

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
CITY COUNCIL

October 5, 2020

Ronnie Thompson, Mayor

Sally W. Sandy, City Manager
Louis E. Vinay, Jr., City Attorney

Wendy Cato)
Christopher Hawkins) Council
Chris Jernigan)
Butch McSwain)

Linda Fafard, Interpreter
Tiffany Patterson

There was a Special Meeting held at 4:15 p.m. to receive a proposed draft of the 10-year Asset Management Plan for Electric.

I. Call to Order – The Meeting was called to order in the Council Chamber at City Hall at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Thompson.

II. Public Comment – The Mayor stated the guidelines for public comment and said speakers were to be called in order of sign-up for those who appeared in person; however, due to COVID-19 the Council was still accepting Public Comments via email, U.S. mail, or hand-delivered letters.

No speakers signed up, appeared, or sent letters/email.

III. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag – The Pledge was led by Councilman Jernigan.

IV. Invocation – The invocation was given by Francisco Risso, a Chaplain with Carolinas Blue Ridge HealthCare

V. Introduction of Council – The Mayor introduced Council and staff.

VI. Retirement Resolutions

a. The Mayor read a resolution honoring James “Marty” Coward who retired from the City of Morganton on September 1, 2020 with 20 years, 11-months’ service. Coward retired from the Public Safety Department as Sergeant.

Upon motion by Councilwoman Cato, seconded by Councilman Jernigan, and carried unanimously, the Council approved Resolution #20-22 honoring retiree James “Marty” Coward.

Coward reminisced about his employment with the City, stating he enjoyed his time and hopes to remain in touch with his coworkers.

Historically, the City has followed the North Carolina General Statutes and awarded a retiring member with their service weapon along with their fire services helmet. This has been done by the Council declaring the particular items as surplus and then allowing someone to purchase the weapon for the officer for a fee of one dollar.

Sgt. Coward has complied with the North Carolina General Statutes in regard to obtaining a valid gun permit for the weapon. City staff recommends that his weapon, a Glock 22 Gen 4 semi-auto pistol, serial number XHY520, and Cairns fire services helmet, model # 1044DSR, be declared surplus, sold for one dollar, and presented to retired Sgt. Coward.

Upon motion by Councilwoman Cato, seconded by Councilman McSwain, and carried unanimously, the Council declared the weapon, a Glock 22 Gen 4 semi-auto pistol, serial number XHY520, and Cairns fire services helmet, model # 1044DSR, as surplus, sold for one dollar (paid for by the City Manager), and presented to retired Sgt. Coward.

VII. Public Advocacy Issues and Strategies

a. The Mayor read a Public Power Week Resolution and Councilman Hawkins presented it to Brooks Kirby, Director of Electric Services. Kirby thanked the Council for their continued support of the Electric Department enabling them to do their jobs.

Upon motion by Councilman Jernigan, seconded by Councilwoman Cato, and carried unanimously, the Council approved Resolution #20-21 for Public Power Week.

The City Manager gave an overview of the Public Power Week activities and a video celebrating Public Power Week was shown.

•The Mayor read the Fire Prevention Week Proclamation, Councilman McSwain presented it to Fire Captain Israel Gibson.

Captain Gibson stated that since January 1, 2020 the City has had 4 residential fires due to unattended cooking. Captain Gibson encouraged citizens to change smoke detector batteries, make an escape plan, and a kitchen safety plan. He stated that every day at 4:00 p.m. during Fire Prevention Week Public Safety will post safety tips on their social media pages. He stated that fire stations are open any time for questions.

b. The Mayor announced that the Morganton City Council would be holding a Special Meeting / Town Hall on Tuesday, October 13, 5:30 p.m. at the Collett Street Recreation Center lower level. The Town Hall is titled "Let's Talk Morganton". The purpose is to continue discussions on ways Morganton can move forward.

The Mayor announced that Greenway Transportation will be offering free rides to voting places; the upcoming Third Thursday Art Crawl, Downtown, October 15; Ghost Tours, Friday & Saturdays, October 23, 24, 30, & 31; a Drive-thru Halloween Trick-or-Treat, October 23 at the Collett Street Recreation Center; the Halloween Huntacular, Scavenger Hunt in Downtown on October 31; and he said that Farmers' Markets continue on Saturdays and Wednesdays. The Mayor stated that the "Party in the Park" to be held at CoMMA on October 8 has been cancelled.

