

Minutes
Forsyth City Council Meeting
May 4, 2020

Call to Order

Mayor Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation and Roll Call

Mayor Wilson led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Stroud gave the invocation. Mayor Eric Wilson, Councilmembers Julius Stroud, John Howard, Greg Goolsby, Melvin Lawrence and City Attorney, Bobby Melton were in attendance via video conference call. Present for the meeting in person was Councilmembers Mike Dodd, Chris Hewett, City Manager, Janice Hall and City Clerk, Regina Ivie. Mayor Pro-tem John Howard joined the meeting at 6:14 p.m. Councilmember Melvin Lawrence joined the meeting at 6:19 p.m.

All members of Council were present either in person or by video conference call. Therefore; all unanimous votes will be six (6) votes. (Dodd, Stroud, Goolsby, Howard, Hewett, and Lawrence). A roll call vote was done by Mayor Eric Wilson for any motion presented

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried with four (4) votes. (Hewett, Dodd, Stroud, Goolsby).

Approval of the Minutes from the March 16th, March 25th, and March 27th, 2020 Council Meetings

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the minutes of the March 16th, March 25th and March 27th, 2020 Council meetings as presented. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried with four (4) votes (Hewett, Dodd, Goolsby, and Stroud).

Approve resolution for public sale of certain tract of real property and authorize Mayor to sign all documents relating to the sale of property

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve the resolution for public sale of certain tract of real property and authorizes Mayor Wilson to sign all documents relating to the sale of the property. Seconded by Mr. Stroud; the motion carried with four (4) votes (Hewett, Dodd, Goolsby, and Stroud).

Award bid for surveying of additional cemetery lots in Monroe Memorial Hills Cemetery

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to award the bid to Coleman and Associate for surveying of additional cemetery lots in Monroe Memorial Hills Cemetery. Seconded by Mr. Stroud; the motion carried with five (5) votes (Howard, Hewett, Lawrence, Goolsby, Stroud). Mr. Dodd voted against the motion.

Authorize deposit of yearend telecom project to Municipal Competitive Trust

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to authorize deposit of the yearend telecom project to Municipal Competitive Trust. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Authorize deposit of MEAG yearend settlement to Municipal Competitive Trust

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to authorize deposit of the MEAG yearend settlement to Municipal Competitive Trust. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of invoices greater than \$5,000; approved during emergency ordinance:

CC & A - \$9,439.58 -for emergency repairs to belt press at SWWTP; repairs complete and belt press back in operation
Renewal of generator service agreements with— generator at PS Complex \$1084.33; generator at MC Jail Lift Station \$1,331.08; and generator at Union Hill Lift Station \$1,246.42
\$6,000 - Middle Ga Fence to repair, replace and install fencing around SWWTP to prevent trespassing and continued damage by trespassers to the plant
Dell - \$13,270.55 for new server
J&J Installers - \$20,122.50 pour floor in Welcome Center lobby and hallway

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve the invoices as presented. Seconded by Mr. Stroud; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of invoices greater than \$5,000

\$6,309.95 - CC&A to replace check valve and gate on #1 high service pump at RWTP; will have additional cost for valve insertion to be able to pull the valve – waiting on size of line to know cost for valve insertion but will be \$12,000 to \$20,000
 \$9500 – Splashpad repairs – Carlos Lora

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the invoices greater than \$5000 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion relating to timeline for resuming normal operations & City Manager's Report

Ms. Hall reviewed departmental activities and protocols in place currently due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. The following report was provided to Council.

❖ Welcome Center - Administrative Staff, Main Street and Economic Development

All administrative office staff, except myself, and CVB employees are teleworking since Monday, March 30th with either their city laptop or desktop. I took this opportunity while all staff are teleworking and all meetings are cancelled to see what can be done about the floors in the Welcome Center lobby - work finally started this past Friday with delays being due to materials being delivered. Main Street worked as best they could with businesses that are open to do Facebook posts telling what they are offering and how to contact them during this time.

Some accomplishments during telework:

- Monica worked to update their website with as much information as they could
- New doors were ordered before pandemic but still have not arrived,
- Tammie is working with Hamlin Hills regarding the “world’s largest barbed wire fence” he is constructing; he does not have local approval to do this structure.

❖ City Hall/Administration

City Hall staff started out working 2 – 10's in the office and 2-10's from home but changed that quickly to 3-8's in the office and 2-8's from home with all in office days staggered to reduce total number of people in the office each day. Lobby is open Tuesday and Thursday from 8:30-1:00; is cleaned by a local cleaning company after it is closed on those 2 days. Worked to keep a check on the Aging Report. I have compared the first 10 days of March and numbers show 3/1-3/10 payment totals were \$379,199; first 10 days of April transaction totals were \$368,814.

