

**TOWN OF CENTRAL
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
1067 WEST MAIN STREET, CENTRAL, SC 29630
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2023 – 8:26pm**

Present: Mayor Andrew Beckner; Council Members, Paige Bowers, Joe Moss, Lynne Chapman, Ken Dill, and Harry Holladay; Administrator Phillip Mishoe; Corporal Shane Bagwell; Fire Chief Ed Reynolds; Assistant Administrator Tom Cloer, Dr. Gabriel Rodriguez, Curtis Peek, Debbie Peek, Amy Gray, Ian Bartley, Amy Gray, Rachelle Beckner, Katina Holder, Rosa Grayden, Janie Collins, Ryan Knowland, Portia Berry, Keith Abercrombie, Susan Abercrombie, Bryan Schaupp, Brock Bailey, Marci Michalec, Bill Ritzman, and Town Clerk Susan Brewer.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Andrew Beckner

Joe Moss rendered the invocation.

Reading of Minutes 10-09-2023

Lynne Chapman made the motion to adopt Regular Council Meeting Minutes 10-09-2023; seconded by Paige Bowers. The vote was unanimous.

Public Session (30 Minutes Total)

Ryan Knowland lives at 129 Hedge Street and was here to talk about the ordinance that you all passed in the summer with regards to our election changes. I'm just curious why we're changing from a majority or from plurality to a majority. I was looking at the ordinance, the city ordinance, the city ordinance today on the website and it still has it listed as using the plurality method instead of majority because as you all know we have a runoff election this upcoming Tuesday which is two days before Thanksgiving and I'm just curious why we decided to change that because that is just going to cause us to have to pay for staff for early voting and we're going to have to pay the staff that works at the polling place. And we have five polling locations. I know some of them are going to be combined for this, but I was just curious why we're doing that because it's going to cost us money to do that. It's going to be probably \$2,000, maybe more, to do that staff and why we're going to have that when we hadn't had that money for a while. and also with the turnout for that we had about 300 voters come out on election day and for the runoff that's during that week. It's Thanksgiving, kids are out of school, turnout maybe a hundred people less than that and we're paying thousands of dollars to do it so I was just curious why we're going to change that and did y'all consult the Pickens County Elections Office before you made that change or is it just something you all decided to do because it's quite frankly not a great decision it just costs more money when we have the election results we want if you want by vote you still want to hit a recount it's just it's not a great process for us and I'm just curious as to why that happened.

Mayor Beckner said he would be happy to follow up with him.

Rachelle Beckner approached Council and stated:

"I'm going to read my statement and I'm allocating three minutes from a person who lives near us to extend my comments. I don't care as long as my three acres aren't disturbed. If you don't like it, sell your house and move. Council members are volunteers. These are all statements that have either been said to me directly or in the community in the last three years, including most recently before this election. I'm here to address issues that have been festering in our city and demand our immediate attention and rectification. It is evident that the political landscape in our community is undergoing a significant transformation. The electorate is sending a clear message that incumbents are at risk of losing elections because frankly they are failing to listen to the residents who entrusted them with their votes. A democracy is only as strong as its representation and it's time we reaffirm our commitment to the principles that define it. A pressing concern is the power dynamic between the council and the town. Let us be crystal clear that the council is here to manage the town, not the other way around. Recent events have raised troubling questions about undue influence turning a once accountable body into a mere puppet. This erodes the trust that residents have placed in their elected representatives. Transparency is not a buzzword, it's a cornerstone of a healthy democracy. Yet our recent experiences challenge this ideal. Restricting resident speaking time and limiting participation based on arbitrary criteria only serves to muffle the diverse voices that make up our community. This is not transparency. This is a calculated attempt to stifle dissent. Every document you have here tonight is a public record and is subject to the FOIA laws. It should be made available to the public before we come to these meetings. Equally disheartening is the lack of transparency in the agenda setting process. Issuing vague agendas, a day in advance, devoid of supplemental materials and meaningful information does a disservice to those trying to engage in the civic process. We deserve better and our democratic rights demand better. Let's talk about the development of the so-called Natural Space Residential District. Promises were made and promises that had been bulldozed, along with the greenery that we were assured would be preserved, including a large tree that is, I assure you, older than this town. It is now gone. What we are left with is a stark contrast to the assurances given. The excuse that property owners have the right to do as they please fall flat when the city has the authority to set guidelines that prioritize the collective well-being of our community. To rectify this situation, I propose that the city consider putting your community garden in the middle of the GSH property on Lawton Road, because after all, it was supposed to be a natural space. And as far as I can tell, the only natural space that exists is around the creeks that they would have had to preserve anyway. Are you planning to test the soil of the railroad property where you wouldn't pit a community garden? Because I wouldn't want to eat produce that's been grown in contaminated soil. I must also address the troubling dynamics involving women who dare question or speak out. The dismissal and

