



**CITY OF FLORENCE  
MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL  
JANUARY 15, 2019**

The regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Florence, Alabama, was held in the City Hall Auditorium in Florence at 5:00 p.m., on Tuesday, January 15, 2019. President Jordan called the meeting to order. Councilmember Betterton gave the invocation and led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Robert M. Leyde, City Clerk, performed the roll call and noted that five Councilmembers were present and a quorum was present with the following members of the City Council in attendance: Kaytrina Simmons, William D. Jordan, David Bradley, Blake Edwards and Andrew Betterton. Michelle Eubanks was absent.

**AGENDA**

**CITY OF FLORENCE, ALABAMA**

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

**JANUARY 15, 2019**

**5:00 P.M.**

- 
1. Meeting called to order - President Jordan
  2. Invocation - Councilmember Betterton
  3. Pledge of Allegiance
  4. Roll Call - President Jordan
  5. Approval of Agenda
  6. Message from Mayor
  7. Reports of Department Heads
  8. Reports of Standing Committees
  9. Public Hearings: None
  10. Business from floor pertaining to items on the consent and regular agenda (5-minute time limit).
  11. Consent Agenda:

All matters listed within the Consent Agenda have been distributed to each member of the Florence City Council for reading and study, are considered to be routine, and will be enacted by one motion of the Council with no separate discussion. If separate discussion is desired, that item may be removed from the Consent Agenda and placed on the Regular Agenda by request. Please call 256-760-6400 for questions on Consent Agenda items prior to the Council meeting.

- (a) Approval of minutes of the January 3, 2019, meeting.
- (b) Confirm payment of bills by the City Treasurer.
- (c) Resolution to approve a contract with Asplundh to provide labor, equipment, materials and incidentals necessary for line clearance for the Florence Utilities Electricity Department, in the amount of \$3,136,369.00, to be paid from budgeted funds, Account #571.10 Maintenance of Overhead Lines, sponsored by Richard Morrissey.

- (d) Resolution to approve a contract with Lambert-Ezell-Durham Architecture, LLC in the amount of \$11,199.00, for architectural designs for remodeling Station #1 at 402 South Wood Avenue, to be paid from budgeted funds, Account #117-42200, sponsored by Jeffrey Perkins.
- (e) Resolution to approve a contract with JC Hamm and Sons, Inc., to provide labor, equipment, materials, and incidentals necessary to repair the existing HVAC Air Handler unit at the Cypress Creek Wastewater Plant, in the amount o \$4,814.60, to be paid from budgeted funds, Account #651 Structure Maintenance, sponsored by Mike Doyle.
- (f) Resolution to approve an invoice from Certified Alarm Company of Alabama for installation of an Intrusion Detection Alarm System at the Florence Police Department Training Center, the amount of \$1,247.00, sponsored by Ron Tyler.
- (g) Resolution to advance and reimburse travel expenses to City employees, sponsored by Mayor Holt.

12. Regular Agenda:

- (a) Ordinance to lease Suite 506 in the Florence-Lauderdale Government Building to Jared Bevis and Joseph Britt for a term of one year commencing on February 1, 2019, and ending on January 31, 2020, in the amount of \$9,500.00, sponsored by Shannon Olive.

13. General Business:

- (a) Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds, sponsored by Mayor Holt and the Finance Committee.
- (b) Resolution – Alcohol Beverage License Application for the operation of a Full Menu Restaurant with On-Premises Beer & Wine by BROWN RICE 888 CORP, d/b/a RICE BOX, located at 1529 NORTH WOOD AVENUE, FLORENCE, AL 35630, sponsored by Robert M. Leyde.
- (c) Resolution – Alcohol Beverage License Application for the operation of a Specialty Menu Restaurant with On-Premises Beer & Wine & Off-Premises Beer & Wine by SWEET BASIL ALABAMA INC, d/b/a SWEET BASIL CAFÉ, located at 1627 DARBY DRIVE SUITES A & B, FLORENCE, AL 35630, sponsored by Robert M. Leyde.
- (d) Board openings within the next 90 days or less:

| <u>Board</u>    | <u>Member</u>  | <u>Appointed</u> | <u>Expires</u> |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Agri-Business   | Michelle Jones | 12/19/17         | 11/20/18       |
| Beautification  | Vacancy        | 12/18/12         | 11/01/18       |
| Tree Commission | Vacancy        | 01/02/07         | 11/03/18       |

14. Business from the public (5-minute time limit).

15. Council Members reports and/or comments (5-minute time limit).

Council member Eubanks  
 Council member Edwards  
 Council member Betterton  
 Council member Simmons  
 Council member Bradley  
 Council member Jordan  
 Mayor Steve Holt

16. Motion to Adjourn.

President Jordan asked for a motion for approval of the agenda. Councilmember Betterton moved for approval of the agenda. Councilmember Edwards seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, a vote taken thereon resulted as follows:

Ayes: Kaytrina Simmons  
William D. Jordan  
David Bradley  
Blake Edwards  
Andrew Betterton

Noes: None

**Message from the Mayor:**

Mayor Holt stated that he had made his comments earlier in the work session supporting the sales tax increase to provide raises for the Fire and Police Departments. Mayor Holt thanked the Fire and Police employees for their hard work.

