

JUNE 20, 2023
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

PRESENT: Mayor Bo Dorough
Mayor Pro Tem: Chad Warbington
City Commissioners: Jon Howard, Vilnis Gaines, and Demetrius Young
City Manager: Steven Carter
City Attorney: C. Nathan Davis

Mayor Dorough called the meeting to order at 8:42 a.m., followed by attendance roll call.

AGENDA ADOPTION

Commissioner Howard moved to adopt the agenda, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Warbington and, following a roll call vote, the motion unanimously carried.

PUBLIC HEARING RE: ZONING MATTERS

Mayor Dorough opened the public hearing for the following:

1. Zoning Case #23-033 - Katoria Facison, Owner/Applicant, request Special Approval to operate a Child Welfare Facility to serve up to 6 clients on a parcel zoned R-2 (Single-Family Residential District). The property is located at 813 Seventh Ave.

Paul Forgey, Director of Planning, used a power point (copy on file) and reviewed the special approval request and discussed the site plan, map of surrounding zoning, photos of the front/rear of the property, trip generator and additional special approval criteria. He noted times of open/closure, advising that the Planning Commission recommends approval.

In reply to Commissioner Gaines, Mr. Forgey stated that individuals from the area were at the Planning Commission meeting to talk about this item.

In reply to Commissioner Young, Mr. Forgey explained the residential requirement for group care homes, adding that child welfare, and boarding houses must be further than 1,000 feet away from each other, preventing two from being on the same block and explained the process for special approval.

Livingston Fulton spoke in opposition to the special approval and advised that there are two houses/lots directly in front of his home/property, adding that the property has been vacant for five years. He briefly discussed factors that caused him to ask the Commission to deny the application.

Mayor Dorough noted that this application is for a child welfare facility, which means that clients will reside there, unlike a day care with hours of operation. He added that if there were others opposed to the application, they, too, should have been present today to voice their concerns.

In reply to Commissioner Young, Mr. Forgey explained that it is classified as a child welfare facility that is state regulated, adding that it is a group home for kids and not a day care, with two staff members onsite daily.

In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Warbington, Mr. Forgey stated that the applicant is ill and not present to speak.

There were no additional comments, therefore, Mayor Dorough adjourned the public hearing.

REPORT OF THE CITY CLERK

A. Travel:

1. S. Carter, City Manager; 2023 GMA Annual Convention; June 22-27, 2023; Savannah, GA; \$3,556.40
2. S. Carter, City Manager; MEAG Power 2023 Annual Meeting; July 10-12, 2023; Amelia Island, FL; \$1,346.38

Commissioner Howard moved to approve travel, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Warbington, and following a roll call vote, the motion unanimously carried.

B. Expense Report – Third Quarter

Mayor Dorough stated that the report was emailed and distributed. Discussion followed regarding an invoice received from the Chamber pertaining to the DC fly-in with Mayor Dorough asking Mr. Carter for a memo of explanation.

REPORT OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

A. Temporary Construction Easements re: Oglethorpe Bridge

Mr. Davis and Rob Griffin, Interim Engineering Director, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the construction including easements, sidewalks, walkways, etc., with Mr. Griffin stating that he thinks GDOT plans to remove the blue arch on Oglethorpe.

Mayor Dorough stated that he serves on the DARTS board and at the last meeting it was reported that GDOT now has plans to start this project in 2027 rather than 2024. Planner I Tanner Anderson, explained that GDOT has plans to allocate funding in 2027 with plans subject to change between now and September.

B. Pension Board Meeting Date Change

Mr. Brown explained the request to change the meeting from the first Thursday to the second Tuesday of each month and asked for approval. Mayor Dorough stated that he is the proponent of this and explained that it will allow the financial consultants to prepare their report from the previous month and be ready to discuss at the meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Public Safety – Alcohol License Applications (new)

1. Lounge Eleven 20 LLC; d/b/a Lounge Eleven 20 113 N. Front St. K. Duffy/Agent; Liquor, Beer, and Wine Consumption

Chief Walter Norman, Code Enforcement Director, discussed information (copy on file). Mayor Pro Tem Warbington stated that the Brooks Family is involved in this.

