CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, September 7, 2023

Council Meeting - 6:30 PM
CENTER POINT CITY HALL

MINUTES

A. Call to Order

B. Invocation

Pastor Charles Parker led the invocation.

C. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

D. Roll Call

Councilwoman Moore, Councilman Williams, Councilwoman Copeland, President Collins

E. Abatement Public Hearing

President Collins opened the Public Hearing for the September 2023 Abatement List to receive comments for or against the city abating their property. President Collins read the addresses of 25 properties and no one was present to speak for or against the abatements. The public hearing was closed at 6:35 p.m.

F. Public Comment

Mr. Shair Aharoui, representing Elad Realty, LLC, addressed the council regarding the property located at 401 19th Ter NE in Center Point, Alabama 35215. He introduced himself as an investor who had a keen interest in purchasing properties within the Center Point area. He expressed his appreciation for the new administration that brought him back to Center Point after an absence of several years.

However, Mr. Aharoui brought up a concern related to changes made by the State of Alabama in 2020 to the tax and tax lien code. He explained that under this new system, investors are no longer able to take possession of properties, and they can't even perform basic maintenance like cutting grass and expect reimbursement, as had been the practice in the past. While he acknowledged that this change is not exclusive to Center Point, he chose to address the issue within the context of Center Point.

Mr. Aharoui highlighted a specific problem where investors attempting to purchase tax certificates cannot receive any form of reimbursement. He noted that the city sends him letters every three months, requesting the grass to be cut on properties, but any efforts to comply with the city's requests result in expenses borne by the investor. This situation poses a significant financial burden for investors, particularly when property owners redeem their properties and are no longer obligated to pay for maintenance costs.

He shared a personal experience from 2019 when he obtained a tax lien for a property that had been entirely abandoned. The previous administration had advocated for the immediate demolition of this property. Mr. Aharoui and other investors, however, aim to rehabilitate such properties for their intended use rather than demolishing them. They received a bid for $60,000.00 to restore the property. Unfortunately, before they could obtain the tax deed that would legally allow them to commence work, Mr. Aharoui received an assessment letter from the City of Center Point totaling over $4,000.00. This assessment was associated with a property that had become overgrown over eight to ten years ago, long before he acquired the property. As a result, he emphasized that this debt should not be attributed to him and requested that the city consider waiving the fee.

President Collins expressed gratitude to Mr. Aharoui for bringing this matter to the council's attention, and Mr. Aharoui reciprocated with a thank you."

Bridget Taylor, representing Project Success Ministries, addressed the council to discuss the reasons for rezoning 100 20th Avenue NW. She began by greeting everyone and expressing her gratitude for the opportunity to speak. She mentioned that she had a petition and asked if copies could be made for the council members to review, with Mayor Scott volunteering to help with that.

Miss Taylor emphasized that Project Success Ministries has a long-standing relationship with the city of Center Point, spanning multiple administrations. She noted that the mayor frequently visits their facility to provide donations and highlighted their commitment to assisting seniors, especially during Christmas, offering free transportation, and supporting homeless individuals in the community.

Miss Taylor stressed that Project Success Ministries is an integral part of the city and expressed their desire to continue being a part of it. She specifically mentioned their growing concern for homeless elderly individuals who are often overlooked. These individuals, aged 55 and older, are vulnerable and face various medical conditions, forcing them to live in areas throughout the city, including under bridges.

She emphasized that these individuals are not the typical homeless population seen panhandling for donations. Instead, they are elderly, with most in their sixties, seventies, or even eighties. Miss Taylor explained that Project Success Ministries works to provide food, assistance, and access to medical care for these individuals, collaborating with major hospitals like UAB, Encompass, and Brookwood.

Miss Taylor highlighted a critical issue: when these vulnerable individuals are discharged from the hospital, they often have nowhere to go, leading to dire circumstances where they end up living on the streets or under bridges.

To illustrate her point further, Miss Taylor brought a senior from their facility, Miss Mary, and intended to show a video to the council. She shared Miss Mary's heartbreaking story of abuse and neglect, explaining how Project Success Ministries aims to provide a safe haven for people like her. Miss Taylor made it clear that their ministry's primary focus is to help those in dire need.

She pointed out that their special needs shelter in Jefferson County is unique, capable of caring for homeless individuals with serious medical issues. She urged the council to understand that these homeless seniors pose no threat to the community and asked, "What could Miss Mary do to cause problems in the city?"

