

**Lamar Town Council Meeting Minutes**  
**November 9, 2020**

Lamar Town Council Meeting was called to order by Mayor Darnell Byrd-McPherson at 6:15 PM.

Invocation was given by Deacon Tim Dargan.

Roll call was taken by Mayor McPherson. Council Members in attendance were Mayor McPherson, Councilwoman Inez B. Lee, Councilwoman Angele Bradley-White, and Councilwoman Mary Ann Mack.

Others in attendance were Tim Dargan, Chief Carl Scott, Micheal McDonald, and Elijha Enoch-Smith. Jannie Lathan and Doug Poston participated remotely via Zoom call.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Bradley-White that the agenda be accepted. Councilwoman Mack seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Bradley-White to accept the minutes from the October 12, 2020 Lamar Town Council Meeting, Councilwoman Mack seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Jannie Lathan of Jannie Lathan Consulting gave an update on the DHEC Consent Order. Mrs. Lathan reported that there were four outstanding issues that had to be addressed before the DHEC Consent order could be closed out; they were (1) proper installation of the appropriate flow meter, (2) the ventilation issue, (3) proper lighting issue, and (4) video via camera of the entire sewer system. All four of those issues have been resolved and Mayor McPherson have forwarded the letter to SC DHEC noting the same. The only thing that remains outstanding are two payments totaling \$7200 that are pending approval from the mayor; a final letter will then be sent to DHEC noting that all requirements have been met and fees have been paid. Hopefully, the town can then get clearance from DHEC noting the same.

Ms. Lathan also gave an update on the RIA Grant. Today she received correspondence from the engineering firm that gives a rationale for realignment of the gravity sewer line on the Zion Pump Station Project, as well as an updated cost estimate and schedule. Ms. Lathan will be reviewing the information with the firm in more detail on November 10.

Mayor McPherson thanked Ms. Lathan for all her diligence. The mayor remarked that she is excited that the town is nearing the end of the journey with the consent order, excited about the progress that has already begun on the Zion Initiative, and excited that the situation at Railroad Avenue is being examined more closely. She noted that although the October Town Council Meeting Minutes stated that the Railroad Avenue issues were resolved; that was only on a temporary basis. Mayor McPherson said that the pumps at Railroad Avenue need to be repaired and that there may be issues with pipe breakage during the winter.

Lamar Public Works Manager, Micheal McDonald, reported that the town is working on locating manholes so that we can update our water and sewer system maps with GIS mapping; most of the manholes have been located. South Carolina Water and Sewer Authority have completed their smoke testing and most of the issues that were discovered have been corrected; however, there are some infiltration issues that must be addressed. Mr. McDonald stated that the town is in the beginning stages of working with ABE Engineering on installing new sewer lines on Darlington Street and addressing the problem at the Railroad Avenue lift station.

Mr. McDonald said that emergency signs will be placed at the water tanks if there are leaks discovered. He also stated the Public Works Department is working on the trash trailer to make it more presentable to the public and safe for the employees.

Mr. Dargan asked Mr. McDonald about the new policy concerning no trash collection if a customer water is disconnected. Mr. McDonald replied that this policy will go into effect but has not officially begun. He then gave an example of a citizen whose water has been disconnected for over two years, still town has continuously collected their trash; there is also a sewer issue with that same citizen that must be addressed.

Mayor McPherson reminded citizens that the town has publicized information about funds that are available through the Darlington County Community Action Agency to help citizens pay their rent, lights, gas, and water bills; she listed the contact information. Mayor McPherson also reiterated that the town would enforce the policy concerning stoppage of trash collection if the water bill is not paid because the two operations mirror each other hand in hand.; this includes removal of the trash cans. She stated that for 2 consecutive years, the town has been cited in our annual audit for not adhering to our own operation procedures as it relates to water disconnection and that the town is losing money.