The City Manager stated that the City will be waiving all convenience fees for those making online payments through November 30.

The City Manager stated the Courthouse Square Project has begun. She stated that every two weeks there will be an update on website, social media, as well as the D2U downtown newsletter.

VIII. North Carolina Municipal Power Agency Number 1 Update – The City Manager stated there was nothing to share.

IX. Consent Agenda – The City Manager presented the Consent Agenda and asked if any items should be removed. No request was made.

Upon motion by Councilman Hawkins, seconded by Councilman McSwain, and unanimously carried, the Consent Agenda was approved and each individual item adopted as stated, those being as follows:

A. Approved Minutes as submitted for a Special Meeting held on August 13, 2020 and for the Regular Meeting held on September 14, 2020.

B. Approved tax releases in the amount of \$1,693.27.

C. Approved the granting by BDI of an easement to the City for an electric line and infrastructure to serve the new water tank at the Burke Business Park, and of an easement for road access to the water tank for purposes of operation and maintenance.

D. Budget Amendment / Public Safety – Approved a budget amendment (Ord. #20-30) in the amount of \$1,000 to recognize a grant to Public Safety from Walmart for community outreach.

E. Budget Amendment / Wastewater – Approved a budget amendment (Ord. #20-29) in the amount of \$30,756.50 to recognize an insurance reimbursement for the Wastewater Treatment shed.

F. Budget Amendment / Cable / General – Approved a budget amendment (Ord. #20-28) in the amount of \$113,874.76 to recognize CARES reimbursement for eligible COVID-19 expenses.

X. Items Removed from Consent Agenda – There were no items removed.

XI. New Business

A. Public Hearings

1. Public Hearing and Consideration of Amending the CDBG FY-2019 Annual Action Plan to Add Additional Community Development Block Grant COVID-19 Funds

The Mayor opened the public hearing at 6:25 p.m.

Lisa Helton stated that the City has been notified it is eligible for an additional \$106,060 in CDBG entitlement funds for COVID-19 relief (CDBG-CV Round 2). In order to accept and spend these funds, a public hearing must be held and a vote to amend the FY 2019 Action Plan which is a part of the 2015-2019 Consolidation Plan.

A requirement of the CDBG Entitlement Program is that the City of Morganton adopt a Project Budget Ordinance each year to reflect the current budget revenues and expenditures. Our project budget must be amended to reflect the additional \$106,060.

The public notice of this hearing was advertised in the News Herald on September 25, 2020.

There being no public comment, the Mayor closed the public hearing at 6:26 p.m.

Upon motion by Councilman McSwain, seconded by Councilman Jernigan, and carried unanimously, the Council approved an amendment to the 2019 Action Plan and the 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan to include COVID-19 Round 2 funding.

Upon motion by Councilman Jernigan, seconded by Councilman Hawkins, and carried unanimously, the Council approved amending the Project Budget Ordinance to include \$106,060 in additional COVID-19 relief funding.

B. Other Business

1. Consideration of Approving the 10-year Asset Management Plan for Electric

The City Manager stated that the City of Morganton owns and operates an electric distribution system that provides electric service to its citizens. Best practices of operating an electric distribution system call for long-term planning of future asset investments. The City retained Southeastern Consulting Engineers, Inc. (Southeastern) to perform a system evaluation and planning study. The intention of this report is to present, discuss, and provide a record of the conclusions and recommendations developed in the study. The recommendations outlined in this report are designed to provide a guide for the planning needed to increase the capacity of the existing distribution facilities over the next ten years to serve an anticipated 2030 peak load of

approximately 78,810 kW. We received this report at a Special Meeting held earlier this afternoon. The plan as presented, details about \$18 million of system investment over the next ten years.

The City Manager stated this ten-year plan will be used in budgeting and rate setting. As with all long-range planning constant re-evaluation of the plan will be required. Planning for maintenance, replacements, and new investments in our system ensure our ability to supply reliable service to our community.