Accomplishments during telework:

- Office staff have taken several online training classes that would benefit their current duties or assist in their moving up to another position
- Able to setup telework for all office staff to remote into their computers – a service provided by Sophicity – this capability helped with billing clerk change all addresses to facilitate looking up addresses; also began working to contact all utility customers to obtain correct contact info including cell and email
- Peachy Clean (new small business downtown) is cleaning the lobby and office areas at City Hall after public is allowed in on Tuesday and Thursdays
- Able to have answering service added to phone system to answer incoming calls after 3 rings

❖ Court

All court dates for March and April were cancelled; next potential court date is May 21; no fine amounts were amended during the Shelter In Place Order.

❖ Police Department

- 2 new police officers hired during this time which brings the department to full staff
- Officers are spending most of their time patrolling; we did not patrol the interstate during this time
- A new camera system was installed at the police department to monitor the exterior of the building and the lobby; this system is the one that we will expand to the new city hall.
- The same system for the phones is in place at PD as in City Hall and we were able to get auto attendant added to the PD phones so that the auto attendant answers after the 3rd ring.
- The police officers are monitoring the businesses to make sure that notices are posted and that personal distancing is being maintained at the businesses that are open.
- Investigators have been staggered and are now working over 7 days rather than 5 to further distance themselves.

- COVID-19 has hit the company that we have the 3 lease cars through and paying \$25/citation written from that vehicle; they have offered to sell the vehicles to us; Chief is working with them to get best pricing
- **Police Department Administrative Staff**
The fulltime administrative office staff are teleworking. They are repeatedly posting that anyone needing an incident report should contact them via email. Supplemental online training applied to the PD administrative staff as well.

Fire Department

- Multiple firefighters deconned during the last month
- Fire Department's temperature is monitored daily when they report to work.
- Fire fighters are helping out in other areas in ways such as taking over grass cutting efforts at the station so public works can focus on other areas.
- Laundering of uniforms for fire and police is working well – they are adjusting to doing their own laundry!!
- Distancing shifts as much as possible and limiting exposure during shift change
- ISO survey is scheduled for May 6, 2020; Chief and Nancy are working on finalizing spreadsheet for ISO inspectors; as far as I know, this inspection is still on as scheduled
- We continue to work on Hazard Pay for public safety; hazard pay has **not** been approved as 100% reimbursable by FEMA as originally presented to me; we must have policy in place to address hazard pay and we do not, working on solution for our guys; some departments have reduced number of people on shifts but continue to pay them their regular salary (same as we have with all other departments) but both chiefs are leery, and understandably so, about doing that – when you need public safety, you need them right then not in whatever amount of time it would take for additional personnel to come in so I am trying to figure this one out.
- **Fire Department Administrative Staff**
Fire Department administrative staff worked a combination of in office and telework, with teleworking being the majority

❖ **Public Works (street, parks, fleet maintenance)**

- With the prison details out, the crews worked really hard to get their regular work done and pick up the work that the details would normally perform; with all the rain lately and high temperatures, the grass –really weeds- are growing fast; if we don't go ahead and bring full crews back in, they are going to get too far behind to catch up; no word on when the prison details will be released to return to work
- Crews were divided into 2 separate shifts to reduce contact between the workers
- Cemeteries looked good for Easter weekend and will work hard again this week to have them looking good for Mother's Day

❖ **Electric Department**

- Electric crews began by following same guidelines as public works and not moving crews from one to another, but quickly divided into 2 separate shifts to reduce exposure between the crews. The electric department had a planned power outage one morning and went very well and was complete in less than 2 hours.
- Meter readers are working longer days and shorter weeks and maintaining the reading of all meters. They were instructed that they were not to enter a property to read meters if there is a gathering at the property. They are to either go back later or estimate based on previous readings.
- We did have an electric department employee that reported to work and stated after being at the shop for about an hour that he did not feel well, had not felt well the day before and had a temperature of 100.1. He was immediately sent home and our protocol was put into place. The other employee he was assigned to was deconned along with the truck they were driving. The separating of crews paid off so that only 1 other person in the electric department was potentially exposed rather than the entire department. He returned to work the next week with clearance from his doctor
- Worked several storms over the last month with minimal power outages

Accomplishments during down time:

- Staff fabricated and installed traffic cone holders on all the trucks. Allowing them to store them somewhere other than the truck beds where they end up getting covered in dirt & hydraulic oil
- Added strobe lighting to all vehicles that needed more for protection while out working – this was done by electric department employees
- Worked on cleaning up debris around the shop, as well as cleaning and disinfecting regularly.

