



**The Tallulah City Council
Regular Meeting
Scheduled for October 24, 2024,
will be held at the
Tallulah Madison Community Center,
800 Beech Street, Tallulah, LA 71282.
The meeting will begin at 5:30 pm.**

**The Water Receiver,
Bonton & Associates, will
be in attendance.**

**The public is encouraged
to attend this meeting.**

Mayor Charles Finlayson

204 North Cedar Street
Tallulah, Louisiana 71282
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Office of the Mayor

City of Tallulah
Regular Council Meeting Agenda
Thursday, October 24, 2024
5:30 P.M.
Tallulah Madison Community Center

Charles M. Finlayson
Mayor
Joseph Scott
District 1
Lisa Houston
District 2
Carla Turner-Harris
District 3
Marjorie Day
District 4
Toriano Wells
District 5

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance & Prayer
3. Roll-Call
4. Public Comments on the Agenda
5. Approve Minutes of the September 30, 2024, Regular Meeting
6. Approve Minutes of the October 10, 2024, Regular Meeting
7. Introduction of Tallulah Water Service Receiver – Bonton & Associates
8. Public Comments
9. Adjourn

Special Accommodations

Any person needing reasonable accommodations to attend a public meeting held by the Tallulah City Council should contact Gerald Odom at 318-574-0964 three (3) days prior to the meeting date. If further information is needed, please contact Mr. Odom at the number listed above.

CORRECTED MINUTES

Regular Council Meeting
City of Tallulah
September 30, 2024

A regular council meeting was held on Monday, September 30, 2024, at 6.00 P. M, in the Council Room Chamber of Tallulah City Hall. It should be noted that the meeting had to be rescheduled for Thursday, 6:00 PM. due to a power outage.

Mayor Charles M. Finlayson called the meeting to order, lead the Pledge of Allegiance, and allowed for a moment of silent prayer followed by a prayer from Councilmember Toriano Wells.

A roll call vote of Councilmembers is listed as follows:

Scott	Present
Houston	Present
Harris	Present
Day	Present
Wells	Present

~~Councilmember Wells stated that he had requested that Police Patrolman Courtney James be put on the agenda to further define his legal standing with the Police Department.~~ Councilman Wells pointed out that Attorney Grady had sent an email to the Mayor requesting the issue of Officer Courtney James' termination be placed on the next agenda so that she could notify Officer James, and that the matter had not been placed on the next agenda as the attorney had asked. He maintains that actions taken to terminate the officer were not done correctly. Consequently, he requested that it be placed on the agenda once again for the upcoming council meeting.

Approval of minutes of the 12th were tabled due to fact as the Councilmember Wells pointed out, all corrections were not complete and should be reviewed again before approval.

Motion and second to approve the occupational license of Latricia South were made by Councilmembers Harris and Houston respectively and carried unanimously.

The scheduled Section 8 report was not given due to the absence of Administrator Merunda Brown.

Approval of the audit year, 2024, and the present fiscal year services, 2025, the Council still wanted additional information regarding approval. Councilmember Wells stated that he had requested a copy of the prior, 2023-2024 letter, and the City Clerk had not produced it. Plus, no representative from the accounting firm was present. Motion and second to table the letter of engagement were made by Houston and Scott respectively, and the roll call vote is listed as follows:

Scott	Yea
Houston	Yea

Harris Yea
Day Yea
Wells Yea

Motion carried.

Approval of Time Extension for the Dabney Street project brought about a lengthy discussion which included Councilman Wells explanation of his conversations with the DRA National Office and Ms. Tracy Ausberry of North Delta Regional Planning (he explained he was told by National Office that no change orders had been submitted for removal of sidewalks from the project). As well, Councilman Wells was vehemently against the approval of the time extension stating that contractors should be held to the dates listed in the contract. ~~The change order request for time extension to the contractor was discussed, and the conclusion reached through the urging of Councilmember Wells was that the request should be denied. Plus, he made the case that modifications, etc, were made to the bid process acceptance before the contract with the City was signed.~~

Motion and second to extend the change order for additional contractor time was made by Councilmembers Houston and Scott respectively and the roll call vote was:

