

**REGULAR MEETING**  
**Minutes**  
**November 14, 2023**  
**6:00 P.M.**

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Thurman called the regular council meeting to order at 6pm.

**2. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance**

Rev. William Gibson gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Roll Call**

Mayor Thurman, Mayor Pro Tem Currie, Council Members Miller, Murphy, Wease, and Thurman was present.

Staff Present: LaThaydra Sands, Carnethia Pennamon, Joe Reitman, Isaac Nesler, Robbie Stone, and Johari Stone

Media Present: Susan Jacobs, the Monticello News

**4. Agenda Approval – add Executive Session made by Council Member Wease**

**5. Consent Agenda to include:**

**a. Approval of Minutes:**

- 1) October 10, 2023 – Regular Council Meeting
- 2) November 1, 2023 - Special Called Meeting

**b. Approval of Check Register - Check #'s 45914 – 46052**

Motion to approve the consent agenda; October 10, 2023, Regular Council Meeting Minutes, November 1, 2023, Special Called Meeting Minutes, and Check Register Check #'s 45914 – 46052 made by Council Member Wease, seconded by Council Member Murphy. All in favor.

**6. Citizen Comments**

*The Citizens Comment section of the agenda allows citizens who sign up to address the City Council for not more than three (3) minutes on specific topics. The City Clerk will keep time. Please be courteous of the 3-minute time limit.*

Evelyn Driskell, 847 Webb Street, expressed to the council how thankful and appreciative she was on the road repair on Webb Street. She also congratulated the elected officials on behalf of Melissa Strozier.

Wanda Cummings, 349 West Greene Street, stated she appreciates all the individuals who ran for council and congratulated those who won. She then encourages the individuals she ended by stating it's



a hard job, but you can agree to disagree but still listen to the citizens of this town. No matter who wins the election you're only as effective as you can be yourself to be, and it is a learning experience.

Stephanie Puckett, 228 Honeysuckle Road, stated she received an interesting letter in the mail in red print which seemed a little excessive. She then questioned if the council was still going to purchase a \$12,000 Christmas Tree and if the council member who didn't attend the GMA training was going to reimburse the city. She recommended for the city to not purchase the Christmas Tree; and the funds for the training are paid by citizens taxes and since the council member didn't cancel the citizens should not be responsible for paying for the training.

## 7. Presentation

- a. **Dr. Clark, President of Southern Crescent Technical College**, presented to the council the new programs offered at Southern Crescent Technical College and asked for help to get the word out to the public.
- b. **Historic Preservation Commission: ~~Zac Middleton~~, David Thompson**, updated the council on the revisions to the HPC Bylaws being presented to the council next month.

## 8. Public Hearing opened at 6:22pm closed at 6:25pm

### a. Planning and Zoning Application: 2023-TA003

For: Amber Whitfield, Christina Harmon

Against: None

## 9. Action Items

### a. Planning and Zoning Application: 2023-TA003

Motion to approve the Planning and Zoning Commission recommendation for Planning and Zoning Application: 2023-TA003 made by Council Member Wease, seconded by Council Member Murphy. All in favor.

### b. Nancy Street Petition for Speed Bumps

Motion to table the Nancy Street Petition for speed bumps until the city can review for paving in the future made by Mayor Pro Tem Currie, seconded by Council Member Murphy. All in favor.

### c. Business Garbage (Carts) Accounts

Motion to accept the business roll around carts for the local businesses in the downtown business district at the rate of \$21.28 per month made by Mayor Pro Tem Currie, seconded by Council Member Murphy. All in favor.

### d. Office Rental Space

**Discussion:** City Manager Sands compared the rental prices for units in the City of McDonough and City of Forsyth and stated there is needs for improvements before increasing the rental price but would like to start the process to get the rate increased to a more comfortable rate before 2024. The council requested an estimate of repairs and square footage measurements for each office space.

Motion to table the office rental space until next month was made by Council Member Wease, seconded by Council Member Murphy. All in favor.

**e. Council Retirement**

**Discussion:** Council Member Miller stated she would bring to the council to increase council retirement to \$75. Council Members Wease and Murphy questioned the current rate and the cost to the taxpayers. Council Member Miller stated the current rate is \$25 and the additional cost would be less than 4%. Council Member Murphy stated the rate was \$7 for many years and then increased it to \$25. Council Member stated the City of Monticello is way behind other cities within our region.

City Attorney Joe Reitman explained he didn't know if the city had a retirement and didn't know if other municipalities have it or not but if this was a pay raise or pay increase, it would be done under Home Rule. This would have to be done before the qualifying period and then implemented before the next new council comes in. This is a little different because he has not completed any research for retirement, but it does sound like this may be a pay raise but on the back in not while in office. Council Member Miller stated what Attorney Reitman mentioned wasn't correct and it was not a pay raise. Attorney Reitman stated he doesn't remember being contacted by the prior Mayor and suggested for the council to look into it.