**Report of Department Heads:** none

**Report of Standing Committee:**

Councilmember Edwards', Chairperson of the Utility Committee, report follows, to wit:

Councilmember Bradley, Chairperson of the Public Safety Committee, stated that the committee met on Thursday, January 10, 2019. Councilmember Bradley noted those in attendance were Mayor Holt, Chief Perkins, General Fund Chief Accountant/Treasurer Shannon Olive. Councilmember Bradley further stated that Mr. Olive explained the results from the PARCA study regarding salaries of the Fire and Police Department as they compared to other municipalities. Councilmember Bradley stated that the study showed that entry and mid level positions were extremely underpaid. Councilmember Bradley further stated that it would cost 1.4 million dollars annually to increase salaries for the Fire and Police Departments. Councilmember Bradley also stated that the Public Safety Committee voted unanimously to send the request to increase salaries to the Finance Committee.

President Jordan, Chairperson of the Finance Committee, stated that the committee met on Friday, January 11. President Jordan noted that in attendance were Mayor Holt, Councilmember Simmons and Chief Accountant/Treasurer Shannon Olive. President Jordan noted that the committee discussed the recommendation of the Public Safety Committee regarding salary increases for the Fire and Police Departments and other infrastructure projects. President Jordan stated that the committee voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council to increase sales tax by one percent.

**Business from the Floor Pertaining to Items on the Consent or Regular Agenda:**

Police Chief Ron Tyler's comments follow, to wit:

Mr. Bill Smoak, 2424 Roberts Lane, appeared and made comments in opposition to General Business Item 13 (a) Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds. Mr. Smoak stated that in August 2017, an article in the TimesDaily Newspaper quoted Chief Tyler as saying that there are 26 vacancies in the Police Department. Mr. Smoak further stated that in the same article Chief Tyler stated that the Florence Police Department has become reactive instead of proactive. Mr. Smoak noted that in 2017 no action was taken to give raises to the Police Department. Mr. Smoak further noted that at the November 8, 2017 City Council meeting a vote on increasing the sales tax was voted down by 3-3. Mr. Smoak also noted that the Councilmembers that voted against the increase stated at that time that they would need more information on how the nine million additional tax dollars would be used.

Mr. Smoak stated that the City should sell Blackberry Trail Golf Course to raise funds to provide raises. Mr. Smoak further stated that the City could ask the University of North Alabama to pay back the money the prior City Council gave them to build a new science building.

Mr. Billy Ray Simpson, 755 West Alabama Street, appeared and made comments in support of General Business Item 13 (a) Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds. Mr. Simpson stated that he is 100% in support of the proposed tax increase. Mr. Simpson thanked Mayor Holt and the City Council for their support of the Fire and Police Departments.

Mr. Barry Morris, 102 Briarwood Circle, appeared and made comments in opposition to General Business Item 13 (a) Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds. Mr. Morris asked the Council to reconsider the sales tax increase. Mr. Morris also asked the Council to postpone the vote until Councilmember Eubanks is able to attend or at least vote against immediate consideration so the vote will be postponed until the next Council meeting. Mr. Morris stated that over the last ten years General Fund revenues has increased by 30% and has more that kept up with inflation. Mr. Morris further stated that if this tax is approved then it will not take long for this administration to spend the additional nine million dollars and will need more money. Mr. Morris also stated that the citizens were not given adequate notice regarding the proposed tax increase.

Mr. John Hargett, 1406 North Wood Avenue, appeared and made comments in opposition to General Business Item 13 (a) Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds. Mr. Hargett stated that these raises are a very small part of the General Fund Budget and could be given without a tax increase. Mr. Hargett further stated that Florence does not need a tax increase but a spending decrease.

Mr. Matthew Sorrell, 1541 Helton Drive, appeared and asked the Council to vote against immediate consideration of General Business Item 13 (a) Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds. Mr. Sorrell asked the Council to postpone the vote until Councilmember Eubanks can be in attendance. Mr. Sorrell stated that an increase in sales tax would affect the low income citizens the most.

Mr. Josh Dodd, 870 County Road , appeared and stated that he was in favor of a salary increase for the

Fire and Police Departments but he is opposed to the mismanagement of money by the Council. Mr. Dodd stated that he owns a gun business in Florence and is afraid his customers will purchase guns in the county where the sales tax is lower. Mr. Dodd further stated that the vote needs to be postponed until Councilmember Eubanks can be in attendance.