❖ **Water/Sewer Department**

- Crews followed all guidelines put in place by Utility Partners and maintain safe distance while working which were very similar to guidelines city put in place. Their office staff is teleworking.
- The leak on Montpelier Road in front of fuel depot; started as small leak but overnight turned into emergency repair; leak is repaired without issues
- Water department began treating the reservoir in preparation of the reservoir “turning over” as it does when the weather changes; hoping that by doing early preventive treatment will at least lessen the impact of the turnover; the water is still safe to drink during the turn over but has a bad smell and taste caused by it literally being water from the bottom of the reservoir
- A couple of mornings lately the workers at the SWWTP have arrived to find the power manually switched off; this week one of the workers saw some teenagers running off when he arrived; whomever is doing this could cause significant damage to the plant and to themselves; fence company came out and repaired hole in fence then returning in 2 weeks to complete remainder of work; clearing done for Phase II of Manor at Montpelier has left the backside of the plant exposed where it previously was surrounded by woods

❖ **Upcoming Council meetings**

- The City has 5 public hearings currently being advertised for the May 18 council meeting that were originally scheduled for the April 6 meeting.
 1. Increasing footprint of Downtown Entertainment District
 2. Amendment to parking space size
 3. Conditional use variance for car wash on MLK (behind Lil Store)
 4. Change of ownership for Monroe Food Mart, 111 MLK for alcohol package license beer and wine only
 5. Change of ownership for Express Foodmart 270 N Lee Street for alcohol package license beer and wine only
- Consider providing banner poles for non-profits to advertise on with fee associated with that use
- Working on revised fee schedule to include several fees that we have never assessed
- Resolution to approve LWCF grant for golf course work along with agreement between city and golf board to cover golf board portion of the grant – 50/50 grant for \$100,000

❖ **Approvals of purchases and/or services**

While we are under the Emergency Ordinance, I approved several purchases and/or services that were needed. I emailed those out to you and presented them tonight for approval.

❖ **General**

Welcome Center floors – work started this past Friday and we cannot enter that part of the building until the job is complete which will hopefully be this Friday as we can return to the office on Monday May 11. New doors still have not arrived.

Splashpad update – Carlos has been here 3 separate times over the last month or so; he did the grinding on the pad floor that was needed prior to installing the new pad; worked with Brian to get the valves replaced in the equipment area that was broken or not properly installed; installed the new pad and came back to de-winterize the system which led to having to dig up the entire piping system and replace portions of it and to remove and correctly install check valves and reducers. This work took more than double the amount of time that we had originally estimated but all features are now working and the new pad looks great. Originally approved \$35,000 for materials and labor. Material for pad came in at \$26,000 plus equipment rental and various materials needed for piping that we were not aware of that was needed to be changed out. The \$10,000 to Carlos was for the equipment rental, various materials needed while doing this job and labor to put pad down and de-winterize the system. This did not include having to dig the lines back up again and replace the check valves and add a reducer valve where one was supposed to be. Carlos has one more visit planned but that is included in the final payment as this visit should be just to make sure chemicals are balancing and final check to make sure everything is working properly.

City Hall – Pellicano has mobilized; basement is almost completely dug out; a tank was hit from a very old gas station when digging the slope so will have a change order to cover the testing and removal of that tank – should be around \$2,500; will be closing off Chambers Street between Harris and Kimball as previously discussed to maintain safety of workers during construction and will also need to close a portion of Kimball Street to allow for proper shoring of wall

GMA Convention cancelled for June. GMA will hold virtual meetings/trainings.

New server has been ordered and is scheduled for delivery on May 11 with setup May 13 then installation thereafter.

Local Alert ability added to City Facebook page; this gives us the capability to send an alert message to those that are following the City Facebook page

Rose Theatre marque is being replaced with LED signage; they have offered use of the sign during emergency as they will not be advertising on it until shelter in place is lifted; they are waiting on the additional tube lighting to complete the project

LMIG project is out for bid; this will include W Johnston from square to intersection with W Main, Pinkney Circle, Phelps Street and E Johnston at the railroad (hoping have response from railroad to be able to include this part this year)

Accounts Payable reports – we were previously posting every check register as they were written on the city website; it became a jumbled mess. I have worked with the Regional Commission to remove those reports and Regina is creating a report that will group January (it is posted now), February and March. We may have to wait until end of April and do a monthly report and then begin the weekly reports combining all reports rather than each individual check run. February and March check runs should be created and posted by end of next week.