Motion to increase council retirement from \$25 to \$75 was made by Council Member Miller, seconded by Council Member Wease. Vote 3-2. Opposed by Mayor Pro Tem Currie and Council Member Murphy.

A citizen questioned when this would go into effect and Mayor Thurman stated the city would look into it.

**f. Tree Trimming**

Council Member Murphy stated she met with Jake Murrell, Murrell's Tree Service, last Thursday on the existing Christmas Tree and Jake gave two different options and thinks both options are better than buying a \$12,00 artificial tree. After looking at the square the majority agreed that was a mistake because there was nowhere to put it and after doing more research, she found a big tree for less money. The idea was to have Jake trim the existing tree to look like a Christmas Tree. Option one is to remove the existing lights and trim it. Option two is to remove the existing lights, trim it, hang new lights, and take them down after Christmas in a timely fashion.



Mayor Thurman stated in the last Special Called Meeting no one called to take their vote back for the tree. She questioned since the motion passed does the tree has to be ordered.

Council Member Murphy stated she would like to bring it back up and change her vote for the motion.

Council Member Wease stated in the past the council has only allowed the individual who made or seconded the motion to rescind the motion.

Council member Murphy stated she was told if she was on the winning side, she could rescind her vote for the motion.

Attorney Joe Reitman stated he corresponded to the mayor and city manager to look into the issue. He initially looked at Robert's Rules of Order and it was not particularly clear. He then did some online research and turns out there are some other options for reconsideration: motion to reopen, motion to amend something previously adopted, and motion to rescind. The initial approach is to reopen and that's where you are today. He also stated if you are looking to solely to reconsideration, that action is typically done the meeting when the action is taken. You must have voted with the prevailing side to move reconsideration, in other words, you would have to vote in favor. Not sure if what you guys are doing is a reconsideration so much as you're reopening it. Now you're talking about amending it or rescinding it. Amending it would be changing things up it because of new facts or information is available, which is what he heard. The motion to rescind it would be undo what was done previously and then to go with something different. In his research, he didn't see where it had to be by the same person but should be by someone on the prevailing side if the reconsideration. He suggested if you reopen, rescind, or alternatively amend it should be someone on the winning side to initiate the discussion. Ms. Murphy stated she did vote in favor and now second thoughts, research, etc. Someone opposed would not be making a motion to reopen.

Mayor Pro Tem Currie stated it wasn't about getting a Christmas Tree but to stop wasteful sending especially at Christmas time and there's no place to put it. We're spending \$12,000 for a Christmas Tree we're not going to use, and we have people who may not have dinner for Christmas.

Mayor Thurman stated last year \$20,000 was spent on Christmas lights, and the people you're saying may be hurting are the same people hurting this year, or if people were hurting.

Council Member Murphy stated the same lights purchased last year are going back on the square again this year.

Mayor Thurman questioned if Isaac saw a place for a tree to go on the square.

Isaac stated currently, no ma'am, not with the irrigation, plants, trees.



Council Member Miller stated the Mayor Pro Tem is concerned about the citizens but he's the same person who voted against the senior citizen receiving a \$25 credit on the utility bill.

Mayor Pro Tem Currie stated he was the same person who wanted to give a bonus or kickback to every citizen of Monticello, and he would represent all citizens.

Council Member Miller stated we did that during COVID, we gave all the citizens credit.

Mayor Thurman suggested we take the \$12,000 and buy hams and turkeys to feed the citizens of Monticello.

Council Member Miller stated she likes the idea and supports it.

Council Member Murphy questioned where they would be stored or if they don't want one.

City Attorney Reitman suggested giving credit on the bill.

Mayor Pro Tem suggested putting the funds back into the budget and see where we can help the citizens at a future time. A bad mistake was made and all we want to do is correct it.

Mayor Thurman and Council Member Miller both stated let's do something now for the citizens.

City Manager Sands questioned if there was a civic group to partner with to give out turkeys.

Council Member Murphy stated the food bank and churches give out turkeys.

City Attorney Reitman stated the options are to vote again to approve the \$12,000 artificial tree, go with one of the two options from the tree company, to purchase turkeys and hams, credit on bill. If you are leaning towards the last two options, the credit on the bill would be easier. Not sure if city staff have the capability to do some of the stuff if the tree service trims up the tree. If you the tree service done one of the options every year it could get expensive.

Council Member Miller stated the problem with the lights is they are never taken down. If we contracted, they would not be out there in the tree and part of why the tree needs to be trimmed is because the lights are banging up against the limbs.

Isaac stated that his department doesn't have a crane but do have personnel and equipment to do his best to trim it up to save money and if it doesn't turn out the way we needed it to then we can look at hiring Murrell's later.

