



City of Guyton
City Council Organizational Meeting
January 14, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES OF MEETING

Call to Order

The January 14, 2020 the City of Guyton City Council Organization Meeting, per the City of Guyton Charter, was called to order by the Interim City Clerk for this date, Linda Rineair, at approximately 7:00 p.m. Council Member Michael Johnson Sr. and Council Member Joseph Lee were present at this meeting.

Others Present - Interim City Manager Brett Bennett, City Attorney Ray Smith, and Interim City Clerk for January 14, 2020 Linda Rineair were present.

Guest Present - Numerous guests were present at this meeting. The guests sign-in sheets are filed in the office of the City Clerk.

Swearing in Ceremony

The following newly elected officials were sworn in by the Interim City Clerk for 01/14/2020, Linda Rineair: Russ Deen was sworn in as the Mayor of the City of Guyton. Hursula W. Pelote was sworn in as Council Member (Post #2), T. Marshall Reiser was sworn in as Council Member (Post #1). Afterwards the three newly sworn-in officials took their seats with the other Council Members before the meeting moved forward.

Moment of Repose for Those Who Practice Some Other Faith

Mayor Deen asked all present to take a brief repose for those who practice some other faith.

Invocation

Pastor Joel Tucker of the Guyton Christian Church gave the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Johnson.

Approval of Agenda (Amended Agenda)

Johnson made a motion to approve the Amended Agenda, as presented. Pelote seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation to Jeff Lariscy, Steve Collins, and Franklin Goldwire

Mayor Deen left his seat with Council and stepped to the front in order to present certificates of appreciation. Mayor Deen presented a certificate of appreciation to Franklin Goldwire, former Mayor Pro Tem, thanking him for four years of dedicated service with the City of Guyton Council. Former Mayor Jeff Lariscy and former Council Member Steve Collins were unable to attend this meeting to receive their certificates of appreciation.

Approval of Minutes

Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 10, 2019 and December 17, 2019 meetings. Lee seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Mayor's Opening Words

Mayor Deen welcomed the guests to the meeting, stating "the greatness of Guyton is the people in this room and the people of this community. We can move forward together. We can do great things together and I firmly believe we can bring about a golden age for our city together if we continue to encourage each other, listen to each other and laugh with each other as we should. I think only good things can happen with our city."

Mayor Deen asked that guests sign-in when they enter the Council Room and that anyone scheduled to speak step forward to the podium when asked and state their name for the record. Mayor Deen also advised that we are going to stop having comments from the galley, Deen said "Hopefully we will have cooperation, ease of service and respect in this room. I appreciate you all for following these rules."

Agenda Request

Mayor Deen briefly reported that an agenda request had been submitted by David E. Rollins of 614 Holley Avenue requesting consideration to get road access across from Guyton property to his, located off Riverside Drive with the possibility to lease Guyton property for hunting and fishing.

David Rollins stepped to the podium and presented the Mayor and Council with a hand-drawn sketch containing the location of the road, along with sewer pipe, canal, adjacent property owner's information, etc. Rollins, President of a Hunting Club, would like to find some type of solution to a problem, which will give him access to the property such as leasing the property he might be able to keep the sewer pipe open. The pipe stays plugged. Beavers stop it up. He opens it up and stated that two days later they (beavers) will plug it back up. Rollins would like to lease the property for hunting and fishing. That would provide him access to keep that sewer pipe open. Rollins further stated if that is not possible if he could get road access to get up in there to get to their property, he could keep that sewer pipe open. Rollins has talked with his neighbor, a retired core engineer, who told him that's a natural waterway and stated that you cannot block or obstruct a natural waterway. Rollins would like to find a solution to the problem that has been going on for almost three years.

