

Council Work Session

October 16, 2018

Meeting called to order by Mayor Harley at 5:00pm.

Invocation given by Mayor Harley

Pledge of Allegiance led by Chief Hadden.

Welcome extended to all by Mayor Harley.

Present were Mayor John R. Harley, Councilman Justin Wright, Councilman J. Micheal Evans, Councilman Edward Armijo and City Attorney Rebecca Tydings. Absent Councilman Cameron Andrews.

Rules of Decorum: Mayor Harley went over the rules of decorum. When speaking, please state your name and address. Do this clearly so that the City Clerk can understand you. Please do not speak unless recognized. Please do not interrupt other speakers. Please do not talk, whisper or otherwise disrupt the meeting or you will be asked to leave.

Public Comments

10/10/2018 Declaration of Emergency, Susan Lemme, 219 Mason Drive, made statement re: recent Hurricane Michael and Declaration of Emergency. Georgia Mayors are granted great power and responsibility under the Declaration of Emergency. Care and consideration of intent actions are paramount importance. Such determines actions with our law enforcement, rescue personnel and first responders. The declaration provides instructions to citizens and businesses. Referenced the following Code of Ordinances:

Section 18-2 (b) Emergency powers. Following a declaration of emergency and during the continuance of such state of emergency, the mayor is authorized to implement local emergency measures to protect life and property or to bring the emergency situation under control. In exercising this authority, the mayor may cause to become effective any of the following sections of this chapter as appropriate: Section 18-5 (overcharging prohibited), section 18-6 (registration of building and repair services) and section 18-7 (closed or restricted areas and curfews). If any of these sections is included in a declaration of local emergency, the same shall be filed in the office of the city clerk and shall be in effect until the declaration of local emergency has terminated. The Mayor proclaimed a Declaration of Local Emergency on 1:30pm October 10, 2018 and hereby activated effective at 3:00pm on October 10, 2018 and will exist and shall continue until 12 on October 11, 2018. The following actions of the Centerville code of ordinances be implemented: Section 18-5, Overcharging; Section 18-6, Registration and Building and Repair Services; and Section 18-7 Closed or Restricted Areas and Curfews; and that the following measures also be implemented: Section 18-2(a) (4) c and d.

The wording of the declaration of emergency caused unnecessary confusion with city personnel and other agencies (Houston County 911), stating they were not aware of the order. The declaration was posted on Facebook and Councilman Wright's Facebook page. There should be better communication in the future and thanked Mayor and Council for considering input.

Mayor Harley replied back to Ms. Lemme. I gave you the courtesy of not interrupting during your comments and I would appreciate the same. Last Wednesday the City of Centerville prepared for the possibility of a Category 1 hurricane. We planned carefully in full partnership with Perry, Warner Robins and Houston County. Together we operate an Emergency Management Response Center at the 911 complex. The members also include Robins AFB. A lot of expertise is available to assure any decision made are planned and coordinated. Our city has invested money and time assuring our employees are well trained and equipped. I would put our Utility, Police and Fire workers expertise against those anywhere. They are professionals. Two members of the Fire Department are fully accredited members of the State of Georgia-GSAR team. In addition, council members have all received disaster preparedness training, some more than others. The statements you made in phone calls and social media are not only misleading, but appear to be an attempt to undermine authority during a state declared emergency. While I very much respect your past as a retired Librarian, I do not know how this in anyway qualifies you as an expert in disaster preparedness. In my opinion, you have done a great disservice to the city and county.

Geraldine Parker, 129 Ridgebend Drive, mentioned Eagle Springs website re: comments from citizens that they had called 911 and were unaware of curfew. Centerville Police Department website did not mention curfew.