❖ Finance review:

Did some quick comparisons for revenues and billing to see where we are;

- LOST for 1st quarter 2020 compared to 1st quarter 2019 is down approximately \$20,000
- Compared 4/1 utility billing totals to 3/1 utility billing totals – total accounts billed 1699 in March and 1707 in April; total \$409,256 for March and \$503,566 for April
- Compared 4/15 utility billing totals to 3/15 utility billing totals – total accounts billed 1976 both billings; total \$629,725 for March and \$613,019 for April
- Aging has increased some; current total stands at \$896,810 but that includes the 4/15 bills that just went out and the 4/1 bills not yet paid but not due until 4/20; over 30 days past due is now \$118,951 so it has increased approximately \$20,000; continue to monitor the Aging report
- Hotel tax for 1st quarter are in; 1st qtr 2019 was \$142,240 and 1st qtr 2020 is \$101,102; March alone was about half of normal receipts but March is normally the highest month due to Forsythia Festival – March 2019 \$59,695; March 2020 \$27,758
- The last aging showed an increase of approximately \$20,000 in the over 1 month column; this week, outstanding balance over 1 month is \$60,358 so that is a decrease of approximately \$60,000 along with the current month amount due decreasing from \$896,810 to \$591,410; people are paying their bills, we still have a significant number of accounts that are showing on the disconnect lists but based on this information most are still paying
- Finally received SPLOST payments for January and February from the county;
 - 2018 – January \$56,819 and February \$35,414 = \$ 92,233
 - 2019 – January \$63,520 and February \$56,004 = \$119,524
 - 2020 – January \$52,542 and February \$50,960 = \$103,502

❖ Utility billing

While we continue to send out utility bills, we have suspended disconnects for now. I have spoken with Advanced Disposal and if businesses that contract directly with them close temporarily, they will suspend pickup and billing for garbage service. Those businesses around the square that share dumpsters are a little different but we will suspend the garbage charge for those businesses that temporarily close this will mean that the city will cover some of the cost of the dumpsters as we currently have at least one business open using each of the dumpsters. Additionally, as businesses close temporarily we are trying to communicate with them regarding their utility services. If they keep all services on, they will receive at least a minimum charge bill even if nothing is consumed. They may want to keep electricity on for security, but may request that water be cut off until they reopen. We will do this on a case-by-case basis. We are also allowing the businesses to notify us via email or fax rather than requiring they come in to the office to do disconnects.

I have been asked by several citizens and businesses if the City is going to charge late fees for those that did not pay on time; I have responded that this is not something that I can waive but that I will recommend to council that we look at some type relief for those that could not pay and/or paid late. I also recommend that we look at businesses that closed but left utilities on that if they had no water consumption for the billing cycle that we adjust off the minimum charges for water and sewer – not sure that this is feasible but we can look at.

Hoteliers are asking for assistance with their utility bills in either extended time to pay and/or no penalty for late payments. Mayor Wilson and I had a conference call with several of the hoteliers and their main request was to allow for partial payments without late charges. The hotels have been hit hard as has every business and many have been closed for over a month. The city ordinance authorizes the city manager to provide arrangements during extenuating circumstances but does not allow for waiving of penalties.

Ms. Hall presented items for consideration to Council as to how to efficiently resume normal operations within the City. Recommendations from Ms. Hall were provided for each item being considered by Council.

1. Disconnects were suspended for March and April. Need to determine date to resume disconnects for those that have not made other arrangements?
 - Recommendation to resume disconnects with next regularly scheduled disconnect date of May 18, 2020 for the bills that were due May 4, 2020.

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to resume disconnects of City utilities for nonpayment on May 18, 2020. Seconded by Mr. Howard; the motion carried unanimously.

2. We have continued to post penalties in order to be able to send out 2nd notices. Need to determine what if any considerations to be given regarding penalty waiver.
 - Set specific timeframe for payments to be made with arrangements requested from customer and waive portion or all of penalty.
 - Originally stated would allow 30 days after Emergency Ordinance expired to have all bills paid.
 - Other cities are providing the full gamut; anywhere from some never stopped disconnecting for nonpayment, to allowing 6 months without penalty to make payments, to providing a limited amount of funds in an Assistance Program for those that need help paying their utility bills.
 - Consider waiver of minimum billing if no consumption for the month – i.e. water and sewer have minimum of up to 2,000 gallons, even if no usage will still receive bill for those amounts. It isn't a large amount, both together would be less than \$50 but is something.
 - Consider waiver of garbage fee for those businesses around the square that were closed for a month. This would require city absorbing part of those costs but again would be small amount back to the business. These vary for dumpster usage based upon the estimated number of carts equivalent times' \$18/month.
 - Recommendation would be look at this on a case-by-case basis for minimum charge without usage and if at least partial payments provide authority to City Manager to reduce or waive fee and/or penalty.

