen establishing small businesses with mentorship attached to it". One of the features includes a group of businesses coming together and sharing resources to reduce expenses. The first meeting of the Program is tomorrow (6/16/2021) at Cadence Bank.

Mayor Scott invited Dustin Dabbs to discuss the General Young Park Improvements Project. Mr. Dabbs stated the grant application was sent in last year, and the City of Aberdeen was awarded the MDA Cap Loan Program. Mr. Dabbs stated that the "Custom Shade Structure" is one item that requires publication for and solicitation of competitive bidding, and we will advertise and seek bids for that portion of the project. Park and Recreation Director Michelle Stewart provided the Board with several different quotes for other materials for the General Young Park Project.

Mayor Scott provided the Board with pictures of an area on Commerce Street at the foot of the hill that needs to be "built up and beautified". The price to do the work would cost \$5,000.00. Mayor Scott stated the work would be donated including the pillars. Alderwoman Garth wanted to know where the \$5,000.00 would come from. Mayor Scott stated the money will come from the Mayor's Office. Comptroller Karen Crump told the Board she isn't aware of the money being in the Mayor's budget. Alderman Allen stated this is being requested by Main Street and Mr. Sam Jaynes to have planter boxes put there, and Main Street will beautify it and keep it up.

Aldermen/Alderwomen Input:

Alderman Devaull: Alderman Devaull stated he turned in some items to Mayor Scott, and he thinks they have been taken care of. Due to the rain last week, the City ditches couldn't be mowed. Alderman Devaull stated Mr. Boone assured him they were going to take care of it. He asked the citizens to please be patient. Alderman Devaull stated that when we start mowing, we should get the neighborhoods first instead of working on projects that's time consuming. Pot holes from the rain need to be attended to. Alderman Devaull received a call from a concerned citizen about the old white storage building at the cemetery. Ms. Bell told Alderman Devaull that she and others will volunteer their time and the materials needed to fix up that building. Alderman Devaull told Ms. Bell to discuss this with Mayor Scott. Alderman Devaull stated that when you're being a respectful alderman / alderwoman people will reach out to you and volunteer their services and help the City of Aberdeen. Alderman Devaull stated that he would like for Dustin Dabbs to look at the drainage and pipes on the corner of Evergreen Drive and Meridian Street, with the camera and scope. Mr. Dabbs said he would take a look at it.

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Alderwoman Garth: Alderwoman Garth stated that since she didn't make the 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. meetings, I don't know if you brought it up or not Mr. Allen about the attorney retaining fees. The one that you were so dissatisfied with, Attorney Zinn, have you'll handled that? Alderman Allen stated that litigation is ongoing and that would be an Executive Session discussion. Alderwoman Garth stated that the individuals in the big trucks doing work in the City are too heavy and tearing up the streets. Mayor Scott stated the supervisors have been contacted by Mr. Boone. Alderwoman Garth stated there are a ton of them on both ends of Burnett Street. Alderwoman Garth asked Comptroller Karen Crump if there was enough money in the Animal Control budget for a full-time person. Ms. Crump stated that Pedro Clay asked about Mr. Jackson's status changing from part-time to full-time. Alderwoman Garth asked Ms. Crump to have a talk with Mr. Clay and explain his budget with him.

Alderman Haynes: Alderman Haynes stated he had a group that came to him about an incident that happened immediately following the funeral services. The group would like to do a Memorial Garden in honor of Chief Henry Randle at the police department. This group will volunteer their time and resources for the Memorial Garden. There will be a stand placed on the sidewalk in front of Aberdeen Police Department with Chief Randle's picture, and short bio of his accomplishments will be written above his picture. Another group is going to do a scholarship in the honor of Chief Henry Randle that will be given to a student at the Aberdeen High School that seeks an interest in law enforcement. Mrs. Toni Reece will be in charge of the scholarship fund. Alderman Haynes stated that Ms. Tina Robbins and I will work on the sign for the sidewalk. Alderman Haynes stated that if the damaged concrete would be replaced along with the cobblestones, it would be a great idea to put the name of any law enforcement officers that has passed on in or out of the line of duty, such as the late Chief Brent Coleman and Officer Eric Cunningham.

