

MINUTES OF THE CITY OF BRISTOL, TENNESSEE CALLED CITY COUNCIL MEETING

February 22, 2022

CALL TO ORDER:

The City of Bristol, Tennessee Called City Council meeting was brought to order by Mayor Mahlon Luttrell on Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 3:01 P.M. in the conference room at the Ewell L. Easley Annex.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mayor Mahlon Luttrell, Vice Mayor Vince Turner, Councilwoman Margaret Feierabend, and Councilwoman Lea Powers.

Others Present: City Manager William Sorah, City Attorney Danielle Smith, City Recorder Mary Lee Williams, Director of Development Services Tim Beavers, Director of Community Relations Jon Luttrell, Director of Parks and Recreation Terry Napier, Fire Chief Mike Carrier, and other members of City staff.

CANDIDATE SELECTION:

Mayor Mahlon Luttrell stated the purpose of this called meeting is to discuss and select a candidate to fill the vacant seat on City Council. There are three candidates interested: Dr. Barry Hopper, Mr. Logan McCabe, and Dr. Mark Hutton

Councilwoman Margaret Feierabend wanted to begin by stating it is a big deal to step up to a position such as this. It takes a lot of courage and a lot of time and she thanked everyone. She has spoken with all three candidates.

Councilwoman Lea Powers asked City Manager Bill Sorah to review what we are facing in the community prior to the next election that the selected candidate will be expected to work with.

The City Manager reviewed the responsibility of the current Council today. Since there is a vacancy, the current Council members have thirty days to appoint a new member and he then listed the criteria for applicants. Since Chad Keen was the representative for the East Councilmanic District the candidate must also be from the East Councilmanic District. Otherwise, there is little guidance in the City Charter for the replacement process except the selection must be by Council vote and if there is a tie vote, the mayor will break the tie. The person selected today will take the oath of office at the beginning of the March 8th Council meeting and participate in the balance of the meeting. As to the items facing Council going forward, the most important policy decision that a Council makes is the adoption of an annual budget. While some budget discussion has taken place, there will be more work session discussion and the selected candidate will be immersed in the budget process. There is the issue with the City of Bristol, Virginia that has got to be resolved and the new member will be involved in all future meetings. They will serve until the next municipal election which is the second Tuesday in November 2022. Whoever wins that election will take the oath of office at the first business meeting in January 2023. It is an exciting time to join Council coming into budget season which, for our City, includes developing a plan of work that is tied back to the budget. Council also approves the five-year capital improvement plan.

Vice Mayor Vince Turner expressed his appreciation to everyone. He has put a lot of thought and time into his decision. All three have great qualities and it was a difficult decision. He based his decision on what is coming up, the budget, someone who has worked with a budget, and someone that has already been elected by the citizens of Bristol in another capacity. Considering these points that will cover the next eight months, his choice is Dr. Mark Hutton.

The City Manager said there has to be a vote, but how to do so is up to City Council.

Councilwoman Powers requested Council comments take place first and then nominations.

Councilwoman Feierabend mentioned that she was appointed to Council the first time. It is a big learning curve. Since then she has seen people serve on Council without experience in any kind of public role. Many say that government and non-profits should act like businesses, but there is a huge difference as the goal of business is to make a profit and the goal of government is to provide services including safety and infrastructure. There are public meeting laws which can be difficult to get used to. The timing is very short for the appointee to determine whether to be a candidate in the upcoming fall election. She would also support Mark Hutton since he has government experience, but expressed concern in losing him from the Sullivan County Commission as he has provided great support as a Bristol Representative.

Councilwoman Powers has also thought about all of these points as has everyone else. How blessed we are to have three extremely qualified, passionate people as candidates. She commented on some of the qualifications of all three and mentioned whoever is appointed will be up for election this fall. For the short term she would support Mark Hutton as well. She thanked Dr. Hopper and Mr. McCabe for the work and community support they both provide in their current roles.

Mayor Mahlon Luttrell stated they are all three great candidates and bring a lot to the table. It is really good to see the community interest for this position. Being a Council member can sometimes be very tough and challenging. It is very critical at this particular point in time to have someone with a lot of experience in governmental work so his opinion is that Mark Hutton would be the candidate of choice.

Vice Mayor Vince Turner motioned to appoint Dr. Mark Hutton to fill the East Councilmanic District seat and Mayor Luttrell seconded. There was no further discussion and Dr. Hutton was unanimously appointed to serve on Council by roll call vote.

City Manager Sorah said he would notify Dr. Hutton in a few moments and he would be included in the attorney / client meeting tomorrow morning. Prior to taking the oath of office at the March 8th Council meeting, he will need to resign from the Sullivan County Commission.

Dr. Hopper thanked Council for the opportunity to be considered for appointment and extolled Council for the manner in which the meeting was conducted and the plans being put forth to improve the life of the community. It is commendable that the City has a reputation of managing funds well and he offered his support to Council and the community.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:14 P.M.



Mary Lee Williams, City Recorder


Mahlon Luttrell, Mayor