

**REGULAR MEETING
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NASHVILLE
COUNTY OF BERRIEN
AUGUST 12, 2019
6:00 P.M.**

INVOCATION: Keith Stone

PLEDGE: Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Michael Richbourg

WELCOME: Mayor Michael Richbourg

ROLL CALL: Members of the City Council present included Mayor Michael Richbourg, Aldermen Scott Stalnaker, Eric Gaither, Antonio Carter and Alderwoman Mellisa Watson.

STAFF PRESENT: Mandy Luke, Jackie Jordan, Chief Edwards, John Reynolds, Peter Schultz, Henry Yawn, Mitchell Moore

OTHERS: Libby Dean, Margaret Perry, Daniel Kent, Janet Studstill

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS – Eric Gaither made the motion to adopt the minutes from the previous meetings. Antonio Carter seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA – Mellisa Watson made the motion to adopt the formal agenda. Antonio Carter seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Cemetery Policy – Mayor Michael Richbourg** – Mayor Richbourg explained the train of events and the timeline preceding the implementation of the new rules and regulations of the Cemetery Policy, which has already passed, including a discussion at a Council meeting in March 2015 regarding items that should not be at the cemetery; a Public Hearing in August 2017 that was advertised in the Berrien Press; a Work Session in February 2018; Public Hearings in May, June and July 2018; first reading of the revised Ordinance in a

Council meeting in July 2018; second reading and adoption of the new Ordinance in a Council meeting in August 2018; the new cemetery guidelines were posted on the City website and information was included in the water bills to refer to the website or the Berrien Press; advertisements in the Berrien Press in the July 7, 2019 and July 17, 2019 papers; and, signs were installed in the cemeteries. Mayor Richbourg further explained this was not taken lightly as it is a very sensitive subject and was not done overnight. He also stated the City Attorney and Peter Schultz, who maintains the cemeteries, did their due diligence in researching this as well. Mayor Richbourg said he would allow anyone with comments or questions to the podium at this time. Libby Dean, East Center Street, Alapaha, addressed the Mayor and Council stating she maintained her lot for ten and a half years because it was therapeutic for her and out of respect for her husband and for protection of damage to her items due to the sizeable investment in her monument. She said she was caught off guard when the signs were installed because she does not read the paper and does not get a water bill as she does not live in Nashville but she realizes the City met its legal obligations. She said she removed her items, after she called and was told the items would have to be removed, which consisted of posts, chain links, flower beds, straw, a concrete tractor, a metal shepherd's hook with a bird house, a small sign printed with "please do not mow or weed-eat this lot" along with small matchbox cars at the headstone and a flower arrangement which she kept fresh. She explained during the process, she spoke with several people and explained the number of gravesites and items she saw that are not in compliance with the new guidelines. She said she realizes the issues these items cause in maintenance but would prefer to maintain her lot herself. She further stated she has complied and ask that all of the graves be brought into compliance and held to the same standards. Mayor Richbourg explained the City is in the process of allowing people to remove their items, the City is removing items and the City is trying to contact people to remove their items. He said she actually contacted the City before the City contacted her and she removed her items but if others do not remove their items, the City will remove those items and store them in the City barn but they will make sure everyone complies. Mellisa Watson apologized stating they understand and it will all be treated the same. Margaret Perry addressed the Mayor and Council. She told Ms. Dean her heart goes out to her and she knows it is an emotional thing but she is on the other side of the issue and commends the City for what they have done. Mrs. Perry said she just wishes it had been done a long time ago but they inherited this problem and it did not happen under this administration. She said her father was buried at Memorial Gardens twenty-two (22) years ago and the reason they chose that cemetery was because they thought it would be maintained. She said it has been

cluttered like this for years which has bothered her. She again commended the City and thanked them explaining she understands it is a very emotional issue for everyone but she is out there a lot like a lot of others and understands with all the items, it is hard for the City to keep it mowed and maintained. Mayor Richbourg also mentioned the liabilities to the public and the City employees because of these items when mowers and weed-eaters are in operation that can cause items to become projectile and cause damage or harm.