Bennett expressed that bond documents would need to be reviewed to see how much of the property could be used regarding hunting and fishing, see what would be prohibited in the bond documents understand the liability of such. The City Attorney could educate Council on that. Bennett has not talked with Mr. Rollins, as he has only been with the City of Guyton for a few weeks but stated that he would be willing to sit down and get more familiar and go out there and look at it. Rollins advised that it is all under water right now. Attorney Smith suggested this may need to be looked at by Parker and that we need to remember, before we get too far into this, that this may be in the unincorporated area in the county. The Plant there is in the county. Rollins advised that the canal is on the right side. The water is supposed to run to the river. The beavers got it stopped so its detoured to a branch. All the water is coming right on his property. After a brief discussion Mayor Deen suggested that a meeting be coordinated so Mr. Rollins could meet with Mr. Bennett so they may look on GIS and get a better picture and see where they could go from there. Rollins also advised of insurance he has on the property and that he would be willing to put that on the Guyton property and stated that all he would have to do is add it onto it and the city could make a contract to get road access to it and Rollins would agree to sign a not responsible for injury or damage to a vehicle document.

ALL PUBLIC COMMENTS WERE LIMITED TO AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

NEW BUSINESS

Consideration to appoint a Mayor Pro Tem

Reiser made a motion to appoint Michael B. Johnson, Sr. as the Mayor Pro Tem. Pelote seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration to name an Interim City Clerk effective 01/15/2020 until the position is filled permanently

Bennett discussed the need for an Interim City Clerk, in title only, who would come in on a part-time basis to handle open record requests, will also be helping Bennett with minutes and Agendas, etc. until the position is filled.

Pelote made a motion to name Linda Rinear as the Interim City Clerk effective January 15, 2020 until the position is filled permanently. Reiser seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration of a proclamation to recognize the Macedonia Baptist Church for 150 years of service

Mayor Deen read the proclamation. Johnson made a motion to approve the proclamation. Lee seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Mayor Deen asked that Lula Seabrooks step forward. Ms. Seabrooks asked that the Pastor also step forward. Mayor Deen presented the proclamation to Pastor Lon Maurice Harden and Lula Seabrooks.

Consideration of nominations to the Planning and Zoning Board

Pelote advised that two seats are open. Pelote made a motion to nominate Tamela Mydell and Andy Harville to the Planning and Zoning Board. Reiser seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration of nominations for the Historical Preservation Committee

Mayor Deen is aware that one seat needs to be filled. Reiser made a motion to nominate Tom Barnes to the Historical Preservation Committee. Johnson seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration of an appointment to the Effingham County Industrial Development Authority

Bennett advised that Lon Hardin's appointment is up, and that Mr. Hardin is willing to serve. Johnson made a motion to appoint Lon Hardin to the Effingham County Industrial Development Authority. Pelote seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration to approve a proposal for Municode for the codification of City Ordinances

Interim City Manager Bennett explained that Muni Code is the source for codification of ordinances and posting on the web. It will be a long process which takes about nine to twelve months. They go through every ordinance, they go through your Charter, to make sure there is no conflicts with the law and make sure there is no conflicts with each other. Bennett thinks that \$20,000 was budgeted for codification this year and advised this is only \$8,500. It would be paid over a time period. Bennett entertained any questions of the Mayor and Council.

Attorney Smith advised that is the premier of service not just in the state of Georgia, but across the country and that is probably the best insurance policy there is. As an ordinance is passed it is incorporated in it.

Mayor Deen spoke with multiple Mayors at the New Mayors Meeting and all of them are on Municode and only had praise for the service. As a member of the Planning and Zoning Board for a decade they struggled to find their way through paper copies and the occasional scanned in document. This would allow citizens to look up codes on their own on the internet. It is the service to go with on that.

Pelote asked how long Municode would service this. Bennett advised that the first step in the process is the codification and it is a set fee to a certain number of pages, but Bennett does not believe we will meet that number of pages. It is around \$550 per year for subscription to host it. There are a lot of additional optional services the City could have, but Bennett does not recommend them at this time until the city gets to a good starting point.

Reiser made a motion to approve the proposal for Municode for the codification of City Ordinances, (Recodification at \$8,500 + \$550 online hosting). Lee seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration to renew Dental, Vision, and Life Insurance with Anthem BCBS

It is time for renewal, with no changes to the rates. Bennett would suggest that the City looks for more options down the road, but currently, with no increase in rates, he recommended that the City move forward with the renewal. This renewal is for dental, vision, and life which is optional for the employee. This does not include health.

