

CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF PIEDMONT
MARCH 4TH, 2014

The City Council of the City of Piedmont met in regular session at the time and on the date above. Present were Mayor Bill Baker, Council Members Ben Keller, Mary Bramblett, Frank Cobb, Kenny Kelley, Brenda Spears, Mark Harper and Terry Kiser.

Following the invocation given by Keith Word and the pledge of allegiance to the flag the minutes were considered for approval. Kenny Kelley made the motion that the minutes be approved as presented. Mary Bramblett seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

The bills totaling \$768,007.53 were then presented for consideration for payment. Frank Cobb made the motion that the bills be approved as presented. Ben Keller seconded the motion and the bills were approved for payment unanimously.

Next on the agenda the council discussed increasing the sales tax by one cent. Ben Keller said he would vote for the increase only if the kilowatt rates were lowered. Mark Harper said he would like to see the increase money spent on hiring a recruiter for the city to find jobs and he said the only way he would vote for the increase was if the city cut the expenses by \$150,000.00.

Frank Cobb made the motion to start the search for a recruiter for the city to help bring business in. Mark Harper seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Next the Mayor asked for a motion to transfer the alcohol license from Norton Package Store to Jai SSai Baba Inc. Terry Kiser made the motion to transfer the alcohol license. Ben Keller seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Terry Kiser made the motion not to contract with Air Evac for emergency ambulance services. Ben Keller seconded the motion and the Mayor asked the City Clerk for a roll call vote and the vote was as follows:

<u>YEAS</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
Ben Keller	None	None
Mary Bramblett		
Frank Cobb		
Kenny Kelley		
Brenda Spears		
Mark Harper		
Terry Kiser		

Following the roll call a unanimous vote was cast not to contract with Air Evac.

The Mayor then called on Chief Ledbetter to give the fire report for the month of December 2013 and January 2014. In December there were 5 structure fires, 1 car fire, 3 vehicle accidents, 2 woods/grass fires, 1 automatic alarm, 1 hazmat call, 2 service calls and 6 burn permits issued. In January there were 11 structure fires, 3 woods fires, 2 vehicle accidents, 4 service calls, 5 automatic alarms and 2 medical assists. The Chief also discussed the FEMA SAFER grant in the amount of \$660,000.00 that was awarded to the fire department to be paid out over the next four years.

Mayor Baker called on Kevin Farmer with the Piedmont Rescue Squad to give the report for February 2014. There were 109 total ambulance runs for February and the response time from station to scene was 2 minutes and 53 seconds.

In Other Business Mark Harper asked the Mayor where the city stood on the contract with ITS dealing with the school internet. The Mayor stated that the contract is being reviewed by the City Attorney. Brenda Spears asked if the two substations were secured after the break in. Electrical Superintendent Casey Ponder stated that the substation was secured by a fence. Ben Keller said that the council needs to look at getting the kilowatt rate down.

In visitor's comments Mr. Danny Pope of Popes Furniture asked that the city not increase the sales tax by one cent stating that this would hurt city businesses.

A visitor asked for a road block to be approved to take up money for a 16 year old boys funeral expenses. Mary Bramblett made the motion to approve the road block. Terry Kiser seconded the motion and the motion was approved unanimously.

Keith Word announced that the Piedmont Throttle Kings would be at Fagan's Park on March 15, 2014. Several citizens spoke to the council about high utility bills and spoke against the one cent sales tax for Piedmont.

In Council Reports Ben Keller had no report.

Mary Bramblett thanked Tiny Lewis and the Park and Recreation Department for another successful Black History Month Program.

Frank Cobb had no report.

Kenny Kelley said he thanked God for the safe return of Mr. Freddie Perry a Piedmont resident that had been missing for several days.

Brenda Spears council comments:

The March 4, 2014 bills for payment are \$768,007.53 and payroll and taxes for a two week period at \$116,777.00 for a total of \$884,784.53.