2. **Public Comments – Mayor Michael Richbourg** – Mayor Richbourg mentioned most public comments in the past year or so have more to do with day to day operations that should be handled through City Hall instead of addressing them directly with Mayor and Council but certainly if they do not get satisfaction or help, they can come to the meeting to address it with Mayor and Council. He explained the school board’s policy, which was adopted in 2009, where people have to apply for public comments which is not to restrict anyone but maintains order and takes care of day to day operations which the Mayor and Council is not responsible for and is why the City has a manager and department heads. The mayor said it will not be voted on tonight but recommends the Council have the City Attorney modify the policy and bring it up at the next meeting. Mellisa Watson said she feels the school board is different than what the Council is elected for and she is not in favor of it. Antonio Carter asked more about it and Mayor Richbourg said people would be able to comment if it is related to a subject discussed in the meeting but this form is for items that can be handled before the meeting by the City Manager or department heads. Mr. Carter said it looks good but he does not want to keep people from speaking or for them to have to come to City Hall to obtain and complete the form. Mayor Richbourg said if they are not interested, they certainly do not have to do it. Miss Watson said she has a lot of people to call her at work and she directs them to the right department and many of them do not come to the Council meeting about it. Mr. Carter said he thought it was to keep them from being caught off guard. Mayor Richbourg said that is part of the reason, it is not to prevent people from speaking but if they are not interested, it is a moot point and they do not have to discuss it any further. Eric Gaither said he is against it also.
3. **Social Media Policy – Mayor Michael Richbourg** – Mayor Richbourg said he spoke with the City Attorney since this was put on the Agenda and the item is already in the employee hand book and employees should not discuss City business on social media. Scott Stalnaker said it does not apply to special events and advertisement. Mayor Richbourg said this refers to day to day operations.

REPORTS

4. **City Manager's/Finance Director's Report** – None.
5. **City Attorney's Report** – Attorney Mitchell Moore said the demolition is complete on the Perkins Subdivision project and they are in the process of revising the request for proposals for bids to be published.
6. **Department Head's** – John Reynolds said he spoke with John Hunkele, of Coastal Engineering, regarding the recent Water/Sewer CDBG grant (East side of Nashville) and they will be ready to advertise for bids on this project in about thirty (30) days. Some of the streets to be included in this CDBG are Beetree, John, Short, Martin Luther King, Jr and Mathis.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Daniel Kent (North Jackson Street) thanked the Street Department for the speed bumps and cleaning out the drainage ditch.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Antonio Carter mentioned things said at the last Council meeting and on social media against the City Manager and management. He said the City Manager does a great job and needs to be commended for what she does and if she tells them she is going to do something, she does it. He said he has been on the Council ten (10) years and he is proud to have her as City Manager.

Eric Gaither added to what Mr. Carter said stating if people want to attack policy, they can do so but not to attack the City Manager.

Scott Stalnaker said the side arm mower head is broken and the part alone is not available and Peter Schultz will get bids for another mower which should be ready at the next meeting. He also added to what Mr. Carter said stating the City hired Mrs. Luke in 2005 and at that time, the City was not operating in a positive balance. He commended Mrs. Luke and all of the City employees. He said she pulled the City out of the negative and has kept the City out of the negative although there has been many financial set backs such as the loss of LOST negotiations which was approximately \$150,000. He said we were fortunate enough to have savings in reserve and there have been many expenditures such as extra employees to clean up the City which the

Council demanded because of a lot more rain and upkeep. He said the City is fortunate to have the staff we have and thanked all City employees for what they do. Mayor Richbourg said a work session will follow adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to conduct, Antonio Carter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:27 p.m. Eric Gaither seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Michael Richbourg

Alderman Eric Gaither

Alderwoman Mellisa Watson

Alderman Antonio Carter

Alderman Billy Retterbush

Alderman Scott Stalnaker

Alderman Walter Steward

ATTEST:

Jackie Jordan, City Clerk