Pelote made a motion that the City continue with the renewal for the dental, vision, and life for the employees. Reiser seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration to authorize the City Manager to contract with a qualified accounting professional for services

One of the biggest challenges Bennett would say are financial matters, which are many months behind in excess of a year of reconciliation of bank statements. That is going to include reconcile of bank statements which requires extra work to determine which entries were missed or which transactions were missed. Bennett feels he is completely capable of doing it, but it would probably consume every bit of his time for the next month. Bennett's recommendation would be to have someone come in to help us with that and get it knocked out so we can move forward. If the Council authorizes Bennett to contract for these services he would like to ask especially, since we have one council member that is a CPA, to include him as well as anybody else to a quorum to develop a scope of work and a fee associated with that. Bennett advised that the cost could depend on what you find when the process starts.

Reiser expressed his support and advised that this is a focus that we should have to come up from where we are and move forward on certain things for budgets and audits in the future and feels this will be money well spent. Reiser would like to serve in consultation with Bennett in the selection process.

Bennett does not believe it will be as he first thought as far as finding missing transactions. This will help us in the long run. Bennett advised that this would be a one-time thing. Mayor Deen desires to have two Council Members with him during the selection and would recommend Reiser and Lee.

Johnson made a motion that Reiser and Lee work with the Interim City Manager Bennett in finding a qualified accounting professional for services with a different firm. Pelote seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration to authorize the execution of a letter authorizing the de-annexation of Mr. Holmes property

Bennett informed new Council Members that this has been brought up for a couple of meetings. There was some confusion as to whether this property was in the city limits or not. There has been a letter drafted to go to the Board of Commissioners, copy in Council packets. The attorney has reviewed it and recommended that the Council approve it prior to being submitted.

Attorney Smith explained this item to new Council Members. The property is in a cluster of lots and every effort was made to find the minutes where it was annexed, but they were not found. Resultingly what has happened is we have treated it for years and Effingham County has treated it for years as part of the City of Guyton. The one real drawback to it is that if we de-annex it, it does create an unincorporated island. We

begin the process, if he wants it de-annexed, by notifying the county on the letter that we have looked at and put together here that the City has accepted an obligation to the de-annexation of that property. Smith believes that it is 30 days that they must make their objections known. It is exactly like an annexation except they have fewer avenues to object and when the time passes, and the objections are not there then it is de-annexed. Mayor Deen advised that he thought that property was in the unincorporated area already.

Reiser stated that part of the county website indicates all properties on that side of the road are county property, not city property, except for the park. Reiser thinks if the property is de-annexed and if it is no longer in the city it would be consistent with the surrounding properties.

Attorney Smith said, "again it is confusing because you cannot point to a set of minutes and say this was annexed here." A brief discussion followed.

Pelote made a motion to authorize the execution of the letter authorizing de-annexation of Mr. Homes property. Reiser seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Attorney Smith stated, "certified mail, return receipt requested."

Consideration to approve the subdivision of property for Habitat for Humanity

In previous meetings, Bennett believes, that Council took up this subdivision before and it was brought to his attention that a report needed to be done. Council could see the revised plan, in packets, along with final correspondence reviewing says that all his comments have been addressed and it meets standards.

There was an original review from Mr. Parker with EMC addressing with some comments. Mayor Deen advised that the city engineer has approved this plan and we are good to move forward. A brief discussion followed.

Reiser made a motion to approve the subdivision of property for Habitat for Humanity. Lee seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration of establishing a committee to analyze the status of the WWTP

Council Member Reiser requested consideration to form a committee of some type that would include maybe a couple of council members, potentially some folks in the community to analyze the status of the wastewater treatment plant, including the financial condition, status of the operations and the ability of it to provide the services that we hope it can provide. Mayor Deen agreed that a general overview would be a good idea. A brief discussion followed.

