

Minutes
Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council
City of Chattahoochee Hills, Georgia
January 5, 2016 / 6:30 p.m.

Call to Order

Mayor Reed called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Councilmembers in attendance were James Stephens, Richard Schmidt, Claire Williams, Faye Godwin, and Don Hayes. All members were present. Also present was Heather Ryfa on behalf of City Attorney Rick Lindsey. Mayor Reed led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Administer Oath of Office to Elected Officials

Attorney Heather Ryfa administered oaths to the following Elected Officials:

- 1. James Stephens – Oath of Councilmember*
- 2. Claire Williams – Oath of Councilmember*
- 3. Don Hayes – Oath of Councilmember*

Election of Mayor Pro Tem

Mayor Reed read Section 2.09(b) of the Charter which outlines the role of the Mayor Pro Tem. Mayor Reed called nominations for Mayor Pro Tem. Councilmember Hayes made a motion to nominate Faye Godwin for Mayor Pro Tem. Councilmember Stephens seconded. There were no other nominations. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Approval of Agenda

Mayor Reed requested the agenda be amended to add Item 16-786, a Resolution to Appoint an Acting City Manager for the City of Chattahoochee Hills. Councilmember Godwin made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Councilmember Williams seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

- 1. Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 1, 2015*
- 2. Minutes of the Special Called Meeting of December 17, 2015*

Councilmember Schmidt made a motion to approve minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 1, 2015 and the Special Called Meeting of December 17, 2015. Councilmember Hayes seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Staff Reports

Financial Update: Kyle Jones

Mr. Jones said that he had nothing to report and that he would be happy to answer any questions about the financials. There were no questions.

Public Works Report: Greg Brett (serving as Interim Public Works/Parks Director)

Chief Brett reported that they continue to work on roadway repairs. There has been a lot of erosion and flooding on the gravel roads. Some of the priority areas were addressed temporarily and grading will begin on Friday and Saturday.

Fire Department Report: Greg Brett

Chief Brett reported that there were a total of 388 calls in 2015. The Fire Department upped manpower to three effective Monday. The digital radio upgrade has been completed and the signal now appears clear and strong in all areas of the city. He also said that he celebrates with the Charter School with them securing their Certificates of Occupancy for the temporary trailers.

Police Department Report: Donnie Keeter

Interim Chief Keeter reported that the department had four full-time personnel resign in December – the Chief and three officers. He said that one part-time officer was made full-time and one part-time officer was hired. There have been no gaps in coverage and they have been maintaining a minimum of two officers on duty at all times.

Community Development: Mike Morton

Mr. Morton reported that he is expecting to receive an annexation application for property located near Cochran Mill Road and Highway 154. He is also working on the schedule for meetings on the Comp Plan update.

Presentations/Proclamations (None)

Public Comment

Dave Hanson, 8135 Atlanta Newnan Road – written statement read by Attorney Heather Ryfa. He thanked the Council for taking the time to hear the concerns of the citizens and taking action. He has known Matt Rook for a number of years and said that the Police Department has become more community oriented under Matt's leadership. He said he has had many conversations with Matt and Matt had always made it clear that his loves the city and desired to have a long career with the City. He urged the Council to conduct an independent investigation into the treatment of all staff, including the resigned officers, regarding the workplace environment created by the City Manager.

Lee Brown, Campbellton Masonic Lodge #76, 7676 Church Street – said that the residents formed the city because they wanted the representation that was lacking with

Fulton County. He has never seen an elected body ignore the will of the people like this Council does. He addressed the Mayor and Council regarding the December 17, 2015 meeting. He said that Councilmember Schmidt was dismissive and talked down to the citizens, Councilmember Williams did not look up during the meeting and did not address the citizens, and Councilmember Hayes was arrogant when addressing the citizens and not completely truthful. He said that Mayor Reed's and Councilmember Godwin's silence leads him to believe that they condone what some of the other Councilmembers are doing. He said they must have run off Matt Rook because they saw his popularity as a threat and that this movement is bigger than Matt Rook and the other officers. He also said the people are not satisfied with their elected officials and encouraged everyone to not back down and hold them accountable.