Mr. Howard offered a motion to allow for possible reduction of and or waive late fees on a case by case basis if partial payments have been done. Seconded by Mr. Goolsby.

Mr. Stroud amended the original motion to allow customers who have been making payments six months to pay balances due. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence; the motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Wilson called for a vote on the original motion offered by Mr. Howard. The motion carried unanimously.

3. When to reopen facility rentals?
 - Recommendation would be to not reopen for rental until all Executive Orders by the Governor have expired as rental of the buildings would be for groups larger than 10.

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to resume facility rentals after the Executive Order from the Governor expired on June 12, 2020. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

4. When to reopen City Hall for payments?
 - How to maintain safe distance in the lobby and limit number of people allowed in lobby at one time to whatever that number is when maintaining 6' distance
 - Require temperatures taken before entering? If so, would require a person to be stationed at the door at all times.
 - Leave doors to lobby open at all times to prevent touching of door to open and close.

- Recommendation would be to reopen after we have brought all employees back to work and then to follow at least limiting number allowed in lobby, maintain 6' distance and leave doors open during business hours.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to reopen City Hall after all employees have returned to work; limit number of customers in lobby area to no more than three (3) customers to maintain social distancing of 6 feet, and to leave doors open during business hours. Seconded by Mr. Howard; the motion carried unanimously.

5. When to return employees to work? Considerations include:

- All departments except city hall employees should be able to continue safe distancing even with all employees returning to work. Concerns for city hall employees since they are inside the police department there could be at any time 8-10 employees not counting the patrol or investigators. The hallway is not wide enough to allow for safe distancing when passing in the hallway. I have met with Regina and Eddie to discuss this and with certain restrictions for employees, we could make this work.
 - Restrictions for city hall/police department would include:
 - Remaining in office with door closed as much as possible
 - Wearing mask when leaving office
 - Staggering lunch times to allow no more than 2 in the breakroom at a time
 - Restrictions for other departments would include:
 - Staggering lunch times
 - Continue not "sharing" crew members to other crews
- Recommendation would be to return all employees to work by beginning of next pay period which begins Friday.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to return employees to work beginning with the next pay period with restrictions to be followed by staff deemed necessary. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

6. When to resume "in person" council meetings. What requirements to include in those meetings?

- Temperature of all persons before entering
 - Thermometers are hard to find. We only have one that is shared by fire and police
- Providing mask and gloves
 - Again, these are hard to find. I would recommend requiring all persons attending provide their own rather than city providing to everyone.
- Cleaning of meeting room before and after meetings.
- We do not have a regular cleaning company so this would require hiring a company. We have temporarily used Peachy Clean to clean the lobby after it is open 2 days/week.
- Recommendation would be to continue at least meeting with the availability of Zoom meeting for those that cannot attend. Must maintain safe distancing; it will require spacing out chairs throughout the room but can be accomplished.

Mr. Howard offered a motion to resume Council Meetings on May 18, 2020 in person and by video conference. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

7. When to open Splashpad?

- Recommendation would be to follow Governors Orders relating to swimming pool as the Splashpad falls under those guidelines with the Health Department.

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to follow Governor's orders for reopening Splashpad. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

City Attorney Report

Mr. Melton stated Chief Justice of the Supreme Court will extend the order to June 12, 2020 to coincide with the Governor's Executive Order. No court hearings of any kind will occur until June 12, 2020. Advertisements for the public hearings have been done a few times in the reporter; all will come before Council on Monday, May 18th. Participants can participate via zoom.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Wilson expressed his appreciation to all City staff for their continued high level of service.

Additional Business

Mr. Lawrence congratulated our City Manager, Janice Hall on doing a very good job. He's appreciative of her hard work.

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to purchase yard signs for the graduating senior's pictures to be posted around the square. Seconded by Mr. Stroud; the motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments

No one came forward for public comments.

Executive Session

No executive session was held.

Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss Mr. Lawrence offered a motion to adjourn the Council Meeting. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.