degradation of women who seek answers and accountability are just unacceptable. They are indicative of a broader issue within our leadership. We, as women, are not ignorant. We recognize that we are being lied to and we will not stand idly by as our concerns are dismissed. These issues extend beyond the developer infecting the very core of our city. As elected representatives, you are not volunteers. You are public servants, accountable to the citizens who put their trust in you. This isn't just about a lack of trust with the developer, it's about a pervasive lack of trust in our city. I implore this council to reflect deeply on your values, your roles, and evaluate the current dynamics and engage in sincere dialogue with the community. The status quo is no longer acceptable. The tide is changing and it's time for a recommitment to true transparency, genuine accountability, and the overall well-being of our community. Furthermore, we must address accountability issues within our community, extending to all employees. Transparency and accountability must be the pillars of our governance to ensure the safety and trust of our residents. Residents shouldn't have to attend every committee or council meeting to hold the city accountable. In addition, we must strive for equality in promoting businesses in our town. All businesses deserve an equal chance to thrive, not just those in the inner circle of some City officials. We need a fair and transparent system that fosters a level playing field for all, promoting diversity and ensuring the economic well-being of our community. I have refrained tonight from naming anybody and calling anybody out personally. However, I want to make it clear that come the next election, I will be sharing voting records publicly to have supported for the pro-development ordinances in our town. The residents have a right to know where their elected officials stand and whose interests they truly represent. In closing, let me emphasize I speak as an individual, a citizen with a voice that will not be silenced. My views are my own, representing the collective concerns of a community that demands better. Thank you.”

Rosa Graydon approached Council She lives at 101 Cantrell Drive. She read her statement.

“I want to ditto, offer Ms. Beckman what she said. I take it seriously. I'm a female as well. And I don't like being denied when I pay taxes and not being heard. And you all work for us. And we do expect for the things that become, that we work out a plan and stop overlooking us as citizens of Central South Carolina. I want to first say congratulations to those that have won the elections and those that's coming up. One of the things from the meetings, various meetings, I've noticed that there's no togetherness. People don't know what's going on. I agree with Ms. Lynn about each council member needs to rotate and get to understand what's going on in the community. have come to you all about NOAA, about having attacks, you know, whatever it's called, from states. We've come to you all about the community, but we got ignored. But these people come up and they gave no paperwork out for the plan. I haven't seen anything. I haven't seen anything advertised. And that's kind of rude. And then you talk about, and I give it to the mayor, about letting people come in because someone was discussing,

supposing somebody has a child support issue. See, when we get above and beyond who we think we are because you don't sit where other people sit, you don't know what's going on in their lives. And then we talk about bringing somebody, people here at the Central, they tell us anything. I've seen right through them. Where's the paperwork? That's what I ask. But you're giving them the go-ahead. Then we want to talk about the chickens, because I like chickens. The last time I came here, I believe you were talking about the, it was something about cars or something, and it was written documents that you hand out, and because this person was going through a battle, some kind of issue that they've been notified, you know how you do the ordinances? We're talking about putting chickens in the ordinances. That ain't even at least our problem. That shouldn't even be on the agenda. That shouldn't even touch us. But for some reason, everybody's getting sidetracked on the important things that need to be done here at Central. And I'm going to double-dare you. Transparency needs to be done. Now I've been holding back because I said I want to do an audit. Because I need to find out what's really going on here in Central. And I've been laying back due to illness. But I'm back. And we're going to get some answers. So, if you're going to work for me and you're going to be a city council person, every last one of y'all needs to step up to the plate. Thank you."