City Attorney Reitman stated to table any actions on the purchase of the tree, having the tree service trim the tree until you hear back from city staff. to approve or rescind vote, table any action to purchase tree a

Motion to take the \$12,000 divide it evenly and give it to the citizens who have electric and apply it as a credit on their utility bill due in December made by Council Member Miller, seconded by Council Member Wease. Vote failed.



Motion to save all the money allow Isaac and his department take a crack at it as soon as humanly possible so that way if he's not capable of trimming it up and getting the lights out of the tree we can reach back out to Murrell's before it's too late to get it done and we will not spend any money on an artificial tree was made by Council Member Murphy, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Currie. Vote 3-1. Opposed by Council Member Miller. Council Member Wease did not vote.

**g. Christmas Bonus**

Motion to raise the Christmas Bonus to \$150 for the city employees was made by Council Member Murphy, seconded by Council Member Wease. All in favor.

**h. Permission to Solicit Bids for Shrimp Boat Building**

Mayor Pro Tem Currie suggested including the Short Street into the bid and make repairs on Webb Street/Gulf Plant.

Motion for the city manager to put out bids with all legal requirements for the city properties on Short Street and Forsyth Street made by Council Member Murphy, Mayor Pro Tem Currie. All in favor.

**i. Electric/Gas Building Sewer Paving Pad**

City Manager Sands spoke with Michael Boykin, and he stated they would wait on the paving pad and will include it in the budget for next year to focus on furnishing the building with council permission.

Motion to wait on the paving pad and protect the septic temporarily made by Mayor Pro Tem Currie, seconded by Council Member Wease. All in favor.

**j. Steele Co Change Order**

Motion to accept Steel Co change order #4 and proceed to pay remaining fees made by Mayor Pro Tem Currie, seconded by Council Member Murphy. All in favor.

**k. Dissolve IGA for Blockstream - table**

Motion to table the IGA to dissolve Blockstream made by Council Member Murphy, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Currie. All in favor.

**l. MEAG Power Margins and Voluntary Deposits into the MCT**

Motion to accept the Off-Systems Energy Sales Margins for the Power Supply as a credit on the monthly MEAG Power bill made by Mayor Pro Tem Currie, seconded by Council Member Wease. All in favor.

**m. ECG Year End Settlement**

Motion to accept the ECG Year End Settlement funds in the form of a credit made by Council Member Murphy, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Currie. All in favor.

## 10. City Manager Update

The furniture bid for the gas and electric building was received in the amount of \$31,000.

Accelecom was working in the building and fiber should be in the city hall building soon.

For Certified Public Manager class, a project worth \$3,500 in value. Currently the city doesn't have a core valued system in place and would like to create a training program called "Are you SHARP?" Service, Honesty, Accountability, Respect, and Professionalism. The council gave consensus for the project.

Water and sewer update – Met with the Waymon and the engineer last week to discuss the draft water permit for water and sewer mandated changes. Currently the city's plant isn't set up to treat phosphate and ammonia. Once the state approves the permit, the city will have 36 months to get into compliance. The engineer discussed two options: build a new plant and hire employees to treat the phosphate and ammonia or distribution through land. The city already has property but will need to run lines and stray our waste onto the vacant land. The engineer will come discuss possible funding for the project later.

APRA funding reminder – local jurisdictions that do not file reports on time by 2024 will have their full reward rescinded even if spent.

Thanksgiving festivities have been changed to a health and wellness luncheon and the city's holiday party will be held on December 7<sup>th</sup> at the new gas and electric building.

City hall transformer repair will take place on November 28<sup>th</sup>. Michael stated the contractor doesn't feel comfortable working close to the generator.

Christmas Parade has been scheduled for December 9, 2023, and the request has been submitted to GDOT.

Council retreat has been scheduled for April 11, 2024.

Audit update – Rick and CHK Group met with Amanda to discuss the plans for the audit. The original deadline was for the end of January or beginning of February. The importance was expressed to both Rick and CHK Group and asked if two could be done by January 31<sup>st</sup>. Spoke with Amanda and she stated we're on the right track, but once she receives what she needs, it will take like three weeks. The testing has been done for 2020 just waiting on a couple items so it will be around January. Amanda would like to complete the audits separately and not together to not hold them up.

CHK Group has been capped at \$16,000. A new invoice was received in the amount of \$15,021. Needs permission to continue to work with them.

Motion to cap the CHK Group at \$10,000 more to proceed with the audit work made by Council Member Murphy, seconded by Council Member Wease. All in favor.

Paving projects – Robert is working on the quotes for an informal bid for Spruce Street and a formal bid for Hunters Ridge because of the pricing and the number of repairs.

**11. Executive Session – Council Member Wease canceled the executive session due to the information discussed in the meeting.**

**12. Council Update – None.**

**13. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the Regular Council Meeting at 7:29pm made by Council Member Murphy Mayor Pro Tem Currie. All in favor.