Miss Taylor acknowledged the council's questions and attempted to play a video on her phone, which Mayor Scott tried to assist with, but technical difficulties prevented it. Nevertheless, she continued her presentation.

Regarding Councilwoman Tiffany Moore's request for specific documentation, Miss Taylor apologized for assuming that the council understood the operation of shelters. She clarified that she could not provide documentation related to the Health Department until the rezoning was approved. Miss Taylor reiterated that Project Success Ministries' focus is on providing shelter and support to homeless individuals, and they had already provided the intake and information about the services they offer.

Councilwoman Tiffany Moore emphasized her genuine concern for the community and asked Miss Taylor to provide the process and next steps after rezoning. Attorney Hendrix echoed this request, explaining that Miss Taylor could provide an outline of their plan and expectations.

Miss Taylor agreed to provide a plan but mentioned that she would start moving people into the facility immediately after approval.

Councilwoman Tiffany Moore reiterated that she needed something in writing before she could vote on rezoning. Miss Taylor expressed a willingness to work on providing the required information and invited Councilwoman Tiffany Moore to visit their facility.

Councilwoman Tiffany Moore agreed to visit, but only after 5 PM or on the weekend due to her schedule. She emphasized her need for visual documentation and stated that she would like to see a written plan.

Miss Taylor appreciated Councilwoman Tiffany Moore's willingness to visit and promised to provide the necessary plan and information to facilitate the rezoning process. She hoped that with this clarification, the rezoning request could be considered at a future meeting.

President D.M. Collins addressed another resident's concerns about property clean-up fees and pledged to communicate with the mayor and respond to the resident via email to resolve the issue.

G. Approval of Agenda

President Collins presented the agenda for approval. Councilwoman Moore made a motion to approve the agenda. Councilman Williams seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

H. Consent Agenda

President Collins presented the consent agenda for consideration. Councilwoman Moore made a motion to consider the consent agenda. Councilman Williams seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, the motion passed unanimously. President Collins stated that the judge required the city to rescind the Rental Inspection Ordinance. Councilman Williams stated that he wanted to open Resolution No. 2023-72 for discussion. Council President Collins stated that resolution no. 2023-72 will be moved to discussion in action. President D.M. Collins stated that she wanted to advise everyone that all items designated as "Consent" are routine and non-controversial and will be approved by one motion. No separate discussion of these items will be permitted unless a Councilmember, the Mayor, or citizen is interested in further discussion or hearing, so requests, if so, such item or items will revert to its normal place on the Agenda Order of Business. Council President Collins presented the agenda for adoption. Councilwoman Moore made a motion to adopt the consent agenda. Councilman Williams seconded the motion. President D.M. Collins called for a roll call vote:

Yes: Councilwoman Copeland, Councilwoman Moore, Councilman Williams, and Council President Collins

No: None

The motion passed unanimously.

H.1. Resolution No. 2023-70 - Declaring the property and its contents located at 405 Kim Drive surplus

H.2. Resolution No. 2023-71 Declaring & Ordering an Abatement on Public Nuisances

H.3. Resolution No. 2023-73 Authorizing the resurfacing of Karey Circle & Karey Drive

H.4. Resolution No. 2023-74 Fire Department Appropriation

H.5. Repeal Residential Inspection Ordinance

H.6. Resolution No. 2023-75 Authorizing Travel Advance

I. Presentation

Council President Collins gave the floor to Mayor Bobby Scott for a presentation to Center Point High School.

I.1. Proclamation to Center Point High School

Mayor Scott expressed his desire to present a proclamation to several members of the DECA program who were students at Center Point High School. He proceeded to read the proclamation and then introduced Cameron Mitchell, the President of the DECA program, emphasizing that Cameron was both a student at Center Point High School and a successful entrepreneur who had already launched his own business. Mayor Scott also mentioned that Cameron often assisted him during football game photography sessions, expressing his pleasure in mentoring and supporting Cameron throughout his journey.

Mayor Scott extended his appreciation to Cameron and acknowledged the presence of other DECA program members who were with Cameron.

Mayor Scott then invited Cameron to speak. He greeted everyone and introduced his fellow officers: Amorria Holmes, the vice president; Amy Tarves, the secretary; and Ashley Moore, the treasurer. Cameron also acknowledged their advisor, Minister Singleton, who couldn't be present but still deserved thanks from the council.

