

**March 4, 2020  
Special Session  
City of Gaston**

**Present:** Mayor David **Meeker**, Council President Bill **Martin**, Mario **DePiero**, Bill **Martin**, Sarah **Branch** (*arriving at 6:35PM*), Suzy **Carver**, Don **Richter**, Gaston Resident Tony **Hall**, Hiland Water Representative Matt **Thompson**, Brent **Whittaker** (*arriving 7:45PM*) and Judy **Clark**, Representative of HR Answers.

**Absent:**

**Staff Present:** City Recorder Wenonah **Blanchette**

Before opening the meeting, council agreed by consensus to contact Hiland to repair the angle stop at the Country Mobile Estates #59 due to it possibly damaging the resident's property. Recorder **Blanchette** also announced that that Councilor **Branch's** name was accidentally left off the second agenda item the Ordinance later to be discussed regarding Emergency Operations.

- I. Mayor David **Meeker** called this special meeting to order at 6:15PM. Matt **Thompson** from Hiland Water was present to introduce his supervisor via speaker phone for the Council to discuss needed repairs for an angle stop at Country Mobile Estates. Discussion heard on repairing the angle stop as the property owner behind the meter has a leak and cannot completely shut off water to his house to fix it. It was discussed that freezing the line will not work unless the meter is completely isolated. Further discussion heard on repairing the angle stop by using a crimper and repairing the property owner's leak that is causing further damage with it not being able to shut it off completely. The property owner was contacted via speaker phone with the property owner explaining he is repairing the water leak without the water completely off, turning on a spicket outside to divert the water away from the broken water line located inside the house. He was asked to contact City Hall once the repairs were completed inside his home so Hiland Water can turn the angle stop on as best they can to address the issue with it not turning completely off.
- II. **ROLL CALL:** Recorder **Blanchette** conducted the roll call for the record with:  
Councilor Mario **DePiero**: Present  
Councilor Andrew **Sewall**: Present  
Councilor Bill **Martin**: Present  
Mayor David **Meeker**: Present  
Councilor Sarah **Branch**: Present (*arriving at 6:35PM*)  
Councilor Suzy **Whittaker**: Present  
Councilor Don **Richter**: Present
- III. **Facilitation Meeting with Judy Clark from HR Answers-Job Duties and Employee Needs:**  
Judy **Clark** was present to discuss with Council employee needs and possibly restructuring job descriptions. Judy **Clark** explained her understanding with that the City is needing to make decisions about hiring and the kinds of activities this person would do; what the nature of hiring and what would best suit the City. Advantages of hiring an employee is knowing what their expectations are and contracting the position can provide different levels of support that are not necessarily needed for a full-time position. Councilor **Martin** cited the biggest challenge is figuring out the salary and benefits for a position while the City is looking to modify duties for the position. Judy **Clark** offered to send information on wages and salaries for Council's information. One of the challenges a small City like Gaston carries is there is the level of skills and knowledge that the job requires but finding the talent at a reasonable salary is difficult. The Recorder clarified what benefits the City offers to full time employees; premiums paid by the City for medical, dental, vision, vacation, sick pay, comp time, and PERS which employees pay 6% of their salary. The City does not contribute to PERS. Mayor **Meeker** called on Gaston

Resident Tony **Hall** who previously was Mayor and City employee supervisor explaining the difficulty he faced when hiring for the position of Public Works Director is the title. The job outlines many duties like that of a larger City, but wages are not competitive. Judy **Clark** suggested the title possibly be changed to a Public Works Specialist to be able to address and manage those expectations with the job description clearly identify that labor is involved. Councilor **Whittaker** explained the position is not exclusively Public Works, it's a position that deals with water, works as the liaison for engineers/developers, and organizes park maintenance. There are many other duties involved. Discussion lead to possibly hiring part time or temporary workers, volunteers, apprenticeship programs, school programs, and job corps. Councilor **Branch** stated the City Clerk's position is another job that needs to be filled for the City. Councilor **Sewall** explained the search to filling the duties of the City are larger than just hiring an individual: it's balancing all the duties in a financially responsible way in the decision for hiring someone. Judy **Clark** explained the priority is to determine what job duties for the public works and clerk departments need to be addressed; what work must be done, what work should be done and what work may be done. Gaston Resident Tony **Hall** was called upon by Mayor **Meeker** and stated the critical part of the clerk's position was to cross train with the recorder's position. If something was to happen with the recorder, there was another employee who could still run the City. Councilor **Whittaker** stated that the City needs to find out what the City is looking for in terms of an employee or if the City continues contracting services for water system needs. Councilor **Sewall** further clarified that the needs are that of the water system being it is the only asset the City has. Discussion heard on what role a water employee would have with the City and money available to pay for the water employee being water was the top priority; second priority is managing projects and grant writing. It was recommended to contact Mike **Marr** to figure out how much money is available to pay an additional employee full time for the water department. Final discussion heard of what certification and experience is necessary for the water employee position with water treatment level 1 certification. NEOGOV, LinkedIn and indeed are recommended websites to post job listings for. A large cost to the City is paying for police services but going out for a levy could offset those costs for the general fund. Judy **Clark** informed Council she will be in contact with Recorder **Blanchette** and provide salary information for positions that are exclusive for a water operator and public works.