Councilwoman Lee stated that some of the citizens meters are being covered with dirt and therefore are not being read properly; she referenced a letter that was written by a citizen stating the same. Mr. McDonald and Councilwoman Mack noted that some of the meters are located next to driveways and consequently dirt, mud, and water will get into the boxes and cover the meters on a regular basis; however, the employees simply remove the dirt to get an accurate reading of the meters. Mr. Dargan also added that the shutoff valves being covered with dirt have no bearing on the reading of the meters; they only come into effect when the water supplies need to be turned off or on.

Councilwoman Mack stated that there is a continuous leak on Main Street that needs to be addressed.

Chief Scott gave updates and made reports on several items. He reported that the Lamar Police Department has added a new officer to the force – his name is Jamil Hall. Elijha Enoch-Smith has been promoted from an Administrative Clerk to an Administrative Officer. There has been a change to the Anonymous Tip Line, the new number is 843-326-1449. The Neighbor Hood Watch Program is still looking for volunteers; they have a captain spot that needs to be filled. Chief Scott stated that the officer will be in the streets more so they can monitor businesses and interact with our citizens.

Chief Scott discussed dilapidated building and the liability issued associated with the owner. He cited a recent issue with one dilapidated house that became a haven for selling drugs; fortunately, that situation has been resolved. The chief pointed out that in addition to these buildings being a nuisance, they are also unsafe for children and the public. Mayor McPherson congratulated Officer Enoch-Smith on his promotion and suggested that we research and post companies that demolish buildings.

Doug Poston of Douglas R Poston Jr CPA gave a report on the Town of Lamar's General Funds and Utility Funds Accounts. He stated that for the month of September the General Fund decreased by \$48,000 and that was due in large part to \$23,000 being transferred to the Utility Fund. The Utility Fund had a decrease of \$10,700 and this was due to a repair bill in the amount of \$34,000. Mayor McPherson asked Mr. Poston for a general idea of how much revenue the Water Department generates monthly. Mr. Poston remarked that averages is between \$22,000 - \$25,000 per/month.

Councilwoman Mack reported that she was asked to obtain information on business license fees by researching local municipalities. She stated that she researched several municipalities and almost each of them used a different format., t but most of them charge a flat fee plus an additional fee. Councilwoman suggested that the town use a flat rate initially and then make adjustment in the future. Mayor McPherson added that the Municipal Association of South Carolina has released a communication stating that the State of South Carolina may go to some type of standardization of license fees.

Mayor McPherson wants the council to reconsider imposing a face mask ordinance for the Town of Lamar. She stated the increase in number of Coronavirus cases and the fatality that have occurred in the Town of Lamar as reasons for reviving this discussion. There was also a discussion about purchasing cleaning equipment to perform deep cleaning of Town Hall and/or hiring a professional company to perform the cleaning.

Councilwoman Lee reported that the Beautification Commission started cleaning town on last week and asked that the citizens do their part by cleaning trash that is on their properties. She mentioned that trees have been purchased and should arrive soon. Councilwoman Lee discussed "Christmas on Main" and thanked Danielle Wilke for coordinating the event and the late Rev. Mark Bowling for his input in organizing the event. Their organization asked that everyone, especially the local churches, participate in Christmas on Main. Councilwoman Bradley-White asked if there will be a tree lighting ceremony this year; Councilwoman Lee said that they probably would, but she would need to check and let us know.

Mr. Dargan gave a summary on recent events including the CareSouth Mobile Unit October Testing Schedule, the Men-to-Men Health Symposium, The November 3, 2020 Elections, and the 2020 Census Counts. He also commented on upcoming events such as CareSouth Mobile Unit November Testing Schedule, the Leadership Development Series, and the U Pass it on Program.

Mayor McPherson reflected on the loss and contribution of the late Rev. Mark Bowling. She also talked about grief and loss in our community.

Mayor McPherson commented on the U Pass it on program and looks forward to working with Bishop Stephens. She also commented on the Leadership Development program that will be conducted by Captain Capers.

The mayor thanked former Councilman Lang Howell for his contributions to the Lamar Town Council and to the Town of Lamar.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Mack to adjourn the Lamar Town Council Meeting. Councilwoman Bradley-White seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously. Mayor McPherson adjourned the Town Council Meeting at 7:10 PM.

Timothy Dargan, Administrative Support