In reply to Commissioner Young, Lequrica Gaskins, Downtown Manager, discussed the Downtown Entertainment District approved in 2020, which allow alcoholic drinks; the Downtown Master Plan (10 parcels); tenants who have renewed their lease; two vacant buildings (Front Street and Pine Ave) with all others being full. She explained plans, benchmarks and providing tenants with resources to make them successful and discussed 4-C Academy and what they will be bringing to the downtown area.

Ms. Duffy, applicant, stated that the hours are from 11 a.m., to 11 p.m., with opening date in July/August, adding that the lounge will be open Tuesday-Saturday.

In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Warbington, Ms. Duffy discussed remodeling the building and commented on the variety of primarily American foods that will be served.

B. Utilities/Public

1. Amendment No. 2 Power Purchase Agreement Between Pineview Solar LLC and Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia

Matt Chancy, Sr. Regional Manager with MEAG Power, introduced Michelle Jackson, Director of Power Generation, who will review the second amendment, and Cho Wen, Director of Analytical services with ECG, to address the retail side of the initiative.

Ms. Jackson explained the solar power agreement, the four countries in Asia supplying 80% of solar panels worldwide, amendment one, shortening the term of the years from 20 to 15, price increases (to \$37.75 per mwh), discussions with Walmart, competitive pricing, and Albany's share to be passed to Walmart, which has accepted the agreement.

Using Power Point (copy on file) Mr. Wen provided additional information regarding the Walmart agreement and the intention to be 100% renewable energy by 2035. He discussed energy/solar attributes, which do not affect revenue, the agreement (PPA) between the City and Walmart, reviewed the original financial version, and gave a breakdown of financial info for Amendment 2.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Ms. Jackson explained the revenue stream based on amendment 1, the \$37.75 mwh that is agreeable to all and is ready for construction next month in Wilcox County. In

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reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Wen stated that the City's margin is \$144,000 and will go to Utilities.

In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Warbington, Ms. Jackson noted the number of cities (23) participating, with 17 which will be serving Walmart with the model developed by ECG with the other six using the solar energy in their communities (clean energy claims), etc.

In reply to Commissioner Young, Mr. Carter advised that Walmart on Slappy and in E. Albany are customers of Albany Utilities and explained the agreement for Walmart to receive credits and is separate from Walmart being a utility customer. Mr. Wen explained that there will be no impact; Walmart will continue to purchase the same amount of power, adding that this deal is similar to providing extra service, which costs more, resulting in the cost being passed onto the customer.

Mayor Dorough briefly explained that once power is in the grid, there is no way to separate it, adding that this is Walmart's way of keeping the commitment to achieve clean energy.

Commissioner Young asked to have citizens participate in solar in some way as it affects the price of paying utility bills. Mayor Dorough stated that he has been an advocate of MEAG financing mechanisms of this nature as they have the wherewithal.

C. Planning/Engineering: Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program

Robert Griffin, Interim Director of Engineering, and Ken Breedlove, Traffic Engineering Manager, discussed information as noted (copy on file) and the request to create an action plan, with the cost being split between the City and County.

In reply to Commissioner Gaines, Mr. Griffin advised that the County has agreed to the split, which is 10% from each entity (\$26,300.00/each)

In reply to Mayor Dorough regarding the DARTS study, Mr. Anderson explained that this is a separate grant program that will determine high traffic accident areas in order to decrease fatalities.

D. Community & Economic Development

1. CL Red LOI: Request for an Extension

Lequrica Gaskins, Downtown Manager, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the request to extend the due diligence period through August 10, 2023.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, discussion followed regarding the possibility of CL Red deciding not to pursue this project after the expiration of the due diligence period. Ms. Gaskins explained that all information gathered during the due diligence period becomes property of the City to be used by the next developer should CL Red decide to pull out of the project. CL Red's interest in the Albany Herald project was also discussed.

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In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Warbington, Ms. Gaskins stated that they will have information by the August deadline and that weekly meetings will be held.