Mayor Harley addressed
Old Business

None

New Business

Discussion-Employee Safety: Councilman Wright stated that when he moved back to Middle Georgia he came to a city council meeting in Centerville. He remembers that the Council was voting on the urban chicken ordinance. Also, he remembers Mrs. Parker speaking, concerned about packs of feral roosters running the streets and who would clean up after them. Found this amusing, but never became an issue. When I decided to run for this office and the previous Councilman Wright decided to retire, Mrs. Parker wrote the Telegraph about how it was a set up, we were all friends, and it was a put up job. None of this true, but reality has never been a barrier to Mrs. Parker's now familiar rants. Upon being sworn in as an elected official, he began to hear tales of escapades. Skulking through the employee parking lot to see what employees are at work that day. I have a copy of the police report if anyone would like to see it. Repeatedly calling the police department to report on her neighbors for their failure to roll their trash can from the road in timely fashion. Reminding the Police Department that she pays their salary and they should do what they say. Mayor and Council, all of this is an annoyance, but our citizens have the right to have access to their government whether they are an annoyance or not. Our citizens certainly have the right to free speech as protected in our constitution, although many of them mistakenly think that also they also have freedom from the consequences of the things they say. However, on September 18th, there was an incident involving Mrs. Parker here in city hall that I believe demonstrates a clear escalation of her behavior of repeated attempts to harass and intimidate city employee's. Read the below written statement by Sherri Thrasher.

“On September 18th, 2018 I was approached by Mrs. Parker in the ladies restroom about 4:50pm; right before the City Council Meeting. I was headed to the restroom, when I saw Mr. &

Mrs. Parker sitting out in the waiting area before the meeting. Shortly after entering the stall, I heard the restroom door open and someone go straight to the sink and start washing their hands. Mrs. Parker proceeded to make small talk about me being the new girl here at City Hall. As I exited the stall to wash my hands; Mrs. Parker started making conversation with me, saying she has known “these people” here a long time and to not trust them. She stated “do not tell them anything.” At this point I had become very uncomfortable and exited the restroom. I returned to my desk getting things closed down for the evening. I looked up at the window and Mrs. Parker is standing there with her finger over her lips as in making the hush don’t say anything motion.”

Councilman Wright stated that he knew what Mrs. Parker’s first response will likely be - to call me a liar. She has certainly done it before. Councilman Wright played security camera video of the incident described in Ms. Thrasher’s statement. Councilman Wright continued, “I won’t attempt to speak for Mayor and Council, but as for me, I welcome the opportunity to have a dialogue with the citizens that I represent. We can debate about the budget, discuss plans for the future, we can even argue over how to best handle particular situations. Can we not all agree that following an administrative assistant into the restroom to intimidate her is out of bounds? Can we not all agree that the person practicing such bizarre behavior has no desire to see our city become the best place to live? In the next couple of weeks I’ve got to take some time away from my Sunday morning service at my church to go, as the pastor, into our kids church area and talk to them about how we are having some new rules because our children are having a hard time staying out of one another’s spaces and keeping their hands to themselves and when they don’t get their way they can’t just yell and scream and call people names. It’s embarrassing to have to have the same discussion in these hallowed chambers this evening. We have excellent citizens in our city and we also have excellent employees. The days of this council standing by while bullies stomp on their neighbors and our employees are over. I want to be so clear tonight, that any continued abuse and harassment of city employees, whether it be by a citizen or another city employee or even an elected official will not be tolerated. As for Mrs. Parker, we are currently exploring all resources available to us under the law including, but not limited to: a temporary protective order or a resolution to ban you from city hall. We will avail ourselves of other actions the law might deem appropriate. We have amazing things going on in Centerville: Phase I of Center Park, road improvements, Police Department is beginning to fill positions back to full strength, Fire Department is getting a truck upgrade and our Public Works Department has moved into their new facility. All of this was done with a balanced budget, no tax increase and without borrowing funds. We will not let a handful of loud, angry and bitter voices drown out the good things that the Mayor and Council have pursued in an effort to create the “BEST” possible environment for our citizens. Mayor, I welcome further discussion in hopes that we finally put this behind us and get back to work.”

Councilman Armijo, I am totally shocked but this does not surprise me. I have been on the council for almost 4 years. One of the main reason I decided to run for council is because the citizens did not have a voice. Every time they spoke up they got bashed. Every time they said something they got humiliated. It had gotten to the point that a lot of the folks came and talked to him and would not come here anymore. Agrees that no one should be harassing employees, but we have hit a new low in the city of Centerville. I would like to think that I represent not just employees but the citizens of Centerville and the management of Centerville. When I was elected to the seat it was to protect everyone in Centerville. I have seen enough bullying too “sick and tired of the bullying”. I am not going to tolerate it anymore either. This to me is

appalling and has reached a low that the city has never gone to before. Thank you Justin for taking us there.