Scott Yea
Houston Yea
Harris Nay
Day Yea
Wells Nay

Motion carried

***Councilman Wells said that he wanted to amend the motion and asked that the following statement be added to the minutes "I, Councilman Wells, offered a substitute motion to the item #10 Approval of Time Extension Project Modification for the Dabney Street Project, but the (sic) refused to bring the substitute before the council to be voted upon. The issue at hand was my questioning whether Tracey Ausberry of North Delta Regional Planning and Development offering the City of Tallulah the option of requesting a time extension for the Dabney Street project per Yvonne Lewis statement.*

Motion and second to approve a contract of the City with Womack and Sons brought about another lengthy conversation. Councilman Wells pointed out that the Parks Contract did not have any dates filled in, thus rendering the contract incomplete. Motion to table the contract until all dates are filled in made by Councilmember Wells and seconded by Councilmember Day. Roll call vote

Scott Yea
Houston Yea
Harris Yea
Day Yea
Wells Nay

Motion and second to approve for LCDBG Street Project was tabled due to the fact that the project was not being handled correctly according to Councilmember Wells. He noted that the bid process was not totally correct and that change orders had not been brought before the Council. These issues will have to be rectified, he stated, and the change order will need to be tabled for further study. Motion and Second to that effect were made by Councilmembers Houston and Day, and the roll call vote was:

Scott	Yea
Houston	Yea
Harris	Yea
Day	Yea
Wells	Yea

Motion carried.

Change order request the LCBG #1 was tabbed due to the fact that the contractor had run over his time to a serious extent, and perhaps something should be done for corrective action. Therefore, the item was tabled until next meeting on motion and second of Councilmembers Houston and Harrison which carried unanimously.

City Clerk Gerad Odom placed Councilmember packets for the 3 larger funds: General Fund, Water Fund, and Utility (Sewer) were the topic of discussion. The month in question was as of August, 2024.

Mayor stated for public information that the Receivership had begun, but had just started with the paper work. He stated that all legal forms had been completed, and that they were waiting for the Judge to sign them.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned by Councilmembers Houston and Day respectively which carried unanimously.

Attest:

Gerald L. Odom, City Clerk

Charles M. Finlayson, Mayor

To: Charles Finlayson, Mayor City of Tallulah

From: Toriano Wells, City Councilman District 5

Re: Inclusion of Substitute Motion for an Agenda Item

This is the language that I wanted to include in the minutes for Item #10 of our Meeting Agenda on September 30, 2024.

I, Councilman Wells, offered a substitute motion to Item #10 Approval of Time Extension Project Modification for The Dabney Street Project, but the refused to bring the substitute before the council to be voted upon. The issue at hand was my questioning whether Tracey Ausberry of North Delta Regional Planning and Development offering the City of Tallulah the option of requesting a time extension for the Dabney Street Project per Yvonne Lewis statement.

Toriano A Wells
@ 4:10 pm

Regular Council Meeting
City of Tallulah
October 10, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the Mayor and City Council was held on Thursday, October 10, 2024, at 5:30 P.M., in the Council Room Chamber of Tallulah City Hall.

Mayor Charles M. Finlayson called the meeting to order, led the Pledge of Allegiance, and allowed time for silent prayer followed by a prayer from Councilmember Wells.

A roll call of councilmembers is shown as follows:

Scott	Present
Houston	Present
Harris	Present
Day	Present
Wells	Present

Under Public Comments on the Agenda, Councilman Wells asked that Item # 5 “Approve Occupational License – Matilda Johnson “The Lit City Arcade” be moved before Item # 4 “Public Comments on the Agenda.” Mayor Finlayson approved the move. Motion to approve the Occupational License of Matilda Johnson was made by Councilmember Wells and seconded by Councilmember Day. Motion carried unanimously.

Councilmember Wells then asked for Item #9 (Approve Corrected Minutes of the September 12, 2024 Regular Meeting, and Item #10 (Approve Minutes of the September 30, 2024 Regular Meeting) be moved up and acted upon.

Motion to Approve Corrected Minutes of the September 12, 2024 Regular Meeting made by Councilmember Day and seconded by Councilmember Harris. Motion carried unanimously.

