



## **CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

**City Council Chambers**

**Tuesday, August 29, 2023 at 3:00 PM**

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### **MINUTES**

#### **Call to Order**

Mayor Becky S. Smith called the meeting to order.

#### **Members Present**

Mayor, Becky S. Smith, Council Members: Joe Will, Brenda Boyd, Dan Boling, and Donnie Griffin were all present. City Manager, Josh Ross and department heads were present as well. Council Members, Brent Guffey and Kay McCathen were absent. A quorum was present.

#### **Department Head Reports**

Bessemer City department heads gave reports on their department's status:

JoD Franklin, Parks and Recreation Director- Mr. Franklin addressed Council regarding Stinger Park, the Swimming Pool, and upcoming City events. Bessemer City area Principals have shared that students are delighted to play in Stinger Park. The Stinger Park pickleball courts are being fully utilized as well. City Staff is looking to create a league soon. We have listed our courts on an app to draw more visitors to the park. The application is called "team reach" and users utilize code "BC2468" to join our location. The pool is closed for the 2023 season, we made over \$100,000 this year. We will host our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Brew & Que Festival on Saturday, September 23, 2023 in downtown. The 9/11 Memorial Ceremony will take place on Monday morning in front of City Hall. The annual Senior Health Fair will take place on Wednesday, October 11<sup>th</sup> at the Allan Farris Community Center. The 2023 Christmas in the City festival and parade will be held on Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup>.

Tom Ellis, Police Chief – Mr. Ellis addressed Council regarding the Fire Department's ISO rating and Police Department call volume. Per the NC Department of Insurance's evaluation, the Fire Department's ISO protection class rating level has gone from a 5 to 3. ISO level 3 is the highest rating in the department's history! This achievement is due to the hard work of the BCFD staff and volunteers who work diligently to protect citizens and property in Bessemer City. This rating indicates that BCFD continues to make improvements and investments built on a solid framework of commitment and service. This higher rating can also significantly lower insurance rates within Bessemer City's Fire District. The Fire Department's annual Bbq planning has commenced. The City's bbq vendor has went out of business. Thus, City Staff is working to locate a new vendor. The Fleet team continues to thrive in the midst of adversity. We are still experiencing shortages on car parts and recalls. We have moved from the Dodge Chargers to the Durangos.

Nathan Hester, Development Services Director – Mr. Hester addressed Council regarding upcoming presentations at the September 2023 Regular Meeting. Mr. Hester has been attending a Rural Transformation Grant (RC2) Conference this year in hopes to apply for a \$49,999.99 grant. Said grant funds provides local governments with grants and expert guidance to improve economic vitality and overcome

the unique challenges many rural communities face. Additionally, Hester will be coming before Council to apply for the EPA's Brownfield Grant Funding. EPA's Brownfields Program provides direct funding for brownfields assessment, cleanup, revolving loans, environmental job training, technical assistance, training, and research. To facilitate the leveraging of public resources, EPA's Brownfields Program collaborates with other EPA programs, other federal partners, and state agencies to identify and make available resources that can be used for brownfield activities. Recently, Council appointed 2 new board members to the Downtown Development Board: Dana Ijames and Bill Whitmire. Both are doing well in their appointment and will be completing training soon.

Diane Jenkins, Finance Director – Ms. Jenkins addressed Council regarding the utility kiosk, City Hall Annex lunch hours, and the upcoming audit. City Staff have experienced a number of issues with the utility kiosk. We were promised that the system would be compatible with the merchant and City utility programs. However, this is not the case. City Staff have been in conversation with the kiosk merchant to begin the process to send the machine back.

By general consensus, Mayor and City Council approved the sever the agreement with the Adcom and send the machine back. Council would also like for Staff to retrieve as much monies paid for the machine.

The auditors will be here the week of September 18<sup>th</sup> to complete the City's financial audit.

Hydeia Hayes, Human Capital Officer & City Clerk – Ms. Hayes addressed Council regarding Thank a Police Officer Day and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The City's annual Thank a Police Officer Day will be Friday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM at the Kiser Senior Center (KSC). All are encouraged to attend. The CDBG project is still undergoing progress. However, the scope of the project has changed, thus the City has been asked by NC Department of Commerce officials to de-obligate funds. The City will only be completing repairs on 5 homes. Thus, \$80,000 has been de-obligated.

### **City Manager's Report**

Josh Ross, City Manager- Mr. Ross informed Council that Staff received a complaint regarding the trees at the Boys and Girls Club. Currently, the City holds a contract with the Boys & Girls Club of Gaston County to allow the program in the house next to the Rock Gym. The Club rents the facility on a yearly basis, there is still 3 years left in the contract. Originally, this agreement was meant as a temporary option until the new Staff will be meeting with the Unit Director in the weeks to come to discuss future options for the center. There are several trees that need to be removed and will cost upwards of \$6,000. The heat continues to be a challenge. Staff are reminded to hydrate and watch the weather. Recently, Livent CEO and executives met with City officials to thank them for their efforts during the fire emergency. In the future the corporation plans to expand. A lot of development is going on.

A fourth water notice has been issued regarding the City's water plant. The plant was down for several months to undergo needed upgrades. Thus, some reporting was not completed, as the water plant was not operable. There are no safety or health concerns regarding the water. These violation notices are regarding the report. The Osage Mill lofts will be opening soon. The first units are expected to be completed in June 2024, and the others in October 2024. Information about the leasing options will be shared with the community soon. Staff will be meeting with City of Gastonia officials to discuss the annexation agreement. City Manager Ross addressed Council to consider addressing things that have been requested or discussed in Council meetings. Namely the streaming of meetings, a decision to stream or not stream should be discussed. Also, the development of citizens academy and publishing of the agenda packets were discussed. Also, Staff would like to explore the idea of partnering with the local high school to promote student sports. City Manager Ross commended City Staff and Department Heads for their hard work and dedication to the City.

### **Council General Discussion**

Mayor Smith opened the floor for Council general discussion. Council member, Joe Will inquired about speed humps on Iowa Street to limit speeding. Additionally, Mr. Will inquired about ordinances pertaining to speed humps. Mr. Will encouraged the streaming of the public meetings, as the Council meetings are open to the public. Mr. Will also would like for City Staff to consider the time that the City Hall Annex is closed for lunch. Council member, Joe Will inquired about a change to the minutes from the June 2023 Regular Meeting minutes. Mr. Will would like to see his remarks about the previous City Manager and budget processed added to the minutes. A copy of the statement he read aloud at the Council meeting was provided to Ms. Hayes to add to the minutes. Additionally, he would like to see the minutes amended to strike the sentence that “the citizens of Bessemer City will not see a tax increase” although the rate remained at \$0.45 per \$100.

By motion of Joe Will and unanimous vote, Mr. Will’s statement and the requested sentence will be removed from the June 2023 meeting minutes.

### **Adjourn**

Being no further business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:07 PM by motion of Brenda Boyd and unanimous vote.

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Becky S. Smith, Mayor

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Hydeia Y. Hayes, City Clerk