

Searcy City Council – Special Session
June 18, 2015 5:00 p.m.
Minutes

Mayor David Morris called to order a Special Session of the Searcy City Council. Alderman Don Raney gave the Invocation, with the Pledge of Allegiance following, led by Alderman Steve Sterling. City Clerk Jerry Morris called the roll with the following Aldermen answering “present”: Logan Cothorn, J. R. Howard, Steve Sterling, Dale English, Don Raney, Dale Brewer and Mike Chalenburg. Also present was City Attorney Buck Gibson. Council member Mary Ann Arnett was not present.

Item (3) on the agenda was a recognition of the retirement of two (2) long-time employees of the City of Searcy. Twin brothers, Mr. George Hale and Mr. Francis Hale, have announced their retirement, effective June 30, 2015. Mr. George Hale has been employed by the City of Searcy for a total of 35 years and 1 month and Mr. Francis Hale has been employed by the City of Searcy for a total of 42 years and 8 months. Mayor Morris presented a plaque of appreciation to each of them for their service to the City of Searcy.

Mayor Morris stated that with this being a called Special meeting of the Searcy City Council, without any objection of the Council, any person that wishes to address the Council concerning the business on the agenda may do so. No objection was voiced by the Council.

Item (4) on the agenda was for the discussion of the proposed Downtown Beautification project. Mayor Morris asked Dr. David Burks, Co-chairman of the Searcy Regional Economic Development Corporation (SREDC) Beautification Committee to address the Council to bring them up to date on the status of the project. Dr. Burks noted that in the April 2, 2015 special Council meeting, \$150,000.00 had been approved to be used for the Holiday Lights project in 2015 and \$150,000.00 had been tentatively pledged for the Downtown Beautification project in 2016, coming from the Reserve and Opportunity fund portion of the 2014 Eight Year Plan Fund. He also stated that through discussions held by the SREDC Beautification Committee that a suggestion for moving forward immediately with the Downtown Beautification project be brought before the Searcy City Council. The reasoning for moving immediately on the Downtown Beautification project was that if the beautification project was completed at the same time as the Holiday Lights project there would be an additional draw for people to come into the City of Searcy. This additional draw of people into the City of Searcy would create a greater economic impact/benefit for the city. Dr. Burks stated that an interest-free loan of \$150,000.00 could be attained by the City of Searcy to facilitate the immediate movement on the Downtown Beautification project with repayment of the loan to be made in 2016. He asked if the Council would consider this request. At this time Mayor Morris asked if anyone present would like to address the Council regarding this issue. No person requested to address the Council.

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Mayor Morris then opened it up to the Council for their discussion. Alderman Brewer stated that he is committed to this beautification project and also his appreciation for the work that has been put in by the SREDC toward the Downtown Beautification project. Alderman Raney noted that he recognizes several downtown merchants in the audience and asked if any of them had any comments regarding this issue. Ms. Amy Maxson, co-owner of Leslie Jewelers, spoke saying that she has consulted with other downtown merchants and believes that it is a needed project. She also stated that she and other downtown merchants are excited about this project and will do anything that they can to make this happen. Mayor Morris thanked her for the comments and asked if there were any others that would like to speak. There were no other requests to address the Council.

Mr. Raney then stated that, since this project could be moved upon immediately with the available interest-free loan with the city not being out any expenses between now and 2016, he is in favor of proceeding with the request. City Attorney Gibson stated that the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) that have been received this year would be sufficient for this Downtown Beautification project, which is essentially a design and paving project. He stated that the Council would need to take action as far as selecting an entity from the RFQ's that have been received to perform the professional services regarding this project. He also stated that the Council would need to take action regarding the financing of this project which would require the waiving of bidding as well as the execution of the financing documents. Mr. Gibson stated, provided no objection is voiced, that he felt the consensus of the Council is that this request be acted upon. No objection was voiced. He then stated that he would have the required proper documents regarding this issue prepared for the July 2015 regular Council meeting.

Mayor Morris announced that the Arkansas State Legislative Audit personnel have contacted the City of Searcy to inform that they will be here the week of June 29, 2015 to begin the annual audit for the 2014 calendar year.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn.

Minutes Approved: July 14, 2015

/s/ David Morris
MAYOR

ATTEST:

/s/ Jerry Morris
CITY CLERK

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