Ms. Anna Broadfoot, 102 East Oakhill Drive, appeared and asked the Council to give the Fire and Police Departments the raises that they deserve but without increasing sales tax.

Ms. Deborah Bell Paseur, appeared and made comments in support of General Business Item 13 (a) Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds. Ms. Paseur asked the Council not to delay this vote. Ms. Paseur stated that the City's budget is a public record and anyone can get a copy and see where the money is being spent. Ms. Paseur further stated that she trusts Mayor Holt and the City Council to make these kinds of decisions. Ms. Paseur also stated that this is a quality of life decision. Ms. Paseur stated that the City needs to be economically competitive to draw in industry and we must have adequate Fire and Police Departments.

Mr. Greg Angus, Battalion Chief for the Fire Department, appeared and made comments in support of General Business Item 13 (a) Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds. Mr. Angus stated that his department is understaffed and is having to work a lot of overtime to make sure our citizens are safe. Mr. Angus stated that it is about more than increased salaries. Mr. Angus further stated that it is also about aging equipment and facilities.

Mr. Dustin Simmons, Florence Fire Department, appeared and made comments in support of General Business Item 13 (a) Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds. Mr. Simmons stated that everyone can agree that we work in hazardous conditions. Mr. Simmons further stated that both departments are losing employees to higher paying jobs elsewhere.

Mr. Kevin Darby, Fire Department, appeared and made comments in support of General Business Item 13 (a) Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds. Mr. Darby stated that at some point the salaries has to be raised due to highly qualified employees leaving because of better pay elsewhere.

**Consent Agenda:**

President Jordan asked for a motion for approval of the Consent Agenda items. Councilmember Betterton moved for approval of the ordinances and resolutions as follow, to-wit:

Councilmember Edwards seconded the motion. There being no discussion, a vote taken thereon resulted as follows:

Ayes: Kaytrina Simmons  
William D. Jordan

David Bradley  
Blake Edwards  
Andrew Betterton

Noes: None

City Clerk, Robert M. Leyde, presented an Ordinance to lease Suite 506 in the Florence-Lauderdale Government Building to Jared Bevis and Joseph Britt for a term of one year commencing on February 1, 2019, and ending on January 31, 2020, in the amount of \$9,500.00, sponsored by Shannon Olive. Said Ordinance follows, to wit:

Councilmember Simmons moved for immediate consideration of the foregoing Ordinance.

Councilmember Bradley seconded the motion. A vote taken thereon resulted as follows:

Ayes: Kaytrina Simmons  
William D. Jordan  
David Bradley  
Blake Edwards  
Andrew Betterton

Noes: None

Councilmember Simmons moved for adoption of the foregoing Ordinance. Councilmember Bradley seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, a vote taken on the motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Kaytrina Simmons  
William D. Jordan  
David Bradley  
Blake Edwards  
Andrew Betterton

Noes: None

City Clerk, Robert M. Leyde, presented an Ordinance to increase sales tax by 1% and provide for the distribution of tax proceeds, sponsored by Mayor Holt and the Finance Committee. Said Ordinance follows, to wit:

Councilmember Betterton moved for immediate consideration of the foregoing Ordinance.

Councilmember Edwards seconded the motion. A vote taken thereon resulted as follows:

Ayes: Kaytrina Simmons  
William D. Jordan  
David Bradley  
Blake Edwards  
Andrew Betterton

Noes: None

Councilmember Edwards moved for adoption of the foregoing Ordinance. President Jordan seconded the motion.

**Discussion:**

Councilmember Bradley made comments in support of the proposed ordinance. Councilmember Bradley stated that he voted against the sales tax increase in 2017 because he needed more time to evaluate it and to have the study completed. Councilmember Bradley further stated that the study was completed and the result was what he expected, that the Fire and Police were severely underpaid. Councilmember Bradley also stated that he has had numerous calls regarding failing infrastructure and the lack of quality resources. Councilmember Bradley noted that along with the pay increases, we also cannot forget about our failing infrastructures and dwindling resources.

Councilmember Edwards made comments in support of the proposed ordinance. Councilmember Edwards stated that he agrees with Councilmember Bradley that this is just not about a pay increase for fire and police. Councilmember Edwards also stated that we have a lot of streets that need to be paved. Councilmember Edwards further stated that we need to maintain our streets and facilities, such as the library and Pope's Tavern. Councilmember Edwards also stated that we have got to be smart with what we do and we need to give you the best equipment. Councilmember Edwards further stated that it makes him mad when people say that we mismanage money. Councilmember Edwards also stated that for a number of years the General Fund has been breaking even with no extra money for major projects that need to be done. Councilmember Edwards stated that we need to pass this ordinance and move on.