Upon motion by Councilwoman Cato, seconded by Councilman Jernigan, and carried unanimously, the Council approved the 10-year Asset Management Plan for Electric.

2. Consideration of Award of Contract for Installment Purchase Financing for the Purchase of Multiple Pieces of Equipment/Vehicles

The City Manager stated it is the time of year when we solicit bids for financing for our large equipment and public safety vehicle purchases. We solicit bids for these purchases as a package so that we get better interest rates. The list of vehicles and equipment to be purchased was shared with Council.

This year the City received two bids on the financing. Proposals were requested for 3-year and 5-year financing. This allows us to keep financing periods at less than half of estimated useful life of any vehicle or equipment. The lowest responsive bid is from First Citizens Bank at 1.45% for a total financing of \$835,744 for 3 and 5-year terms

Councilman Hawkins stated this was an excellent interest rate and Councilman McSwain complimented Jessie Parris, Finance Director, for negotiating a great rate.

Upon motion by Councilman Hawkins, seconded by Councilwoman Cato, and carried unanimously, the Council approved a contract for installment purchase financing of multiple pieces of equipment to First Citizens Bank, in the principal amount of \$835,744 at 1.45% interest, for periods of 3 and 5 years, and to authorize the Mayor and City Manager to execute all required documents.

3. Consideration of Award of CDBG Entitlement Funds to Non-Profits

Lisa stated this funding is for FY-2020.

The City Manager stated that in the FY 2020 Action Plan, CDBG funds in the amount of \$22,388 would be used to provide assistance to non-profits that meet the goals and requirements of the CDBG program.

Applications were received on September 21, 2020 and the CDBG Committee reviewed these applications based on specific requirements set forth by the CDBG program. The CDBG Committee would like to recommend to the Council that the following non-profits be awarded entitlement funds:

The Outreach Center requested CDBG funds to be used for the Food Distribution and Community Food Bank Program. Items needed to be purchased for the Food Program include an electric pallet jack with 4,500 lb. capacity, side panels for pole barn, 5 outdoor heaters w/propane tanks, and guttering for pole barn. The CDBG Committee recommends awarding The Outreach Center \$9,100.

The House of Refuge requested funds to assist with housing and food costs. The Committee recommends the House of Refuge be awarded a CDBG grant in the amount of \$6,288.

BUCM requested CDBG funds to purchase food for their food program and for the Housing Assistance Program to pay rent deposits for low/mod income persons in Morganton in need of this type of assistance. Also there will be some funds available for bus tickets. The CDBG Committee recommends awarding \$7,000 to this program.

The Meeting Place requested \$6,000 for expenses at their facility on West Union Street but was not funded this year due to our policy that says if you receive in the past two years you don't qualify if current requests exceed available funding.

The total amount of CDBG recommended for approval was \$22,388.

Upon motion by Councilman McSwain, seconded by Councilman Hawkins, and carried unanimously, the Council approved awarding FY 2020 Entitlement Funds to non-profits as recommended by the CDBG Committee.

4. Consideration of Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Human Relations Commission – The members of the Human Relations Commission are appointed by the Mayor. At the September City Council meeting an amendment to the Human Relations Commission Ordinance was approved increasing the number of Commission members to a total of up to sixteen. The new terms will be staggered.

Jane Gantt has expressed interest and attended the recent HRC forum as a citizen and to reiterate her interest in membership. Sharley Mendoza has also expressed interest and also attended the recent forum. Staff recommends appointing them both to the HRC.

This leaves 2 at-large positions open as well as 2-student positions. Due to COVID-19 the student positions this year are unfilled at this time.

The Mayor appointed Jane Gantt and Sharley Mendoza to the Human Relations Commission for terms to expire on June 30, 2023.

5. 30-Day Notice for Boards and Commissions

Historic Preservation Commission – The terms of HPC Board Members David Stevenson and Mark Barrier are expiring in November. These members have been excellent participants on the Historic Preservation Commission. If citizens have an interest, they should contact the Clerk's office.