Bryan Schaupp asked if he could ask a quick question?
You can make a statement.

He said he just wanted to tap on the question that Ken asked really quick. While everybody's brain is still there, he asked the question about the front yard. Is it unattractive in the front yard? And the response was, the assumption when I moved in, there wasn't any there when I moved there. Like earlier in the discussion, that is going to require a very long list of things I thought weren't in your front yard that are now there the next year. A long list of things that I never thought you were going to put a pool in your front yard. So, I agree that that assumption can't be made based on what's not there when you move there. Just wanted to drop that point.

Amy Gray said she had lived in Central for two years. She said she wanted to touch base again on the issue with the fowl and she thanked Mr. Dill for his comments. Everyone has animals for different reasons and different purposes, and we are required as decent human beings to be responsible for our animals, for our children, for ourselves, for our family. Why chickens are pulled out to be different, I don't know, because if you take care of things, you take care of them and there's never any issue. Just like there's no issue if my neighbor wants to have 10 children and they're outside screaming and hollering and playing that's no big deal. Nobody has... And I know that sounds like an extreme example, but just to make my point, if people are being responsible humans, they're going to take care of their animals, whether it be chickens, dogs, cats, rabbits, goats, whatever it is. We have, if there's an issue with someone's

children, if someone's child is not being cared for DSS would be called in. If you have chickens and they look like they are being cared for you can call somebody. She said we are regulating things that shouldn't matter. We do have bigger issues going on. She we are talking about setbacks and property lines. She asked were we going to go around town and if a dog house was too close to the property line were we going to make them move it? She said she was not trying to be contrary at all. She said that when it comes to ordinances there were some things that are just absolutely unreasonable. She said chickens are one of them. They are pets that happen to provide you with food.

Brock Bailey approached Council and said he and his wife own chickens and on Reformation Day or others know it as Halloween we were issued a courtesy warning ticket. It wasn't nailed to our front door thankfully but for foul running at large with a date of 1/1/24 and that hat these things must be corrected by then. He was referring to the warning ticket that some things were checked as to what needed to be done to not in compliance with and quite a few of them they were in compliance with so his question with the current ordinance being postponed how valid was the warning ticket since things were that we are in compliance with does that make it no void? Does that mean another warning ticket must be issued? He asked was he expected by 1/1/2024 meet this or lose his privileges, be fined? He said he was a tax paying, law abiding citizen who has never even received a speeding ticket. He said he was a model citizen in the community. He wanted to know if anyone else had been ticketed or if he was being singled out. He said he was being a model citizen in this town and he is being made a criminal at this point because he wants to provide for his family, to help his family and be able to be some degree be able to sustain any supply chain issues that might be out there. He thanked Paige Bowers and said she had worked extremely well working diligently proposing the Ordinance. He said if we were having a fire truck meeting in December and they don't look at this until after 1/01/2024 would put him getting a ticket by our officers. He asked if there was anything he could do at this point not to get a ticket, and still keep his chickens and provide for his family.

Receipt and Disposition of Petitions (15 Minutes Total)

Reports from Council Committees:

All committee reports are on file in the Town Clerk's office and available for review upon request.

A. Planning – Paige Bowers

Paige Bowers said Planning would have a meeting next Tuesday at 6:30 if they have a quorum.

Paige Bowers read a letter that was submitted by Tripp Brooks (Planning Commission Chair)

“As a part of the development review process for the Springwood Grove neighborhood currently under construction on Lawton Road, the developer agreed to build sidewalks along Johnson Road to accommodate foot traffic from the neighborhood to the school. Provided the Town acquires easements, the developer will build the sidewalks.