Alderman Haynes stated that overtime did go down under \$8,000.00, but would like for it to stay under \$6,000.00. Please monitor the overtime in your departments. Grass cutting and pot holes is a concern in Ward Three. The water lines on Vine Street have been repaired, but the streets and sidewalks need to be repaired as well. The orange barrels are not a quick fix. Demo buildings in Ward Three need to be on the list to come down. Alderman Haynes stated there are three buildings he knows of that needs to be demolished. Mayor Scott stated that they have identified the top five sidewalks that will be addressed as soon as the weather breaks. Alderman Haynes asked about the ditches and holes that getting larger on Canal and Hickory Streets as well as the one on North Thayer Avenue. He wanted to know if any action was being done because he is still receiving calls. Dustin Dabbs stated he is awaiting approval from the Board to do an underground video service to have a better idea on what's going on with the pipes and infrastructure underneath.

Alderman Haynes asked about the rental contracts for Park and Recreation Building and the High Street Community Center that's being handled by Mrs. Janet Parks. He said Mrs. Parks is no longer in that position but is still handling the rental contracts at City Hall. Alderman Haynes wanted to know if that responsibility would be moved from City Hall back to Park and Rec. Mayor Scott stated there was a three person session at one time, and that would have to be discussed at a different time, because when Mrs. Parks moved up to City Hall the position moved up here too.

Alderwoman Odom: Alderwoman Odom did not have anything additional to report.

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Alderwoman Odom: Alderwoman Odom did not have anything additional to report.

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Alderman Allen: Alderman Allen stated he requested the information about the prior work project for the Walters Drive drainage, and I got it and a copy of the Minutes. On November 5, 2019, Hanna Construction was awarded the contract on the Walters Drive drainage improvements. Nothing ever happened with it. On July 21, 2020, a motion was made to authorize the City to advertise for competitive contractor quotes for the Walters Drive drainage project, and nothing ever happened to any of it. Mayor Scott asked City Clerk Melissa Moore to explain to the Board the conversation she had with Hanna. Ms. Moore stated that she talked with the secretary for Hanna Construction and was told the contract was awarded to Hanna in 2019 by the Board. Ms. Moore was also told that when the new administration took office in 2020, the previous Mayor and Board did not want to accept that contract award, and if the Board was still interested in Hanna doing the project, please let them know, and that the price would be higher than the quote given in 2019.

Alderman Allen stated that he would like to make a motion to rebid that contract. Alderman Allen asked Dustin Dabbs if he drew up the contract for the project in 2019. Mr. Dabbs stated the Board asked him to put a package together and the prices came back a little higher than what was anticipated. Mr. Dabbs stated some adjustments were made for the City and contractor would do a portion of the work, but factors changed and it was never implemented. Mr. Dabbs stated that it would be an easy update to take what we had, but again we would have to decide as the administration and the Board if the contractor be responsible as a whole or if the City Departments have the extra resources available to help on the process. Attorney Faulks stated he have some vague memory about that. When we had the street paving bond issue, we authorized in the Notice of Intent process that some of that money with the bond issue would be used for that and other projects. Attorney Faulks asked Comptroller Karen Crump if the City ever spent all the bond money or is there some left over for this particular project. Ms. Crump stated she will look into this, but believed the money was spent on another project.

Attorney Faulks questioned if there is money for the project. Attorney Faulks stated that Mr. Dabbs needs to go back and look to see if his specifications would be the same or different, and then give her (Ms. Crump) time to figure out where the money is going to come from to pay for it. Mayor Scott stated that could fall under the Rescue Fund as Infrastructure, and it would cover the cost. Alderman Haynes asked, "How does this fall under the Rescue Fund?" Mayor Scott stated its part of the Infrastructure, and those items fall up under that. Alderman Haynes asked Attorney Faulks to weigh in on that. Attorney Faulks stated he was not familiar with the "Rescue Funds" Program. Mayor Scott stated it's the \$1.7 million dollar funds the City will be receiving, and it can be used for Infrastructure projects.