Commissioner Young commented on the arrangement and his concerns regarding the property, offering exclusive rights to the developer and not offering to others to consider. Ms. Gaskins discussed advantages to the City, which is an important piece of the Downtown Master Plan.

Mayor Dorough commented on CL RED not making a substantial commitment until they were provided clarification regarding ownership, paying off the loan, deed returning to the city with this developer having a proven track record. Discussion continued with Mayor Dorough expressing the pros and Commissioner Young expressing cons and concerns.

Mayor Dorough asked the status of designating downtown as a historic area, with Ms. Gaskins explaining that it was submitted to the National Register, and was originally denied, adding that ADICA and DDA will meet to discuss.

2. Community Development Block Grant Awards

Community and Economic Development staff including Orson Burton, Jr., Public Service Manager, and April Mahone, Deputy Director, discussed information as noted (copy on file) regarding the 2023/2024 Public Service Grant Awards and presented recommendations. The following were recommended for approval: Open Arms - \$25,000, Communities in Schools - \$15,000, GA Patriots Youth Athletic - \$10,000, Liberty House - \$10,000, New Visions Community Dev - \$5,000, Destiny4U - \$5,000, and Innovative Housing/AHA - \$5,000.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Burton advised that he would provide information on the agencies receiving the grant.

Commissioner Young commented on the organizations listed, with Mr. Burton explaining the process, CDBG allocations (\$75,000) which cannot be exceeded, with the organizations going through training and being reimbursed, including monthly reporting, processes, etc. Ms. Mahone noted housing counseling, fair housing, etc., that is inclusive. Commissioner Young asked the objective to allocate monies to the agencies, with Mr. Burton explaining that the CDC appointees make recommendations regarding agencies to fund and noting specific requirements.

Mayor Dorough asked for additional information regarding the location, mission/purpose of the agencies and questioned eligibility, with Mr. Burton stating that he will provide the information.

Commissioner Young noted housing issues within the community and asked the Commission to put money/resources toward the homeless population, domestic violence, gun violence, etc. Ms. Mahone noted that funding is being reduced from \$1.2 million to \$775,000. Mayor Dorough asked for funding for the last 15 years.

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E. Public Administration/Finance

1. Contract Renewal re: Chehaw/CVB

Tommy Gregors, Director, Artesian Alliance, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the contract renewal.

Questions included the number of undeveloped acres, with Mr. Gregors advising that there are approximately 800 acres and approximately 400 acres are not developed which includes portions that are in the flood zone. He explained that the Indian festival is no longer a big draw and commented on the plan presented which starts July. Mr. Carter added that these are the annual numbers that are budgeted.

Mayor Dorough discussed his concerns of changing the enabling legislation, adding Lee and Dougherty County appointments, etc., issues regarding attendance from Albany/Lee and Dougherty County, and the suggestion for Lee County to contribute funding. Mr. Gregors said he is in discussions with Lee and Dougherty County. Mayor Dorough noted the terms of the agreement regarding automatic renewals, the Commission revisiting the agreement and suggested earmarking funds for improvements.

In Reply to Mayor Pro Tem Warbington regarding having different park entrance fees, i.e., Albany, Dougherty and Lee County having different rates, Mr. Gregors advised that they offer membership passes.

Commissioner Young asked if Chehaw was a state park with Mr. Gregors explaining that in the 1970's it was a state park and discussing the history of the City taking it over, establishment of the Authority, etc., and continued marketing that is being looked at. Regarding the archives building, Mr. Gregors advised that archives are available to the public and have direct access to records (minutes/ordinances and resolutions). Discussion continued regarding the old agreement vs the new agreement and having a free day at Chehaw on Saturdays in the past, looking at ways to increase revenue, community outreach, etc.

2. Contract Renewal: Flint RiverQuarium/CVB

Mr. Gregors stated that this is in partnership with the Artesian Alliance.

Mayor Dorough expressed concern regarding the automatic renewal and asked if the RiverQuarium is subject to open records (to which Mr. Gregors stated that they honor requests received). Discussion continued regarding the City having appointments consistent with the budgeted amount of its allocation to the RiverQuarium board.