Cameron provided background information on DECA, explaining that it stood for "Distributive Education Clubs of America" and highlighting that their school chapter was one of the most popular organizations at Center Point High School. He elaborated on their achievements, including participation in and success at business competitions both at the state and national levels, community service initiatives, and the continuous growth of their membership numbers. Cameron emphasized DECA's role in empowering individuals, and guiding students toward success through leadership development, professionalism, and natural networking, which had previously benefited the Center Point community.

Cameron expressed their commitment to further assisting the community through partnerships and outreach activities in the future. He encouraged the council to reach out whenever they needed assistance from DECA for community projects and services and concluded his speech by thanking the council once again.

J. Discussion/Action

Council President Collins stated that the sheriff department enhancement agreement was on discussion. Council President Collins stated that the council would make a motion to consider and then she would open the floor for discussion. Councilwoman Moore made a motion to consider the sheriff department enhancement agreement. Councilman Willams seconded the motion. Council President Collins opened the floor for discussion.

J.1. Resolution No. 2023-72 Authorize the solicitation of bids for the City Cafe.

Councilman Williams made a motion to consider resolution no. 2023-72. Councilwoman Ebonee Copeland seconded the motion. President Collins stated that the motion had been moved and properly seconded. President Collins opened the floor for discussion. Councilman Williams stated that he is trying to find out the status of the current tenant. Are they going to terminate her lease?
Mayor Bobby Scott stated that a thirty-day letter had already been sent to vacate the premises.
Councilman Williams asked if the formal tenant would be able to get reimbursed for their deposit?
Mayor Bobby Scott stated that she only had a 12 month lease and that she never paid a deposit.
Councilman Williams asked Mayor Bobby Scott if he was going to get a different company to be in the building.
Mayor Bobby Scott stated that's what the solicitation of the bid is for. Mayor Bobby Scott stated if anybody wants to have an opportunity to lease the building, they can send a proposal to city hall.
Councilman Williams asked if all the equipment would stay in the building.
Mayor Bobby Scott answered yes, the equipment belongs to the city.
President Collins closed the discussion and called for a roll call vote.

Yes: Councilwoman Copeland, Councilwoman Moore, Councilman Williams, President Collins

No:
The motion passed unanimously.

Councilwoman Moore made a motion to adopt resolution no. 2023-72 authorizing the solicitation of bids for the city cafe. Councilman Williams seconded the motion. Council President Collins called for a roll call vote.

Yes: Councilwoman Ebonee Copeland, Councilwoman Tiffany Moore, Councilman Williams

No: Council President Collins
The motion passed by majority consent.

J.2. Consider Sheriff Department Enhanced Agreement

Councilman Williams stated that he was trying to see if anyone had spoken with Jefferson County about whether they had made a decision to give us six officers. President Collins stated that the last time they had spoken about the agreement, the council agreed on four officers. She stated that this is what the agreement entails. She stated that it just went from six to four officers because the plan was to start some development in our public safety department.
Councilman Williams asked if the council had heard anything about the plan that we had concerning reducing the officer's money.
She stated that you can say that the cost did decrease because the deputies were decreased.
Councilman Williams stated that the cost is still high, but we have fewer deputies.
Mayor Scott stated that each deputy does run a certain amount and although Jefferson County did give their deputies an increase in pay, they accounted for the increase in the city's contract.
Councilman Williams asked if the council could do a follow-up on the discussion.
Mayor Scott stated that we can work on the process of growing the public safety department.
Council President Collins asked if there was any other discussion.

The item failed because of a lack of motion.

J.3. Ordinance No. 2023-4 Rezone Request for Project Success Ministries from C1 to Institutional

Councilwoman Tiffany Moore made a motion to postpone Ordinance No. 2023-4. Councilman Williams seconded the motion. President Collins asked if there is any other discussion regarding rezoning the request for Project Success Ministries from C1 to Institutional. Upon voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

K. Reports- Mayor & Committee Chairs

No report.

K.1. Economic Development/Public Safety- President D.M. Collins

No report.

K.2. Park & Recreation- Councilman Glenn Williams, Sr.

No report.

K.3. Public Works- Councilwoman Tiffany Moore

No report.

K.4. Education & Library- Councilwoman Sharon Jones

No. report.

K.5. Finance Report-Councilwoman Ebonee Copeland, Chair

No report.

L. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting stood adjourned.

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Nicolia Hopkins, Acting Clerk

Approved:

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D.M. Collins, President

Date: ____________________________