Gaston Resident Brent **Whittaker** arrived at 7:45PM. Brent **Whittaker** explained his previous position with the City needed certification, backflow certified to stay in compliance with the State, municipal experience and water loss accountability. The biggest portion of the public works position is administrative and not physical labor. Brent **Whittaker** announced he ideally foresees three possible positions for the City; manager, public works, and water. Judy **Clark** announced that she will provide the Council with information with water duties as the number one priority and follow with administrative/managerial duties for job descriptions. It was mutually decided to call the position a public works specialist. Councilor **Whittaker** suggested the City hire a public works position, reconsider the police services and possibly later hire a city manager. Councilor **Branch** requested Judy **Clark** provide figures for a public works specialist to the Council and revise job descriptions.

At this time Judy **Clark** left the meeting at 8:25PM and Council held a 5-minute recess. Meeting reconvened at 8:30PM

- IV. Emergency Operations: Ordinance No. 2020-01 An Ordinance Adopting an Emergency Operations Code as Title III (Administration) Chapter 32 (Emergency Operations) of the Gaston Code of Ordinances:** Mayor **Meeker** announced his intention to setting up an emergency operations center and is appointing Gaston Resident Tony **Hall** as the point of contact during the coronavirus epidemic if there is no opposition from Council. Tony **Hall** discussed with Council his interest in serving the community as the point of contact during the coronavirus and provided experience he has with dealing in emergency situations. Discussion heard amongst the Council regarding the actual need of having an emergency center in Gaston when

Washington County already acts as the emergency liaison for Gaston. As written in the Ordinance the city supervisor would be the designated point of contact for the emergency plan with city supervisor Councilor **DePiero** stating he did not want to take on more responsibilities as the emergency point of contact when Washington County already provides emergency services. Tony **Hall** led a discussion with the Council addressing what the City should do in the event of an emergency. Councilor **Branch** wanted to know what authority Tony **Hall** had behind preparing the City in emergency response as he is no longer on the City Council or the Mayor. Tony **Hall** responded that Mayor **Meeker** had asked him to prepare the City with an Emergency Operations Center, establish contacts, and prepare emergency information for the Council and City. Mayor **Meeker** clarified that Tony **Hall** is acting in a volunteer capacity as he is well educated in emergency response; his expertise would be a benefit for the City in the event of an emergency. Resident Brent **Whittaker** suggested this is time for the Council to review the Ordinance, establish a process for making decisions in an emergency and contact Washington County Emergency Services for further information. Councilor **Branch** thanked Tony **Hall** for volunteering his time and working on emergency preparedness for the City, however lack of communication from the Mayor is the issue in considering items on the agenda for tonight. Councilor **Branch** informed Council the City would like time to review the information and decide upon adopting the ordinance at a later meeting. It was mutually agreed upon Council to reconsider the Ordinance for Emergency Response in two weeks. Further discussion heard on COVID-19 amongst the Council with a motion to table the Ordinance until the next regular council meeting made by Councilor **Sewall** and second by Councilor **DePiero**. Motion carried with Aye votes heard from: **DePiero, Sewall, Meeker, Branch, Whittaker, and Richter**. Nay: **Martin**. Tony **Hall** asked the Council if he can continue volunteering his time until a decision is made with Council requesting him not to act on behalf of the City until more information is sought in response to emergency preparedness and Ordinance No. 2020-01. Councilor Sewall stated that education and accurate information is essential to keeping the public informed of the potential emergency of COVID-19 as it's the City's responsibility to the community to provide truthful information. It was announced to contact 211 for those wanting additional information on resources for the community and to continue practicing good hygiene.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn was made by Councilor **Branch** and seconded by Councilor **Whittaker**. Motion passed with aye votes: 7. Nay: 0. Mayor **Meeker** closed this special meeting at 9:15PM.

  
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Mayor David Meeker

Attest:   
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City Recorder Wenonah Blanchette