In reply to Commissioner Howard regarding having Juneteenth at Chehaw next year, Mr. Carter stated that this is a County event that the City participates in, however, he said he will get with Mr. Gregors and the County.

3. Retention Incentive

Mr. Carter discussed information (copy on file) regarding critical positions with less than 70% occupancy rates and awarding them a \$2,500 retention incentive and suggested \$1000.00 incentive for other employees who are not considered critical with a recommendation for a 15% pay increase for public safety and 5.5% for the general population.

Commissioner Howard asked if this will be effective July 1, to which Mr. Carter agreed. Discussion continued with suggestions/other options being provided, with Mr. Carter explaining the reason for his recommendations.

Detailed discussion followed regarding COLA options, percentage to go to the pension fund, having all employees receive \$1,000 instead of the original proposal for public safety to receive \$2,000, adding 911 operations to the pay, etc.

Mayor Pro Tem Warbington suggested an email be sent with four options for consideration and vote at the business meeting. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Brown provided funding information for Mayor Dorough's option, Commissioner Howard's option with Mr. Carter asking the preference of the incentive - \$2,500 or \$1,000. Commissioner Howard asked if the pay study can be looked at after the election with Mr. Carter stating that this is a Commission decision and distributing a list of salaries without names.

4. Employee Pension Contributions Increase

Derrick Brown, Chief Financial Officer, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the contribution increase.

There were no questions/comments on this item.

Corey Gamble, Buyer I: Don McCook, Deputy Operations Director; and Jeff Hughes, Sewer Maintenance Engineer, discussed information as noted:

5. Maintenance Contract re: Water Pollution Control Plant and Pumping Stations

Commissioner Howard asked the number and location of pump stations, the logo/name of the new owners, and a presentation by the new owners. Ricky Adams, Project Manager and Scott Broderick, Manager for SWGA and N. Florida, ESG reps, were present to provide additional information. Mr. Adams stated that he is responsible for the Albany contract and that they are working to make improvements.

In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Warbington, the contract amendment and increase were discussed.

Mayor Dorough asked if the City's allocation for maintenance is sufficient, with Mr. Adams agreeing. Discussion continued with Mayor Dorough asking for the initial assessment and progress that has been

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made. Mr. Adams stated that he can ask the CEO to make a presentation. Commissioner Howard noted concerns at storm station 50.

Mr. Gamble and Dale Henry, Fleet Asset Supervisor, discussed the following (copy on file):

6. Ford Diesel Trucks

In reply to Commissioner Young, Mr. Gamble and Henry provided additional information regarding the trucks and services.

Mr. Gamble, Mr. Henry and Stacey Rowe, Public Works Utility Operations Director, discussed the following (copy on file):

7. Public Works Dump Truck

There were no questions/comments on this item.

8. FAA & GDOT Grant Application

David Hamilton, Transportation Director, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the grant to fund the Airport Master Plan Update.

Mayor Dorough asked the number of pages is the current plan, with Mr. Hamilton stating approximately 600 pages, adding that he will provide an executive summary.

In reply to Commissioner Young regarding opening the Transportation Center for Greyhound bus, Mr. Carter stated that he is in discussions with Greyhound. Commissioner Young expressed concern for the area with individuals waiting outside for hours, some laying on the ground and no access to amenities. He asked that consideration be given to customers, suggesting that the rate be increased if funding is the issue.

9. Rural Workforce Housing Initiative Grant

Using a power point presentation (copy on file) regarding the Rural Workforce Housing Grant, Heather Sharpe, Region 10 rep for DCA, discussed information regarding the eligible communities, funding requirements, eligible applicants for grants/loans, etc., eligible activities (housing for workforce), application deadlines, first steps, etc.,

Roderick Gilbert, EDC provided additional information regarding the next step, requirements, including there being 29 homes added, infrastructure, etc., and ascertaining if the City wants to pursue the project/grant. He noted the timeline and deadline to apply including any additional funding.

Mayor Dorough asked to see blueprints for the development.