Clay Johnson, Chattahoochee Hills Charter School, 9670 Rivertown Road – thanked the Council for their investigation into the incident that occurred with Jay DiPasquale at the charter school. He said the charter school concluded their investigation last night and the finding was that Jay DiPasquale did breach their harassment policy. The school is taking no further action other than this notification. He has worked with many governments and the current Council is a good group who worked hard deliberating on a holiday. He also said that the charter school board feels that it is a public safety concern that the fire and police departments can lose staff so quickly and asked the City Council to examine the authorities of the City Manager in the Charter and to find a way to slow down deliberations of the termination of public safety staff.

Susan Tillander, 9900 Woodruff Road – said that everyone was “wanded” coming into the meeting and that you do not do that the citizens. Jay DiPasquale was given a chance to speak to the Mayor and Council for four hours and was given the chance to clean out his office but Matt Rook was not given that chance. She said that Chattahoochee Hills is a community and the police department is part of that community. The community is why she and her family moved back to Chattahoochee Hills. She said that Matt Rook did not resign on his own because he loves this city – the city manager forced him out and the Council was complicit. She said that the city should investigate if there has been some financial benefits received by some of the Council members. She said that Matt is loved and they will never give up until Matt is back.

Terry McGinnis, 11845 Upper Wooten Road – thank the Council for doing the right thing on December 31st. He said that he would like the city to be more self-examining and investigate what happened over the last four months with the city manager. He said that the city needs to appoint an independent investigator and the findings need to be made public. Mr. McGinnis submitted a copy of his comments for the record.

Nesha Bryant, 13150 Hutcheson Ferry Road – thanked the Mayor and Council for giving the citizens the opportunity to speak and for all the time and effort put into the Special

Called meetings. She said that she was stunned that one person could do so much damage. She requested that the Mayor and Council consider creating a policy that requires City Council approval for hiring, firing and resignations of senior staff, particularly the public safety positions. She also said that she strongly feels that the police force should be brought back. Ms. Bryant submitted a copy of her comments for the record.

Brooke Lochore, 9455 Browns Lake Road – thanked the Council for listening and doing a great job over the past few weeks. She said that she is the president of the Chattahoochee Hills Charter School PTO and she thanked the Council for working to make sure the children and the school are safe. She said that she is proud to be a resident of the city and is proud to send her child to a wonderful school in a wonderful city.

J.K. Langley, 6240 Campbellton-Redwine Road – said that he had intended to comment at the December 17th meeting and regrets his decision to not support the city manager at that time. He said the comments made at the meeting that night were a grain of truth, wrapped in layers of lies, and covered in a thick layer of emotion. He said that the former city manager had failed to realize the vindictiveness of some people and that the charter school is a subsidiary of Serenbe. He has nothing against Matt Rook and does know the details about his resignation. He said that is between Matt Rook and the former city manager.

Robin Cailloux, 10680 Serenbe Lane – thanked the City Council. She said that Matt had told her that he has respect for the Council. She said that many of the residents feel that bringing Matt and the other police officers back is what is best for the city. She also said that the City Council should not begrudge Matt for hiring an attorney. Ms. Cailloux submitted a copy of her comments for the record.

Lisa Bianco, 7605 Barnes Road – thanked the city for work on the gravel roads and thanked the City Council. She said that the search for a replacement for Chief Rook is costly and time consuming. She said that Matt Rook is the ideal candidate for the position and she urged to the City Council to hire him back.

Cindy Ford, 7605 Barnes Road – thanked the City Council for the time to speak and the citizens for their commitment. She said that there have been news stories in the last year about bad policing and police brutality. She said that Matt Rook's highest standard of policing has galvanized the community to this cause. She urged the City Council to advise the new city manager to rehire Matt Rook.

Sylvia Redic, 6419 Campbellton Redwine Road – said that even though she was born and raised here, she felt intimidated getting up to speak about something that is contrary to

what is brewing among the local citizens. She does not think this movement or campaign over personnel issues is unifying all of the community. She said few, if any, people have all of the details and cannot speak with the knowledge of all sides. The six people on the stage were elected from a majority of voters and the people should treasure that. She cautioned everyone to not take a rumor or one person's version of a story and turn it into a truth that is then used to attack people. She encouraged people to read the Georgia Code regarding the process of recalling elected officials.