The current stage of the development process requires that town staff acquire surety bonds for roads, sidewalks and sewer infrastructure prior to final plan approval.

The Town Master Plan notes improvements in multi modal and pedestrian transportation as objectives in several sections.

With that background, I petition Council to direct resources to the acquisition of easements along Johnson Road for the purpose of sidewalk construction between Springwood Grove and Central Academy of the Arts. Further, ensure adequate surety bonds are obtained from the developer to cover these potential sidewalks as well as the infrastructure within the property boundaries. This can be a wonderful way to welcome a new group of residents to the town. It will provide this group the same access to the school that other residents in Brockwood already enjoy. It is a potentially inexpensive way to address concerns within our Master plan. It may also help address some concerns raised during development review related to the current use of the road being primarily pedestrian”.

Paige Bowers asked the Administrator give them an update on where we are on providing those easements or obtaining easement.

Phillip Mishoe reported that he and Tom Cloer had been working on securing easements and there's really two parts. One is we are wanting to cross sooner than going all the way down on the side of Spring Grove so they have been talking with property owners on the other side of the street but they haven't received word back as to whether they'd be willing to give us some easement over there. The developer will put sidewalks and the other issue is that he would rather have more of a 10 ft. walking, biking trail like we are trying to do as we put in new pedestrian walkways in. He said we are still working with the developer on making it a 10ft walking, biking trail so that people can pass each other comfortably. He said they are working on it and he feels pretty confident that the sidewalks will be walking biking trail there.

Downtown Planter Sponsors and Community Garden

All Council agreed to move forward with downtown planter sponsors and community garden projects.

B. Streets and Public Safety – Joe Moss

Joe Moss reported 57 calls for the month of October in the fire department. On December 9th the Police Department would be doing Toys for Tots. He announced the Police Department is fully staffed. Joe Moss said the first meeting of the 'Unity in the Community' would be December 2nd at Central Independent Baptist Church from 10:00pm – 12:45PM. Unity in the Community will be April 13th at Bolick Field.

C. Finance and Marketing – Lynne Chapman

Lynne Chapman everything was looking better. The Sanitation and Sewer Funds were in the black. The General Fund and Water Fund was in the red but it was not bad. Lynne Chapman deferred to the Administrator for clarification.

Phillip Mishoe said in the Water being 9,000 in the hole is not anything to be concerned about it's going to have inflow in the general fund we've been having issues in the general fund so far as reporting and this I've been using this report for well over 10 years. Since ARPA got dumped into general fund twice in two different budget years it's messed up this report Phillip Mishoe said he and Josh are working on doing a different report. He thinks what he is going to end up doing is just taking general fund off of this spreadsheet and creating a new spreadsheet and running a different report. Right now, we have \$583,000 in general fund. When the new fiscal year started July 1 it zeroed out. We have been having to take out the ARPA money that's coming in because it came in and then we're spending it and it's showing up in this report and it's just messed it up. After the second ARPA was deposited it's going to continue until we spend all of the ARPA money. We are probably looking at another 3 - 4 years. Phillip Mishoe said he needed to come up with a report that is more reflective of the financial position. The \$583,000 is a carryover from the property taxes and the business license that we got back in January through May so we're going to come up with something that's a little more reflective. It looks bad it. This report says it's \$127,000 in the hole but that's because we have carryover the \$583,000 is not there and right now we're fine in general fund. We need what we always call the cold months we need that carryover to last till about mid-January and that's when the property taxes start trickling in pretty rapidly and start the process over again. He said he didn't know if we're going to be able to get a new report going this physical year but they were going to try. We have been working on the last couple of months so maybe we can get something that's more reflective so the \$127,000 negative balance shortfall that's inaccurate. He said that's a quick but inaccurate. But that fund is ok.

D. Recreation – Ken Dill

Ken Dill reported that we are still on track to complete the Depot by the end of the month. We will have a special grand opening recognizing our donor who

made this venue possible. We will look for a date that fits her schedule when everything is done.