Alderman Allen stated he was approached by a couple about Oddfellows Cemetery entrance. Joan Walter Lann will take on the project of rehabbing the entrance to the Oddfellows Cemetery and completely re-do it, paint it, clean up, everything at their own expense. They will take the shrubs out or trim them down, re-do the numbers on the gates like they were original, and the only thing they are asking for is the permission to do so.

Alderman Allen researched the salary for the Chief of Police and referenced the salary paid in other cities that have the same population as Aberdeen. In comparing those salaries, it came out to be \$55,000.00, and asked that a motion be made to set the Chief of Police salary at \$55,000.00.

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Citizen's Input:

Mrs. LuEllen Childress stated she appreciated the work the Garden Club has done for the City by putting plants in the flower pots every year. This is the first year they put roses in the flower pots, but discovered they had been stolen. Mrs. Childress would love to see Aberdeen return back to the values it once had.

Ms. Stacie Lenoir wanted to discuss a complaint she has with a city official. Alderman Haynes stated the complaint is a personal issue, and it needs to be discussed in Closed Determination. Mayor Scott told Ms. Lenoir that her concern would be discussed in Closed Determination.

Mr. James Young (M & J Lawn Service) stated he mows the grass at Oddfellows Rest Cemetery, and was told not to cut a certain side of the cemetery. Mr. Young stated he discussed his contract with his attorney, and was told to ask the Board to provide him with something in writing to not mow the side of the cemetery he shouldn't. Mr. Young stated his contract ends in September, but he is willing to tear up his contract and the Board can re-do another contract. Mr. Young stated that he understands why Alderman Allen always voted against to pay M & J Lawn Service, and he has no problem with it because they talked about it. Mr. Young asked the Board to please come up with a place to put the worn out flowers on the graves at the cemetery. Mayor Scott commended Mr. Young on the excellent job he's doing at the cemeteries. The issue the City is having is the contract may be defective, and a planning meeting needs to be scheduled to resolve this issue.

Mayor Scott updated the Board on the COVID Vaccinations schedule. The next COVID-19 Vaccination is scheduled to take place June 29, 2021. There will be an infomercial with the students and various citizens within the community. They will talk about the ordeal they had with COVID-19 and how it affected their family members. They're in-hoping it would interest individuals to take the vaccine and increase the percentages in Mississippi.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Garth, seconded by Alderman Devaul to enter into a closed determination to determine whether to go into Executive Session. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderman Allen, seconded by Alderwoman Garth to go into Executive Session to discuss the litigation involving Attorney Zinn, Jr., and his invoices. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

The Mayor and Board announced to the public that the Board was entering into Executive Session to discuss the litigation involving Attorney Zinn, Jr., and his invoices.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Garth, seconded by Alderman Haynes to come out of Executive Session. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderman Allen, seconded by Alderwoman Garth to pay Attorney Walter Zinn, Jr. the amount of \$750.00 that had been deducted from his invoices dated April 1, 2021 - May 4, 2021. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

A motion was made by Alderman Allen, seconded by Alderman Haynes to instruct the City Clerk's Office to provide the Aberdeen Municipal Election Commissioners the records pertaining to certifying candidates. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".

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Assistant Chief Chris Dobbins provided the Mayor and Board with an update on an alleged murder that occurred in the City of Aberdeen last night – early this morning. A young man was killed. Two individuals were arrested for murder, and they're currently in the Monroe County Jail. A bond of \$200,000.00 has been set for the both of them. Aberdeen Water Department Employee Fredrick Young was praised for his knowledge in helping the Aberdeen Police Department with the camera system.

Alderman Allen asked Assistant Chief Dobbins, "How many murders have happened in the City of Aberdeen?" Assistant Chief Dobbins stated there have been three murders within a year in the City of Aberdeen.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Odom, seconded by Alderwoman Garth to adjourn until the July 6, 2021 Board Meeting. On a roll call vote, all present voted "Aye".


Charles Scott, Mayor

Attest:


Melissa Moore, City Clerk


Barbara Vasser, Deputy City Clerk