Councilmember Betterton made comments in support of the proposed ordinance. Councilmember Betterton stated that we have been discussing infrastructures for a very long time. Councilmember Betterton further stated that we need to maintain our facilities and also look at infrastructures. Councilmember Betterton commended the Fire and Police Departments for what they do.

Councilmember Simmons also thanked the Fire and Police and stated that she is here to support them. Councilmember Simmons stated that she does not take raising taxes lightly. Councilmember Simmons further stated that weights everything and that she does her research.

President Jordan stated that it is more than salaries. President Jordan also stated that there was a time when there was a waiting list to be hired for Police and Fire and now that it not the case. President Jordan further stated that we also need to address equipment, police cars, fire trucks and Veterans Park. President Jordan stated citizens want to drive on streets without potholes. President Jordan further stated that this is an easy vote because it provides fire and police protection for our citizens. There being no discussion, a vote taken on the motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Kaytrina Simmons  
William D. Jordan  
David Bradley  
Blake Edwards  
Andrew Betterton

Noes: None

City Clerk, Robert M. Leyde, presented a Resolution – Alcohol Beverage License Application for the operation of a Full Menu Restaurant with On-Premises Beer & Wine by BROWN RICE 888 CORP, d/b/a RICE BOX, located at 1529 NORTH WOOD AVENUE, FLORENCE, AL 35630, sponsored by Robert M. Leyde.

Said Resolution follows, to wit:

Councilmember Betterton moved for immediate consideration of the foregoing Resolution.

Councilmember Bradley seconded the motion. A vote taken thereon resulted as follows:

Ayes: Kaytrina Simmons  
William D. Jordan  
David Bradley  
Blake Edwards  
Andrew Betterton

Noes: None

Councilmember Bradley moved for adoption of the foregoing Resolution. Councilmember Betterton seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, a vote taken on the motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Kaytrina Simmons  
William D. Jordan  
David Bradley  
Blake Edwards  
Andrew Betterton

Noes: None

City Clerk, Robert M. Leyde, presented a Resolution – Alcohol Beverage License Application for the operation of a Specialty Menu Restaurant with On-Premises Beer & Wine & Off-Premises Beer & Wine by SWEET BASIL ALABAMA INC, d/b/a SWEET BASIL CAFÉ, located at 1627 DARBY DRIVE SUITES A & B, FLORENCE, AL 35630, sponsored by Robert M. Leyde. Said Resolution follows, to wit:

Councilmember Simmons moved for immediate consideration of the foregoing Resolution.

Councilmember Bradley seconded the motion. A vote taken thereon resulted as follows:

Ayes: Kaytrina Simmons  
William D. Jordan  
David Bradley  
Blake Edwards  
Andrew Betterton

Noes: None

Councilmember Bradley moved for adoption of the foregoing Resolution. Councilmember Betterton seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, a vote taken on the motion resulted as follows:

Ayes: Kaytrina Simmons  
William D. Jordan  
David Bradley  
Blake Edwards  
Andrew Betterton

Noes: None

Board openings within the next 90 days or less:

| <u>Board</u>    | <u>Member</u>  | <u>Appointed</u> | <u>Expires</u> |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Agri-Business   | Michelle Jones | 12/19/17         | 11/20/18       |
| Beautification  | Vacancy        | 12/18/12         | 11/01/18       |
| Tree Commission | Vacancy        | 01/02/07         | 11/03/18       |

**Business from the Public (5-minute time limit):**

Mr. Billy Ray Simpson, 755 West Alabama Street, appeared and thanked the Council for voting to increase sales tax. Mr. Simpson stated that he hated to disagree with Mr. Barry Morris but he did this time. Mr. Simpson further stated that taxes help everyone especially when money is placed in the right hands. Mr. Simpson stated that this is not Washington and that we have good Councilmembers that will make good decisions.

Ms. Anna Broadfoot, 102 Oakhill Drive, appeared and stated that the Fire and Police Departments need to be priority. Ms. Broadfoot stated that this money needs to be earmarked for the Fire and Police Departments.

President Jordan noted that the pay increases for the Fire and Police Departments will take affect on April 1.

Councilmember Bradley stated that the raises for the Fire and Police will be the first priority.

**Council Reports and Comments:**

Councilmember Edwards stated that he is very thankful for all City employees. Councilmember Edwards further stated that all City employees do so much for our citizens.

Councilmember Betterton stated that the School Resource Officers' program is very important and that he supports it immensely. Councilmember Betterton thanked the Fire and Police for their hard work.

Councilmember Simmons stated that she hopes the citizens of Florence entrust her to do what she believes is right.

Councilmember Bradley stated that he agrees with Councilmember Simmons. Councilmember Bradley further stated that citizens want things funded, but they don't want to pay for them. Councilmember Bradley stated that he does not take increasing taxes lightly.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

ATTEST:

---

CITY CLERK

