

Lamar Town Council Meeting Minutes
July 12, 2021

The Lamar Town Council Meeting was called to order by Mayor Darnell Byrd-McPherson at 6:20 PM.

Invocation was given by Angela Kirkland Jacobs.

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

Others in attendance were Tim Dargan, Chief Carl Scott, Mike Lloyd, Elijha Enoch-Smith, and Patrice Lloyd. Doug Poston originally participated via zoom, but later attended the meeting in person.

A motion was made by Councilman Cook that the agenda be accepted. Councilwoman Bradley seconded the motion with the noted changes (Tim Dargan speaking on the upcoming events). The motion was carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Mack to accept the minutes from the June 14, 2021, Lamar Town Council Meeting as read. Councilwoman Bradley seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Patrice Lloyd from the South Carolina Department of Mental Health gave a presentation on mental health awareness. She received and answered several questions from audience members.

The Financial Report was given by Doug Poston of Douglas R. Poston, Jr. CPA.:

General Fund > Beginning Balance-\$50,316.46, Ending Balance-\$64,309.24 = Increase of \$13,992.78
Utility Fund > Beginning Balance-\$99,325.91, Ending Balance-\$87,943.62 = Decrease of \$11,382.29

The Public Works Report was given by Mike Lloyd:

- Mr. Lloyd reported that the previous month water loss was the lowest that it has been in recent month.
- Several citizens cut their water back on after the Public Works Department disconnected service for delinquent or non-payment.
- Introduced a memo that will be placed at citizens residence to notify them of intent to remove water meter until satisfactory arrangements have been made to bring the account current. (Council adopted the memo; however, Councilwoman Mack suggest that the "number of days" be removed from the memo language.
- Working on ways to enforce delinquent payments in a timely manner.

The Lamar Police Department Report was given by Chief Carl Scott:

Chief Scott gave an update on the issue concerning dilapidated buildings in the Town of Lamar. Chief Scott also spoke about the upcoming Lamar Neighborhood Watch Kids Racing League and the Lamar Fun Day Event.

Councilman Tyler Cook had a concern about litter in the town limits of Lamar. Councilwoman Inez Lee stated that the Town didn't have a litter problem and she also pointed out that the Town employees could not go on private citizens property to pick up litter. The public works employees will pick up litter as they come across it.

The Lamar Town Council held a very healthy and lengthy discussion on the first reading of the proposed budget for Fiscal Year End 2022:

- Councilman Cook had concerns/questions about several miscellaneous items, funds spent at several local businesses, the need to seek cost-saving opportunities as much as possible, and the method at which the projected numbers were arrived.
- Mayor McPherson emphasized that some services and supplies are necessary to efficiently operate in the current climate. She also elaborated on the positive improvements that have taken place.
- Councilwoman Bradley revealed that this was the most detailed budget report that she has seen since she has been on council.
- Councilwoman Mack stated that the budget is a living document.

Councilwoman Mack made a motion that the first reading of the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget be accepted. Councilwoman Bradley seconded the motion. There were 4 “Yea” votes and 1 “Nay” vote; therefore, the first reading of the budget passed. The second budget reading will be held at a special Town Council Meeting on July 29 at 6:30 pm at Town Hall.

The Lamar Town Council held the first reading of the proposed water and sewer rate increase:

- Councilman Cook said that the Town is currently too dependent upon Darlington County Water & Sewer Authority and that the Town should explore getting its own drinking water system. He also mentioned that the Town should try not to burden the citizens financially.
- Tim Dargan said that research is being done to see if it is financially feasible for the Town to have its own water well.
- Councilwoman Bradley and Councilwoman Mack stated that due to DCWSA increasing their water & sewer rates, the Town of Lamar has no choice but to do the same. DCWSA has an increase of 3% that goes into effect on August 1, 2021; Councilwoman Mack suggested that the Town increase their rate to 4% effective August 1, 2021.
- Mike Lloyd pointed out that although the water & sewer rates for the Town of Lamar correspond, typically, the sewer rates are more in most municipalities.
- Several citizens asked questions and/or made comments about the Town obtaining its own water system (will this be pursued), Davis & Brown (is the Town still working with them), and rate increase (could there be a larger increase this time so that there will not have to be a rate increase every year).
- Jeronell Bradley, who publicly acknowledged that she was a DCWSA Board Member, made several observations including: (1) Lamar has the lowest water & sewer rates, which may explain the deficiency in funds, (2) is the Town charging other entities that use the waste water treatment pond to discharge their waste, (3) DCWSA wants to partner with the Town of Lamar, but there are costs associated with their assistance, (4) does the Town plan to seek its own water treatment facility, and (5) DCWSA is not trying to take over the Town of Lamar water & sewer systems.
- Mayor McPherson stated that the council should reach out to DCWSA County for further guidance and assistance. She appreciates the patience shown by DCWSA and their willingness to work with the Town of Lamar in bring arrears payment current. Mayor McPherson mentioned the upcoming meeting with DHEC, as well as the problem associated with the Railroad Avenue lift station.

Councilwoman Bradley made a motion to increase the water & sewer rate to 4%. Councilwoman Mack seconded the motion. There were 4 “Yea” votes and 1 “Abstain”; therefore, the 1st reading of the water & sewer rate passed.

Tim Dargan spoke about the following upcoming events:

- Lamar 's 150 Year Celebration (Sesquicentennial)
- Diane Hicks Day (Health Awareness)
- Youth Virtual Revival / Community In-Person Summer Revival
- Lamar Music Festival (Gospel/Jazz/Easy Listening)
- Text My Gov

Mayor McPherson stated that the Town will have a work calendar that will include a schedule for audits, budgets, annual fees, etc. She also suggested that the Council reach out to The Darlington County Council (Bobby Hudson and Charles Stewart) for assistance and guidance. Finally, Mayor McPherson noted that the council is being as transparent as possible and that they are sharing information with the citizens.

A citizen asked about the cleaning or replacing of the awnings on the businesses on Main Street. The mayor said that some additional awnings have been pressured washed since the last Town Council Meeting and that The others are a work in progress.

Council Cook stated that his intent in asking questions is not to be disruptive or negative, but to enlighten the citizens. He acknowledged that he gains valuable insight himself at these meetings and think that the sharing of knowledge would alleviate some of the concerns of the citizens.

Closing prayer given by Deacon Tim Dargan.

Councilwoman Bradley made a motion that the Lamar Town Council Meeting be adjourned. Councilman Cook seconded the motion. Mayor McPherson adjourned the meeting at 8:50 pm.

Timothy L. Dargan, Administrative Manager