Blake Walker, 10205 Henry Mill Road – thanked the Council for the charter school investigation. She also thanked Greg Brett and Matt Rook for being examples of what the citizens and community want when it comes to communication. She suggested that all departments have similar ways of communicating. She said that she hoped there would be an investigation on what took place between the city manager and former and current employees.

Steve Hurwitz, 9116 Selborne Lane – thanked the City Council for securing the resignation of the city manager. He said prior to July, the city had a police force that was embraced by virtually 100% of Chattahoochee Hills. Many had the personal phone number of the Police Chief, knew the police officers by their first names, and the city had an enviable model of law enforcement. He said the geographic comments about where someone lives were tiresome and destructive. He asked the Council and new city manager what could be done to reset the clock to June.

Renee Prince, 13015 Hamilton Road – said that she was speaking on behalf of Trella Dickerson. She said that Ms. Dickerson told her a story about when her son passed away in 2013. Ms. Dickerson had said that Matt Rook was there consoling her and stayed with her until her daughter arrived. Ms. Dickerson also wanted to thank the current police officers.

Rebekah Michaels, 9068 Selborne Lane – thanked the City Council and Mayor for taking time for listening to the concerns of the citizens and for doing the right thing on New Year's Eve. However, Chief Matt Rook and Officers Bass, Purcell, and Allen needed to be reinstated to further heal the community. She said that several citizens canvassed the city during the last month. She said that they had spoken to 28% of the electorate, and among those voters, 90% strongly favor the reinstatement of Chief Rook. She urged the Council to consider reinstating the four officers. Ms. Michaels submitted a copy of her comments for the record.

Amber Rampley, 9059 Selborne Lane – shared a story for someone else. She said the person's husband had a wreck on Hutcheson Ferry Road and was transported to the hospital. The wife was not allowed to ride with her husband in medical transport so

Matt took the wife to the hospital in his police car. She said the Chattahoochee Hills a modern Mayberry and that they are all here fighting for Matt.

Andrea Ciasullo, 9068 Selborne Lane – thanked the City Council for their attention to the concerns recently raised by the citizens. She said that the police officers who had recently resigned to escape a hostile working environment were important contributors to a culture of mutual respect and trust between our police force and the citizens. She asked the Council to take steps to restore the people and the culture. Ms. Ciasullo submitted a copy of her comments for the record.

Eliza Bacot, 1000 Loliver Lane – thanked the Mayor, Councilmembers, and staff for their time over the holidays to conduct meetings and hear comments from the citizens. She shared a personal experience with Matt Rook. She said that she was going to work very early one morning when she saw a woman and half-naked man walking on Atlanta Newnan Road. She was able to text Matt Rook and he responded immediately and said he would have an officer respond. She said that knowing that she could reach out directly to the police force is the reason she loves living in the community. She asked the City Council and interim city manager to reinstate any officer who is willing to return. Ms. Bacot submitted a copy of her comments for the record.

Sherry Wilson spoke on behalf of her mother-in-law, Elizabeth Wilson, 4570 Cochran Mill Road – said that she was deeply concerned for her mother-in-law’s safety. While her mother-in-law was out of the country, she had a violent man on the property, but she never worried because she could call an officer and have one there in minutes. She said safety is vitally necessary for her mother-in-law to remain in the community and asked why the Council would hire rookie officers when the city had officers with years of experience.

Ben Hoffman, 10975 Hutcheson Ferry Road – said that he moved to the city a few weeks ago and did not know what was going on until he started talking to neighbors. He told the Council it was cool how they took the initiative at the last Council meeting and made things happen right away. He requested that they keep that momentum going and do an investigation on what was going on with the former employees and Mr. DiPasquale.