XII. Other Items from City Manager and City Council Not on Agenda

Consideration of Award of CDBG-CV CARES ACT COVID-19 Grant Funds to Non-Profits

The City Manager stated that included in the FY 2019 Amended CDBG Action Plan is \$87,803 that was designated to fund utility assistance programs and assistance to non-profits for COVID-19 related operational expenses. She stated that in September 2020, the City was notified by HUD that an additional \$106,060 in CDBG-CV CARES ACT Funds would be awarded to assist with programs that help to prevent, prepare for and respond to the coronavirus in Morganton. The City of Morganton solicited grant requests from local non-profits for the third round of awards from the original \$87,803 and for the first round of awards of the \$106,060. In total for this round of funding the City has \$10,000 for non-profit operational expenses and \$56,000 for rental/mortgage assistance programs.

Four applications were received on October 5, 2020 and the CDBG committee reviewed these applications based on specific requirements set forth by the CDBG-CV program. The CDBG committee would like to recommend to the Council that the following non-profits be awarded these CDBG-CV funds which are to be expended by January 8, 2021. Any funds not expended by this date will be reverted and considered for other awards.

1. Burke United Christian Ministries (BUCM)

BUCM requested \$5,000 CDBG-CV funds for the Rental/Mortgage Assistance Program to assist with paying past due rent or mortgage payments up to \$2,000 per household for low/mod income persons in Morganton in need of this type of assistance. The CDBG committee recommends awarding \$5,000 in CDBG-CV funds to this program.

BUCM requested \$5,000 to assist with the purchase of hygiene and food for the food pantry. The CDBG committee recommends awarding \$1,000 for operational funding from the original CDBG-CV funds.

2. The Outreach Center

The Outreach Center requested \$20,000 CDBG-CV funds for the Rental/Mortgage Assistance Program to assist in paying past due rent or mortgage bills up to \$2,000 per

household for low/mod income persons in Morganton in need of this type of assistance. The CDBG committee recommends awarding \$20,000 in CDBG-CV funds to this program.

The Outreach Center requests \$4,521.29 funds for equipment which will include electrical equipment, canopy and equipment needed for food distribution. The CDBG committee recommends awarding \$1,000 for operational funding in original CDBG-CV funds.

3. Olive Hill Community Economic Development Corporation, Inc. (Olive Hill)

Olive Hill requested \$66,000 CDBG-CV funds for the Rental/Mortgage Assistance Program to assist with paying past due rent or mortgage payments up to \$2,000 per household for low/mod income persons in Morganton in need of this type of assistance. The CDBG committee recommends awarding \$31,000 in CDBG-CV funds to this program.

4. The Meeting Place Mission

The Meeting Place Mission requested \$8,000 for safe and clean emergency shelter and transitional housing. Since the beginning of 2020 they have transitioned 35 individuals to permanent housing. The CDBG committee recommends awarding \$8,000 for operational funding from the original CDBG-CV funds.

The City Manager stated there would be remaining CDBG-CV funds after the award of these funds to the above non-profits. The remaining CDBG-CV funds will be put into a pool for non-profits to request additional funds as needed to prevent, prepare for, and respond to Coronavirus in Morganton. Funding is being placed in multiple distributions over several months to ensure those just now being affected by COVID-19 have a chance to receive assistance.

The City Manager stated the rules from HUD are changing constantly. As staff finds out what more it is expected, more distribution requests will be on future agendas.

Councilman McSwain stated it is delightful to have this money to distribute to our community.

Upon motion by Councilman Jernigan, seconded by Councilman McSwain, and carried unanimously, the Council awarded CDBG-CV CARES Act COVID-19 funds as specified for Public Service Activities to local non-profits as indicated for the purpose of assisting with COVID-19 related expenses.

XIII. Reports – Reports were distributed to Council.

XIV. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Preparation of Minutes. These minutes were prepared by Mikela D. Russell, Assistant City Clerk. Copies of all resolutions, ordinances and orders referenced in these minutes are intended to be incorporated into these minutes as if fully set forth herein. Prior to including them into the official minute book, the minutes have been read and approved by the City Manager and the City Attorney, then distributed to each member of the City Council for further review and final approval, at a subsequent Council Meeting.

Mayor

Assistant City Clerk