Councilman Evans, I have been on the city council almost 4 years. When I moved to Centerville in 2007, I decided to get involved in city government. A lot of great things were going on and I wanted to be a part of them. We have accomplished a lot of great things. Also, during this time we have had to deal with a lot of issues (personnel and citizens). The method you may not like or expect but it had to be done. Employees should be able to come work and feel comfortable and citizens come to city hall and feel comfortable. Hate to see stuff like this happen. Analogy, sometimes children suffer from the decisions of the parents, it's not good but it happens. After today a lot of things will be put to rest. If you as a citizen feel like something is going on or want to voice something, come and talk to someone, be reasonable express your opinion, but don't think just because you want something to happen, it's going to happen. We (Mayor and Council) are here to serve all citizens not just some of them. This is something that I try to keep in mind every day.

Mayor Harley, I am embarrassed that we have to do something like this. In the time that I have been here this is the first time I have seen something like this happen. Have to keep an eye out for our employees they work hard for you. It is a shame we have to embarrass anybody. We have some good people, we are going to protect our people that work here for the city.

Introduce Newly Hired Firefighters – Chief Jones recently just hired (3) new fire fighters. Introduced firefighters: Shane Williams, Jonathon Leatherwood, and Joseph Laimano. Mayor and Council welcomed them to the city. They have all recently completed their orientation period.

Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) 2017 Golden Axe Award Plaque Presentation - Bridgett Monroe with MDA reported that over the past 11 years Centerville Fire Department has raised \$ 96,000. The main goal of MDA is to raise funds for research. This year the Centerville Fire Department raised a total of \$ 12, 750 bringing their overall fund raising to \$ 108,750.00. Mrs. Monroe presented the 2017 Golden Axe Award plaque to Chief Jones and fellow firefighters.

Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) 2018 Centerville Fire Department MDA Check Presentation - Councilman Armijo & Chief Jones presented a check to Bridgett Monroe (MDA) in the amount of \$ 12,750.00.

Centerville's Firefighter of the Year 2018 Recognition - Chief Jones stated that every year local organizations recognize public safety personnel from the different agencies within Houston County. The Knights of Columbus hold their annual luncheon in the spring to recognize the outstanding Firefighters, Police Officers, and EMS personnel. Around September 11th every year the Houston Home Journal publishes a magazine to honor the public safety personnel as well. During October which is Fire Prevention Week and month the Centerville Fire Department officially recognizes and honors the Firefighter of the Year for the City of Centerville. This year's recipient of this great achievement, first and foremost is a good person, good morals, values, integrity. Dedicated and loyal to the Firefighter, good work ethic. Chief Jones recognized Brandon Pate as the 2018 Centerville's Firefighter of the Year.

Fire Prevention Week Proclamation - Councilman Armijo read proclamation and presented to Chief Jones.

New Fire Station Design Presentation - David Selby WM2A Architects recognized Jodie Nichols (WM2A Architects) stating she has done the majority of the design on the proposed fire station. They have been working with Chief Jones for several months in the development phase, have not spoken with engineers re: design. Someone is going to ask cost calculation - EST cost per sq. \$165, site work less than \$20 a sq. ft.; 3.1 million construction cost for the fire station. The costs are high, the construction cost have been increasing 9% per year since this project was first discussed. Mr. Selby recognized Ms. Nichols and she presented the new fire station design.

Councilman Armijo stated that one of the things he really likes, it's consistent with the buildings in Centerville. Chief Jones pointed out the administrative side, cost measure to plan for future staff with the most efficiently designed space. Chief Jones thanked Mr. Selby and Ms. Nichols stating it was a pleasure to work with you both on the project.

Councilman Wright asked what the original budget number was 2 million, where did the additional 1.4 million come from? Mr. Selby stated that they started with a little smaller station, but Chief Jones stated that they needed deeper bays and higher count for staff needed more bunk rooms (male and female). Privacy for bunkrooms. Mr. Selby added that it looked like building the 2 million facility would be an underservice.

Director of Operations Brumfield reminded everyone that the construction fees are increasing (9% each year). No motion or action taken. Miscellaneous discussion about funding source and cutting back the cost.

Comments from Council

Post 4 Councilman Armijo, no comment.

Post 3 Councilman Evans, no comment.

Post 2 Councilman Wright, no comment.

Mayor Harley, stated that Mrs. Toni Copeland was a good friend and great person. I have a lot of memories and pleased she is in the arms of the Lord.

Mayor Harley adjourned meeting at 6:07pm.

Mayor John R. Harley

Attest by City Clerk Krista Bedingfield

Date