Rob Preiditsch, 9159 Selborne Lane – thanked the Mayor and Council and thanked Councilmember Godwin for responding so quickly to questions. He said that he moved here because he wanted to live in a small town and that they got involved in the community. He said there were men in the room that carried the casket of Lt. Mike Vogt and that police force got involved with the community. He spoke of going through his daughter’s diagnosis of epilepsy and said that Matt Rook followed up with them and provided information about epilepsy. He asked the Mayor and Council to look into the situation further.

Tanya Cole, 10207 Hutcheson Ferry Road – said that Matt Rook was the first person she met when she moved to Chattahoochee Hills when he responded to a call at her house and that he had given her his personal cell phone number. She said that it seems pretty obvious that all the districts want Matt back. She asked why it took five hours of executive session to remove the city manager. She said the public is either not being respected or other things are being hidden. She said there needs to be transparency going forward.

Dave McMurrain, 10180 Capps Ferry Road – said that he was involved in the canvassing and petitioning for the start of the city. He said we became a city for three things that were being promised: fire, police, and zoning. There is too much segmenting and everyone needs to come together like they have for this meeting. He said the charter school needs the community support and reminded everyone that the citizens came together to purchase the parks. He said the city has to overcome the class situation and needs to maintain cohesiveness. He urged everyone to vote their conscience at the next election.

Daniel Funderbirk, 11820 Upper Wooten Road – said that he wanted to leave the Council with his professional expertise. He said it is tough to take a seasoned officer and replace them with a new officer. There is policing to the letter of the law and there is policing to the spirit of the law. He said that he has modeled his own policing in the City of Atlanta after Matt Rook. The 90% that want the Police Chief back need to be considered. He said that Councilmembers reflect us and they need to reflect our voices. He apologized for any disrespect that the Council has received and asked that they move the city forward.

Public Hearing (None)

Discussions (None)

Unfinished Business (None)

New Business

- 1. Item 16-786:** A Resolution to Appoint An Acting City Manager for the City of Chattahoochee Hills.

Mayor Reed read the rules from the Charter regarding the appointment of an Acting City Manager. He introduced Mike Jackson, who was recommended by the Georgia Municipal Association to serve as Acting City Manager.

Councilmember Godwin made a motion to approve Item No. 16-786. Councilmember Hayes seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Attorney Heather Ryfa administered the Oath of City Manager to Mike Jackson.

Mayor Reed said the Mayor and Council directs the City Manager to form a committee made of five people, including two citizens, two employees, and the City Manager, to review the City's current disciplinary process and grievance process, and to make recommendations to the Mayor and Council on any suggested changes to this process. The committee should also evaluate the possible need to make a change in the Charter to section 3.04.3 regarding the process the City Manager must follow in order to terminate an employee at a Director or Chief level and make a recommendation on improving those processes.

Mayor and Council Comments

Councilmember Schmidt told Finance Director Kyle Jones that the financials look wonderful.

Councilmember Stephens thanked the Council and the Mayor and said that he appreciates the opportunity to represent the citizens. He is looking forward to getting past where we are today and moving forward.

Mayor Reed thanked everyone for coming and thanked those who spoke at the meeting. He said sometimes things do not move as quickly as some want and he will keep pushing until we are there. He said that the Council is a group of volunteers who give their time and are trying to do the best thing for this community.

Mayor Reed thanked John Taylor for his years of service as Councilmember and presented him with a framed photograph that was taken by Alan Merrill.

John Taylor said that that the great thing about this city is are the people. He said that we were told that we were never going to make it as a city but we are still here and we have a lot to be proud of.

Mayor Reed welcomed Ricky Stephens and said that he was looking forward to working with him. He also thanked the Parks Commission members, Planning Commission, Community Brickworks, and other volunteers. He asked everyone to keep the city staff in mind during this time.

Adjourn Meeting

Councilmember Godwin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Williams seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

These minutes are provided as a convenience and service to the public, media, and staff. It is not the intent to transcribe proceedings verbatim. Any reproduction of this summary must include this notice. Public comments are noted and heard by Council, but not quoted. This is an official record of the City of Chattahoochee Hills City Council Meeting proceedings.

Approved this 2nd day of February, 2016.

Dana Wicher, City Clerk

Tom Reed, Mayor

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