

CITY OF GLADEWATER  
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION  
MINUTES  
MAY 8, 2006  
6:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor John Paul Tallent, Mayor Pro-tem Walter Derrick, Joe Derouen, Jerry Williams, Scott Owens, Richard Parrish, Jr.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jimmy Williams

STAFF PRESENT: Jay Stokes, Melba Haralson, Jimmy Davis, Wayne Smith

GUESTS PRESENT: Deborah Pike, J. Shafer, Pat Derouen, Elijah Anderson, B.K. Johnson, Mary J. Williams, Brenda Brown, Beverly Tallent, Megan Middleton, Charles Miller, Marilyn Kelley, Hercules Wells, Raymond L. Johnson, Weldon W. Davis, Rhonda Farmer, Herman Tyeskie

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Tallent called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. DISCUSSION WITH THE CONCERNED CITIZENS COMMITTEE regarding grievances stated in their resolution presented March 16, 2006 and reaffirmed April 16, 2006

B.K. Johnson of 309 Eddy, the CCC spokesperson, thanked the Council for holding the meeting and stated that this meeting is an initial step. They will request another meeting at a later date when all issues can be addressed. He said their presentation will be in two parts; 1) conditions which are civic in nature and 2) revamping or finding a solution to problems with the police department. Mr. Johnson said there will be several speakers on each topic.

Elijah Anderson of 512 Roden read a statement of complaint regarding potholes, insufficient street lighting, there being little or no parks in their neighborhood and the sewer lines are in bad condition.

City Manager Stokes responded that now is a good time for road improvement requests, as decisions will be made in the next 4-8 weeks on which streets to repair with the \$100,000 that's budgeted. Mr. Stokes also said that everyone would like to have a street light by their house, but we try to place them where they illuminate the most number of houses. B.K. Johnson said that there are some streets with no lights at all. Mr. Stokes said that it is up to the Council whether money is budgeted for additional parks. Mayor Tallent added that we always ask for input from the citizens while preparing the budget and we have not received any. B.K. Johnson said if we have to tell you what our needs are then you don't care about them. Mr. Stokes stated that sewer line repairs are expensive and the Council has been making those repairs with grant funds as they become available. Mr. Stokes added that he does not dispute the condition of the old lines, but they are that way all over town.

Deborah Pike of 308 Sunset read a statement alleging that the police department has a disregard for public safety, is endangering the lives of minors, creating phobic fear in children by rough-housing and threats, drawn and aimed assault weapons and continued harassment. The personal style of law enforcement results in illegal personal searches, uses warrants for the arrest of one person to encroach on the rights and property of another, rude and provocative treatment, illegal interrogations (minors) and late night "hunting", which was described as officers using late night hours to arrest, interrogate or search someone solely for sport. She said that there are inappropriate departmental policies resulting in the denial of arrest sheets, delaying acquisitions of arrest report, no record of citizen complaints kept and the police department refuses to act on citizen complaints.

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Mayor Tallent asked Police Chief Jimmy Davis about these allegations. Chief Davis said he wasn't aware of any of it. Mayor Tallent then called for specifics from the representatives of the CCC. Raymond Johnson said that he was coming home from work late one night and an officer followed him all around Gladewater until he pulled up in his yard. B.K. Johnson gave an example of a group of kids who went to a convenience store after school. As they were leaving the store the group divided and went in opposite directions. The store owner called the police because one of the kids had taken something from the store. The police stopped and interrogated the first group of kids they saw, which happened to be the innocent group, instead of checking first to find out which group the shoplifter was in. He gave another example of the police serving an arrest warrant at a residence where they had good reason to believe the suspect was staying. They knocked on the door, when the wife asked who it was, they said maintenance. The officers went into the house with weapons drawn. Councilmember Jerry Williams asked if the suspect was there. B.K. Johnson answered yes he was, but the wife and a 3-year old child were terrified in the process.

Raymond Johnson of 225 Saunders read a statement criticizing the current method of recruiting and hiring police officers, claiming that persons with little or no experience and miscreants released or retired from other forces find their way onto our department. They proposed a recruitment plan as follows; 1) A complete and thorough investigation of prospective officer's training, experience, personal tenets, and public repute, 2) Creation of a board to review applications and information obtained or omitted on any applicant. This board should consist of members of the council, representatives from the citizenry, chief of police, the city attorney, and the city manager. The departments' head that does the hiring should seriously take recommendations of this board. 3) Each recruit should undergo a longer and more thorough apprenticeship that will allow a more complete coverage of professional tactics, public diplomacy, and departmental policy. 4) At the end of a probation period, all information and evaluation reports should be submitted to the board for final approval.

City Manager Jay Stokes said this calls into question the character of folks we have at the police department. We have a lot of good people working here and we haven't hired a new officer in over 2 1/2 years. He said typically bigger cities have this type of board, but he will show their recommendations to the new police chief. Mr. Stokes clearly stated that the police chief will have the latitude to run the department the way he or she sees fit. He added that he is not objectionable to the creation of a board but is not in favor of the board being involved at the end of a probation period. The chief is trained and certified in police work and sees each officer on a daily basis. Councilmember Jerry Williams said he would be in favor of creating a board and sees it as an improvement when more oversight is given to hiring the best officer we can afford.

City Manager Stokes said that we received 30 applicants for the police chief position. He asked three area law enforcement professionals (White Oak Police Chief Charley Smith, Kilgore Emergency Services Director Ronnie Moore and Gregg County Sheriff Maxey Cerliano) to screen the applicants and recommend a slate of finalists to be interviewed. They narrowed the field to four and one of those has already taken another position. Mr. Stokes said he will meet with the review committee Thursday and possibly begin interviewing next week.

Councilmember Owens asked if the new police chief will have free reign to set up the department. City Manager Stokes said that he will have the authority and added that we have 100% good department heads they are qualified to run their departments in a professional fashion. We all want what's best for Gladewater.

B.K. Johnson said it would augment the board and it is CCC's suggestion that all complaints be filed in three places; one at the police department, one with the board and one with the Concerned Citizens Committee. He said the board

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stands as a bridge between the police department and the citizens. Mr. Johnson said that they are after the simple truth and shouldn't meet any opposition.

Charles Miller of 316 Miller said they have been stonewalled in their search for the truth and that the Council is hiding behind "pending litigation". He asked the Council to define pending litigation. Councilmember Jerry Williams defined it as something in process or that has not been finalized. Mr. Miller then asked if the King family has filed a suit. Mayor Tallent said he needs to talk to our attorneys. Mr. Miller then questioned Police Chief Jimmy Davis on his decision to rehire Brian Naismith after he was fired as a dispatcher in 1993 by Police Chief Keene. Chief Davis said he thought he would do a good job at the time.

Marilyn Kelly, who lives in Upshur County, said that the teens need something to do in the afternoons. She said the condition of the streets in the Weldon area are bad and she's seen no change or improvement in years. The kids need something to look forward to and need a reason to come back to Gladewater.

III. ADJOURN

Councilmember Parrish moved to adjourn at 7:12 p.m. Adjourned by consensus.

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JOHN PAUL TALLENT, MAYOR

ATTEST:

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MELBA HARALSON, CITY SECRETARY