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In reply to Commissioner Howard regarding the location of the 29 homes, Mr. Gilbert provided the location on Gillionville Road, which is 6.11 acres. Discussion included funding, other areas that may be included in the next round of funds, with Mr. Gilbert noting that the sewer is the most important part of the project.

Commissioner Young questioned the funding and whether it qualifies or not. Ms. Sharpe noted that the eligibility will include Dougherty County and Albany. Discussion continued on projects, state funds and/or federal funds that can supplement, combining programs and having new development rather than something already in the works. Commissioner Young commented on unfinished subdivisions with Ms. Sharpe explaining funding if infrastructure is in place, etc. Mr. Gilbert stated that he will include a summary for review before the vote next week.

Mayor Dorough asked about the Springfield area and extending lines to the project on Gillionville and if this can be the City's contribution, with Mr. Gilbert stating that more discussion can be held regarding this. Mr. Carter stated that the cost will be provided with the full project being approximately \$1.2 million, adding that the question is how much the developer will participate since the City is applying for the grant. Preliminary documents were discussed, reimbursements, etc. Mayor Dorough asked if the numbers to be provided will include estimates of the cost, with Mr. Gilbert replying affirmatively.

Mayor Pro Tem Warbington stated that this will incentivize developers with potential for further developments, grants, etc. He stated that sewer is in the area with the issue being that the developer must connect to the sewer.

Commissioner Young asked if plans are to engage Dougherty County with Mr. Gilbert stating that this development is in the city.

MEMBER COMMENTS / ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

Commissioner Howard asked for a timeframe for property acquisition (Eugene and Averitt Streets). Mr. Maples stated that he will provide a schedule and update. Commissioner Howard expressed concern regarding the continued Greyhound bus security situation.

Commissioner Gaines stated that he would like to honor Talyia Griffin for her academic achievements as noted in a recent article in the Albany Herald, adding that her mother works at Planning and Development Services and that her grandmother works at the Courthouse.

In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Warbington, Mr. Carter advised that there is no action needed on TSPLOST unless the agreement is changed. Mayor Dorough advised that it was discovered that in 2018, Albany and Dougherty County adopted a resolution that stated the split between the two would be in effect for the next ten years, adding that he will draft a letter and asked Mr. Davis for an intergovernmental agreement.

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Commissioner Young stated that he researched information from when Orlando Rambo owned the bus station, and he received \$3-5,000/month from Greyhound to pay for security, etc. Discussion continued regarding after hours opening of the transportation center.

Mayor Dorough asked for an update on the tennis center, with Commissioner Gaines advising that they are waiting on Mr. Belk to schedule a meeting with Dougherty County. Regarding the Davis Exchange Building, Mayor Dorough asked Ms. Gaskins for their budget, drawings, projections and how money is spent, with a commitment that the quality of workmanship will meet the \$18 million budget. Ms. Gaskins stated that she will reach out to the developers today. Mayor Dorough mentioned the Charter review scheduled for Thursday, with Commissioner Howard having stated that he will attend, asking that anyone else planning on attending to let it be known, adding that if there is a quorum, notice must be sent out. He asked Mr. Davis to look at items in the city charter regarding: two year terms, language regarding the Mayor Pro Tem being elected at-large, if the City has nonpartisan elections and if this is a municipal law; if election provisions are in the charter and does not govern municipal elections, it does not need to be in the charter. He recalled asking that the Utility Board spending limit be increased to \$1.0 million with no interest from the Commission and asked to look at increasing it to \$500,000 in August. He commented on recommendations from the Utility Board that come to the Commission which involve equipment/vehicle purchases that are routine and are budgeted for, suggesting that the Commission reconsider his proposal.

CITY MANAGER’S REPORT

Mr. Carter thanked staff for assisting with the Juneteenth celebration and mentioned the July 4th (Independence Day) that is sponsored by the City and asked the commission to let him know if they want to attend; He noted that Mayor Pro Tem Warbington is running for a MEAG board appointment and asked for everyone’s support and reminded all that there is only one work session in July on the 18th.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 12:44 p.m.

SONJA TOLBERT
CITY CLERK