Councilmember Wells offered the following corrections to the September 30, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes:

1. Paragraph 4, Page 1 – Delete “Councilmember Wells stated that he had requested that Police patrolman Courtney James be put on the agenda...” Councilmember Wells says that he stated that “Attorney Grady had sent an email to Mayor Finlayson requesting the item be added to the next agenda so that she could notify Officer James.”
2. Paragraph 9, Page 2 – Councilmember Wells asked that the minutes be corrected to reflect the proper project(s) and change order(s) are referenced specifically by name and number in the minutes to assure clarity. During discussion, Councilmember Wells referenced the Dabney Street project and a Change Order for the Dabney Street project and his communications with Tracy Ausberry of North Delta Regional Planning regarding the Dabney Street project.
3. Paragraph 12 – Strike “I had been pointed out....” Add “Councilman Wells pointed out that the park contract did not have any dates filled in, thus rendering the contract

incomplete.” Also the vote reflected for this item should be changed to show Councilmember Wells voted “nay” with regard to the Womack Parks Contract.

4. Councilmember Wells also stated that the statement that he asked to be a part of the September 30, 2024 minutes was excluded. He provided Clerk Odom with a written copy of the statement and asked that it be added to the minutes.

Motion to table the September 30, 2024, minutes was offered by Councilmember Wells and seconded by Councilmember Harris. Roll call vote:

Scott	Yea
Houston	Yea
Harris	Yea
Day	Yea
Wells	Yea

At this juncture, Mayor Finlayson asked that Item #8 “Approve Change order #2 for LCDBG Street Project (Tank/University/Florida) be addressed, followed by Item #6 “Enter Executive Session.” Discussion followed, which included the following points:

1. Councilmember Wells stated that the proposed Executive Session could not be entered to talk about Potential Litigation, citing statutes.
2. Attorney Grady disagreed with Councilmember Wells and also cited statutes. After further discussion, Attorney Grady advised the Council that it was their decision whether to go into Executive Session. She also advised that she believed discussions regarding this items should be done in Executive Session.

Motion to Enter into Executive Session was offered by Councilmember Houston and seconded by Councilmember Day. Roll call vote:

Scott	Yea
Houston	Yea
Harris	Yea
Day	Yea
Wells	Nay

Councilmember Wells initially joined the Council in Executive Session but at some point opted to leave. He came back to his seat on the dais and waited until the Council returned.

Motion to adjourn Executive Session and Re-Enter Regular Session offered by Councilmember Houston and seconded by Councilmember Scott.

Approve Change Order #2 for LCDBG Project (Tank/University/Florida) brought forth a lengthy discussion. Councilman Wells strongly reiterated:

1. Change Order #1 was not brought before the Council and thus was not legal. He also felt that since Change Order #1 hadn't been brought before the Council, the Change Order on the agenda (listed as Change Order #2) should in fact be Change Order #1, as he stated that

Change Orders should be sequential. Councilman Wells specifically asked if Change Order #1 had been presented to the Council. The answer was no to that question.

2. Input regarding this item was offered by LCDBG Grant Administrator Robbie Waxman and Project Engineer Cinnamon Gooding of McManus Engineers.
3. Councilmember Wells request that the following statement be made a part of these official minutes: "On October 10, 2024 at 7:04 pm, Councilman Wells made it a matter of record that the City Council of Tallulah did not vote to approve Change Order #1 that was given to Dreher Contracting Company. The Mayor signed it and it was executed and it is on its own without Council approval."

Motion to Approve Change Order # 2 for LCDBG Street Project (Tank/University/Florida) was offered by Councilmember Houston and seconded by Councilmember Day.

Scott	Yea
Houston	Yea
Harris	Nay
Day	Yea
Wells	Nay

Councilmember Wells again stated after his "no" vote "Because Change Order 1 had not been approved."

Section 8 Report covered August 20, 2024 to September 30, 2024. Ms. Merunda Brown stated that for August 2024 Section 8 utilized 50 vouchers, had four (4) open vouchers; had a total of \$19,630.02 in Housing Assistance Payments (HAP), a total of five (5) new contracts, gave notice to one (1) participant for termination, conducted three (3) initial inspections, and conducted three (3) annual inspections. For September Section 8 utilized 51 vouchers, had three (3) open vouchers, had a total of \$21,920.02 in HAP payments, signed two (2) new contracts, terminated one (1) voucher and conducted one (1) initial inspection. Ms. Brown asked the Council to approve Fair Market Rent for 2025. Motion to approve Fair Market Rent for 2025 was offered by Councilmember Day and seconded by Councilmember Harris. Motion carried unanimously.