Reiser made a motion to establish a committee to analyze the status of the Wastewater Treatment Plant consisting of Mayor Pro Tem Johnson, a few citizens, and himself. Lee seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration to approve the purchase of a probe system for Linton Lane pump station

Interim City Manager Bennett explained the need for the probe system and went over quotes received for the purchase of a probe system. Bennett feels that GWI is more familiar with our systems and they have responded quickly when called.

Johnson made a motion to approve the purchase of a probe system from GWI (in the amount of \$2,901.13) for the Linton Lane pump station. Pelote seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Discussion of the status of the Leisure Services Committee

Lee reminded council that the Leisure Services does functions for the city and he would like to get it back going. The Leisure Services was unacted by the previous Mayor. Lee would like to open it back up. Lee advised that anyone wishing to serve on the Leisure Services Committee to come by the City Hall and let us know.

Mayor Deen stated that part of his campaign was to increase community participation and community activities. Mayor Deen has spoken with Mr. Bennett about this earlier. Mayor Deen suggested perhaps a Community Services Board, which will serve in a very similar capacity to the Leisure Services. This is where he is calling on all of you (those present) who are in the city and would like to be involved with this. This would not be a huge time commitment. At the same time, we could increase the number of activities we have. We had a wonderful illumination service this year. We had the caboose lighting. Musicians coming out. The sale on the trails was our biggest draw and all these things would be improved upon with a committee designated to set up more things. Bringing our churches involved, bringing our other civic organizations involved, making use of all the assets we have like the old gym which we are working on. There is a ton of growth in Guyton as more and more families move here. They are just coming in gross. Mayor Deen expressed that he would really appreciate it if anyone in this room (Council Chambers) is interested or if you know of someone who is interested please talk to Crisa at City Hall, we will get your information and we will be in touch before the next meeting, next month, where we would set this board in motion.

Discussion of the process for amending the City Charter

Bennett has already reached out to our State Representative and that is the route you must go through, even Legislative Counsel. The first step is GMA (Georgia Municipal Association) sends out a model Charter. The first few pages are included in council packets, because it is a rather large document. It out-lines the many options for different forms of Government. This is the primary discussion that must take place for the City. If Council wants to make minor revisions, we can get something done this year. If Council wishes to do significant overhaul you will not be able to get it done, just because there will not be enough time for discussion to get the amendment and to get a document that we all can approve to be sent to the Legislature in time for them to approve.

Attorney Smith stated, "November usually closes that door." Mayor Deen asked for clarification as to would this procedure be amending our current Charter, not a brand new one. Bennett replied, in his opinion it is easier, when we have these older Charters to start with GMA's model Charter. Council would not be really amending the Charter but would be creating a new Charter.

Attorney Smith advised that always a new one because you do not want anything from the past dragging you back.

Mayor Deen stated, "If citizens are interested GMA is the Georgia Municipal Association. GMA does a lot to help our city and all the cities in the state. There is a sample Charter on their website, of all the different types of Charters that are available." The City of Guyton has a Strong Mayor system. We are looking at the more common City Manager – Council, which is in almost every city that he's met with and talked to Mayors of are on that system, or basically doing that system and have not updated their Charters. This would be a big undertaking and would require some work sessions and workshops. Council has had some discussion and we want to bring ourselves into this century.

Discussion of the hiring process for City Clerk and City Manager

Bennett advised that both positions are currently open. The City Clerk was well on her way when he came in. Bennett has done some preliminary interviews and spoke with Council individually about this process. He would like to recommend three or four to Council for the Council to interview. The City Clerk is a unique position, as they are the Clerk of Council, they work for Council. Obviously, there is some direction from the staff, but at the end of the day this is your Clerk. Bennett has interviewed five and will probably interview a couple more this week, but would like to schedule a called meeting soon, to get that position filled, because that is probably one of the more critical positions in city government.

Mayor Deen asked Bennett to clarify that Council would hold an Executive Session in order to interview them. Bennett replied, "Correct, and he would refer to our Attorney that interviews for these types of positions can be done in Executive Session." Attorney Smith agreed that interviews of this nature can be done in Executive Session. You can do it at Special Meetings, and he thinks it is critical and that we need to remember under our present Charter the only persons that the City Charter actually names "you shall have the City Clerk and City Attorney." Furthermore, Attorney Smith explained that the City Charter is almost as Constitution. You are dealing with an issue that arises to that level.