On the council's agenda is listed "Other Business". At the council's meeting on January 21, 2014, I told the council that at a future meeting, I wanted to make a motion that any business concerns under "Other Business" to be openly and fully discussed at this time but not voted on that night unless it was an emergency or life or death situation. This way there would not be any surprise agenda items, or some council members would not be suddenly made aware of a soon to be made motion, second, and vote. Council members would not be blindsided by hearing for the first time the Mayor's or another council member's special interest. The extra time frame between the two council meetings would give all council members more time to make an informed and well thought out decision before voting. In my opinion, this was going to be a very good, positive, and proactive motion. For community support, if everything the council is considering and discussing, it is human nature to do things that most people would approve of. At the February 18 council meeting, I made this motion: That items under "Other Business" be discussed at one meeting and then voted on at the next meeting unless a life or death situation or emergency existed. The roll call vote was taken with 3 yeas and 3 nays and 1 abstain. With a tie vote, the Mayor voted with the nays and the motion was defeated with a 4-3 vote. I am disappointed in the final vote.

In May 2010 the Mayor and Council agreed to finance and /or refinance 5 bonds with Regions Bank. GWS Bond was \$1.8 million; General Obligation Bond was \$4.4 million; School Bond B was \$1.6 million; School Bond C was \$2.9 million; Electric Bond was \$1.6 million. The bond payments include interest and principal. The payments are due the 25th day of each month. The bonds were financed for 30 years and will be paid off in the year 2040. I have been on the council since November 2012, and these payments have not changed till our February 18, 2014 agenda. The monthly bills for these 5 bonds are: GWS - \$11,881.77 but now is \$12,235.94; General Obl-\$22,325.42 but now is \$22,591.56; School B- \$12,195.31 but now is \$12,443.75; School C-\$14,945.00 and remains unchanged; Electric-\$9,629.58 but now is \$9,558.75. I am asking the Mayor for a written explanation why these costs are changing, and the higher difference being around \$600.00 per month for a possible of \$7,200.00 per year more on the taxpayers! Because spring is around the corner, the Animal Control Officer is ready to help with your problems. Her phone number is 256-447-3586 or her mobile number is 256-452-5225.

Remember to set your clocks forward this Saturday night on March 8 for Daylight Saving Time.

I am turning in for my district work orders for 2 fire hydrants that need repairs, leaves to be picked up, 5 drainage pipes that need to be cleaned out and the ditches pulled, and 4 nuisance abatements with one concerning health and safety issues.

Mark Harper thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting and said this is the best meeting he had attended since his time on the council.

Terry Kiser thanked everyone for attending the meeting and he said he hopes to see the city move forward.

In the Mayor's Comments the Mayor announced that the Assisted Living Facility had invited the Mayor and Council on March 20th at 6:00 pm to tour the facility and to have a meal.

He also said that Piedmont Health Care Board needed to replace Mr. Ralph Davis on the board because he was moving out of the city.

The Mayor then asked for a motion to allow budget billing for everyone that is interested in signing up with the utilities. Ben Keller made the motion to allow budget billing. Mary Bramblett seconded the motion. The Mayor asked the City Clerk for a roll call vote and the vote was as follows:

YEAS

NAYS

ABSTAIN

Ben Keller	NONE	NONE
Mary Bramblett		
Frank Cobb		
Kenny Kelley		
Brenda Spears		
Mark Harper		
Terry Kiser		

Following the roll call a unanimous vote was cast to allow budget billing for all utility customers.

Next the Mayor asked for a motion to move the penalty date from the 15th to the 20th only for the month of March to give customers more time to pay the higher winter bill. Mary Bramblett made the motion to change the penalty date. Ben Keller seconded the motion and the Mayor asked the City Clerk for a roll call vote and the vote was as follows:

<u>YEAS</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
Ben Keller	NONE	NONE
Mary Bramblett		
Frank Cobb		
Kenny Kelley		
Brenda Spears		
Mark Harper		
Terry Kiser		

Following the roll call a unanimous vote was cast to change the penalty date for the month of March.

With no other business to come before the council Terry Kiser made the motion that the meeting be adjourned. Mark Harper seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.