Approve Police Chief Recommendation for Termination of Officer Courtney James brought discussion by Police Chief Buster McCoy (vote has already occurred legally for termination), Councilmember Wells (City must say on the record that the prior vote was done incorrectly) and Attorney Grady (spoke to LMA and out of an abundance of caution advised to bring the matter back before the council for vote). Motion to approve Police Chief Recommendation for Termination of Officer Courtney James offered by Councilmember Houston and seconded by Councilmember Day. Roll call vote:

Scott	Yea
Houston	Yea
Harris	Nay
Day	Yea
Wells	Nay

Approve Contract for Womack and Sons LLOP LCDBG Parks Project brought about a lengthy discussion.

1. Councilman Wells reiterated his earlier statements that (1) Elements of the project were improperly removed from the project, prior to the approval of the bid and (2) He spoke with Angela Heath from the Legislative Auditor's Office and she advised that the project be re-bid.
2. Attorney Grady advised that she had spoken with Angela Heath of the Louisiana Legislative Office and that after offering further information, Ms. Heath advised that the contract could be executed and immediately followed by a delete change order to remove items from the contract. Attorney Grady also advised the City to look into a new process of alternative bidding which gives a contractor an opportunity to bid on a project in various forms.

Motion to approve the Contract for Womack and Sons for LLOP LCDBG Parks Project was offered by Councilmember Day and seconded by Councilmember Houston. Roll call vote:

Scott	Yea
Houston	Yea
Harris	Yea
Day	Yea
Wells	Nay

Motion to approve Change Order #1 for the LLOP LCDBG Parks Project was offered by Councilmember Day and seconded by Councilmember Scott. Roll call vote:

Scott	Yea
Houston	Yea
Harris	Yea
Day	Yea
Wells	Nay because project was changed before bid accepted.

Approve Letter of Engagement for Allen, Green and Williamson brought forth the following:

1. Councilmember Wells reminded all that this matter had been tabled multiple times pending a representative from Allen, Green & Williamson coming to a meeting.
2. Councilmember Wells asked, once again, if there was a contract in place for FY 23/24. The answer to the question is no. Councilmember Wells reminded the Council that Clerk Odom had in the past said that there was a contract for FY 23/24.
3. Ms. Lewis stated that she'd spoken with the Legislative Auditor's office regarding this item and was told that:
 - a. There is nothing in the law that states a written contract has to be in place for these types of professional services; however, the Legislative Auditor advised that as a best practice a contract should be used.

- b. The Council has two options (i) vote on the current Letter of Engagement for FY 23/24 and FY 24/25 or (ii) do not vote and begin the RFQ process or some other process to choose a contractor for these services.

Motion to Approve the Letter of Engagement for Allen Green & Williamson for FY 23/24 and FY 24/25 was offered by Councilmember Houston and seconded by Councilmember Day. Roll call vote:

Scott	Yea
Houston	Yea
Harris	Yea
Day	Yea
Wells	Nay

Under the Mayor's Report:

1. Application for Receivership, amongst other documents, has been filed by LDH. Judge Angela Claxton has recused herself from the matter and it has been assigned to Judge Laurie Brister. The City of Tallulah is now under a Receivership. The Receiver is Bonton Associates (offices in Baton Rouge and Shreveport). Bonton Associates should expect communication from Bonton in the near future. Questions regarding starting dates, fees, etc., were asked. Attorney Grady said that from the paperwork, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security will be sharing the cost of the Receiver with Tallulah. Attorney Grady advised the public that all papers filed were public records and could be obtained from the Clerk of Court's office.

Under Public Comments:

1. Mr. Frank Williams asked about spraying for insects in Tallulah. Mayor Finlayson said he could not find anyone and Mr. Williams gave him a potential source. Mr. Williams also asked about having department heads at meetings.
2. Ms. Joy Jackson asked about the water in the bayou.
3. Councilmember Houston asked could the City address the bayou from the bridge to the old VoTech bldg.
4. Councilmember Harris asked about clearing the ditch for a private citizen.

Motion to adjourn offered by Councilmember Day and seconded by Councilmember Houston. Motion carried unanimously.

Attest:

October 10, 2024

Gerald L. Odom, City Clerk

Charles M. Finlayson, Mayor