Ken Dill reported the Recreation Department has been awarded a \$61,000 State Parks and Recreation Grant for 3 projects. We will pave to the top of the hill at the disc golf road, put in the ADA sidewalks at Community Park for the new playground, and install a safety fence around the playground. We hope to have this completed by the end of this year.

E. Enterprise – Harry Holladay

Harry Holladay reported the Sanitation Department operated on a normal schedule. They had 149 total work orders completed for the month of October. They had 32 disconnects with 30 reconnects.

F. Tourism and Economic Development- Vacant

Mayor reminded everyone of the Town Christmas Parade on December 1st.

New Business

None

Old Business

None

Introduction and consideration of new Ordinances, Policies, Proclamation and Resolutions Consideration of Ordinances and Policies already in possession of Council

Resolution #11-13-2023 CLOSE GREEN STREET

Lynne Chapman made the motion to adopt Resolution #11-13-2023 CLOSE GREEN STREET; seconded by Paige Bowers. The vote was unanimous.

Ordinance #12-11-2023 AMENDMENT TO ORDINANCE SECTION 3-3 FOWL

Ken Dill made the motion to table Ordinance #12-11-2023 AMENDMENT TO ORDINANCE SECTION 3-3 FOWL; seconded by Andrew Beckner. The vote was unanimous.

Consideration of Ordinances and Policies already in possession of Council

Ordinance #11-13-2023 AMENDMENT TO BUSINESS LICENSE (2) AMENDING THE BUSINESS LICENSE ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF CENTRAL TO UPDATE THE CLASS SCHEDULE AS REQUIRED BY ACT 176 OF 2020

Lynne Chapman made the motion to adopt of second reading of Ordinance #11-13-2023 AMENDMENT TO BUSINESS LICENSE (2) AMENDING THE BUSINESS LICENSE ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF CENTRAL TO UPDATE THE CLASS SCHEDULE AS REQUIRED BY ACT 176 OF 2020; seconded by Joe Moss. The vote was unanimous.

Reports from the Administrator and Mayor:

A. Administrator

Phillip Mishoe gave an update on the Church Street waterline project. He said they're still on schedule to completely be done in February. He said that includes the sidewalks. They've also got the fix Church Street. They have it patched right now until they can come back and Mill it and put it back the way it was but they should be completely done with that project and it's really exciting for the people that live over there because they're going to get much better quality water. Phillip Mishoe said we're also going to be applying for a grant to upgrade the water line on Brock Street and part of Wood Street. He said there's some lines over there that need to be replaced. He said we got notification from one of the grant organizations had received our letter that we want to apply. We are going to be moving forward with that.

Phillip Mishoe said we also have a land donation. He said somebody that owns a little piece of property in Central that wants to donate their land to the town. It's over there near the pond behind the mill. It is a piece of vacant land with nothing on it. The people don't want it anymore so, they are going to donate to us and we are going through the legal process for the donation. He said there's plenty of options. We could make a little park or something like that but we can we can discuss that once we finish getting all that sorted out.

Phillip Mishoe said we have Shop with a Cop on December 15th at 3:00pm. at Wal-Mart. If you know anyone qualifies there is a link on the Police Departments Facebook page or pick up one here at Town Hall.

B. Mayor

Mayor Beckner read a Proclamation recognizes Harry Holladay for his years of service to the Town of Central. Mayor read the Proclamation. (attached)
Mayor made the motion to adopt Proclamation #11-13-2023 Harry Holladay; seconded by Lynne Chapman. The vote was unanimous.

Executive Session

Mayor made the motion to go into executive session per S.C. Code of Laws, Section 30-4-70 (a) (1) Personnel Matter, Legal Issues-Section 30-4-70 (a) (2) to discuss a personnel matter; seconded by Joe Moss. The vote was unanimous.

Return from Executive Session

Council returned from executive session where no decisions were made only information was shared.

Action Items

None

With no objections, Mayor Andrew Beckner adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan A. Brewer, CMC
Town Clerk

Approved: 12/11/2023