A brief discussion followed.

Bennett also brought up the City Manager position, which he is filling in as Interim, and to recruit a City Manager. Bennett asked if Council would like to go about that position in the same way. Bennett would like to suggest that he be allowed to do some preliminary interviews and make a few recommendations to Council. Bennett asked if there was any objection to that. No objections were expressed from the Mayor or Council Members.

Discussion of the implementation of tablets for City Council Members

Mayor Deen reported to Council that Mayor Lariscy had dropped off some of his recommendations for tablets/laptops and had discussed the benefits of both. With the City going to an on-line code and this allows Council to better communicate in terms of having a device that is dedicated to city work and is a minimal expense of about \$460 each for five people and believes it would be money well spent and allows Council to work better and communicate more. Communication is key in what Council does. Mayor Deen asked that Council look these over. A brief discussion followed.

Reports from Staff or Committees

Legal - City Attorney Smith – Asks that the Council consider holding an Executive Session, there will be on going litigation that he would like to discuss to bring everyone up to date.

Police Department - Interim Chief Coppola was unable to attend this meeting, as he has sickness in his family.

Public Works - Jacob Ford - For the month of December the Public Works completed 73 work orders and completed 46 locates. Ford went onto report further information to Council.

Fire Department - Chief Clint Hodges – The Fire Department ran 296 calls in December with about 21 within the city itself. December, as far as fire alarms was high compared to most months, but it is cold, and people crank their heaters up. Had several civic engagements. Mayor Deen wanted to personally thank Hodges for all the activities that Hodges has supported and advised Hodges that he has been a boom to our city.

Interim City Manager - Brett Bennett – Will have the Council a formal report one day next week. Did want to mention that Effingham Day at the Capital is coming up in February. Also, GMA's Cities United is coming up later this month. All three newly elected officials are signed up for Newly Elected Training, as required. The counties and cities are beginning to discuss T-SPLOST. We need to have a meeting soon, not an official meeting, not a quorum, but to have some preliminary discussion. Bennett asked Council to let him know who is interested in attending that, just preliminary discussion, nothing official at this time. Bennett updated Council that he is really diving into numbers in the budget. There will be a budget amendment in the next month or two, depending on how quickly things progress. Bennett mentioned that Council will be signing bank signature cards. Something upcoming, we have done some GIS locating work. Prior to Bennett coming here we have all this mapping data so coming up he will have to present something to Council for another company to take that data and help us manage that GIS data. That will help us know where all our infrastructure, main and water/sewer will be. Bennett has prepared employee evaluation

forms; he is not sure that these have been being done this past year and he will do some of those prior to his departure so the new City Manager will have some background data to work off.

Dates to Remember - Mayor Deen reminded Council Members and those present of the following dates to remember:

01/18/2020 MFH Grits Cook-off at Guyton Christian 10am
01/20/2020 MLK Day Events
Homer Lee Wallace MLK Breakfast at the Rec Dept. 7:30am
Parade in Springfield at 10am
Children's Award Ceremony at Recreation Dept. at 12:00pm
Evening Service at Mt. Carmel Holiness in Rincon at 6:00pm
01/24/2020 GMA – Cities United Summit
02/11/2020 Effingham Day at the Capitol

Adjournment to move from the Organizational Meeting into an Executive Session reference Personnel and Litigation

Johnson made a motion at approximately 8:08 p.m. to adjourn from the Organizational Meeting into an Executive Session reference Personnel and Litigation. Pelote seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**


A brief recess of approximately 10 – 15 minutes occurred prior to the actual beginning of the Executive Session.

Adjournment from Executive Session back into the Organizational Meeting

Pelote made a motion at approximately 9:50 p.m. to adjourn from the Executive Session back into the Organizational Meeting. Reiser seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Adjournment

Pelote made a motion at approximately 9:52 p.m. to adjourn this meeting. Lee seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.**



Russ Deen, Mayor



Tina Chadwick, City Clerk

