



CITY OF DAHLONEGA

Council Work Session Minutes

March 21, 2022, 4:00 PM

Gary McCullough Council Chambers, Dahlonega City Hall

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, those requiring accommodation for Council meetings should notify the City Clerk's Office at least 24 hours prior to the meeting at 706-864-6133.

PRESENT

Mayor JoAnne Taylor
Councilmember Ron Larson
Councilmember Roman Gaddis
Councilmember Johnny Ariemma
Councilmember Ryan Reagin
Councilmember Ross Shirley
Councilmember Lance Bagley

OPEN MEETING

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting, including distinguished guests, Chief Wimpy, Alan Ours, Robb Nichols, and Sam McDuffie.

Mayor Taylor announced Employee of the Year, Troy Armstrong, who has been with the city for seven years. Mayor Taylor read the accolade for Troy.

BOARDS & COMMITTEES:

1. Cemetery Committee—February 2022

Chris Worick, Committee Chairman

Mayor Taylor announced Mr. Worick would not be available, reminded the Council of the report in their package, and announced Mr. Worick has seven new students from the University of North Georgia helping with the cleaning and restoration of Mt. Hope Cemetery.

Councilmember Ariemma questioned the sale of plots in the report. Administrator Kinley responded, indicating the sale of plots falls to Community Development, and the question was deferred for later discussion.

2. Main Street / DDA – February 2022

Ariel Alexander, Main Street/DDA Interim Main Street Manager

Skylar Alexander presented for Ariel and indicated there was nothing additional to add to the report in the package.

TOURISM: Sam McDuffie, Tourism Director

Director McDuffie highlighted that the snowbirds campaign ended in February and was successful. Targeted for the Great Lakes region, the top cities were Cincinnati, Ohio, and Columbus, Indiana.

On April 3rd, the Augusta National billboard on Exit 199 on I-20 for the Master's Golf Tournament will feature rotating advertisements, and three are for Dahlonega and Lumpkin County. Councilmember Shirley asked when the kiosk would be active, and Director McDuffie indicated it would be live on April 1st. He also announced that advertising on the 680AM campaign starts focusing on Bear on the Square and summer traffic.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Mayor Taylor announced Council received the Department Reports ahead of time and asked for any questions.

Councilmember Ariemma indicated he would like to see a breakdown between plots and columbarium. There was discussion regarding burials and locations of cemeteries in the County.

Councilmember Ariemma asked for clarification on the non-revenue water from Director Jarrard, who indicated it was unaccounted for through leaks, inaccuracies, water produced but not passed through a meter. A discussion ensued about the elevation and pressures at various locations throughout the city.

Councilmember Larson thanked the staff for their thorough and detailed reports. What you do is tremendous.

City Attorney Parks left the Chambers at 4:17 pm.

3. Community Development – February 2022

Jameson Kinley, Planning and Zoning Administrator

4. Dahlonega Police Department- February 2022

George Albert, Chief of Police

5. Finance Department Report - February 2022

Allison Martin, Finance Director

Councilmember Ariemma discussed with Director Martin the number of adjustments and their average at \$350. People need to understand what it could cost them if they were opt-out.

Mayor Taylor asked Chief Albert how the calls from citizens to address complaints fall in his report. Mayor Taylor requested tracking the number of nuisance calls to determine how much it costs the city.

Councilmember Ariemma asked if the department addressed traffic concerns around the traffic light at N Grove St. There is a pedestrian safety concern with the number of fast-moving cars increasing speed from the intersection. Chief Albert added that he would increase patrol.

City Attorney Parks returned to Chambers at 4:21 pm.

6. Water & Wastewater Treatment Department Report February 2022

John Jarrard, Water/Wastewater Treatment Director

7. Public Works—February 2022

Mark Buchanan, PW Director/City Engineer

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

8. Amended - Resolution 2022-07 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

David Wimpy, Director/Fire Chief

Mayor Taylor announced the document, and Chief Wimpy went on to address the plan. Chief Wimpy explained that a Hazard Mitigation Plan is necessary to request funds for mitigation and disaster in an emergency. Mayor Taylor reminded Council that this item comes up for a vote at the April 4th Council meeting.

9. Amended - 2022 Comprehensive Plan

Jameson Kinley, Planning Administrator

Mayor Taylor invited Administrator Kinley to explain the Comprehensive Plan. Administrator Kinley explained that the plan is our vision of the city in 25-50 years, demonstrating our goals. Administrator Kinley read a document from Adam Hazell, highlighting that the plan had been through several public hearings, approved through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and ready for Council approval. He added the summary of the goals begins on page 41, a state-required addition of Broadband assessment, modified environmental assessment, and passive use parks and trails.

Administrator Kinley added that the focus was on community vision- how we envision our growth, community development strategy—items like Broadband and implementation program. He expounded that DCA wants to make sure we set a list of goals, and we are working toward them with regular updates every five years, and DCA is whom we go to for grant funding.

Council discussed properties, stakeholders, and the vision of Dahunega.

10. Request to increase the allocation of funds for pay adjustments for city employees.

Bill Schmid, City Manager

Mayor Taylor offered the floor to City Manager Schmid, who indicated the last adjustment was in 2020 before COVID and requested an increase comparable in the market. Inflation has risen over 7% since that time. This request does not impact operations and recommends acting at the April 4th Council Meeting. Mayor Taylor questioned if this was a Cost-of-Living adjustment, to which he affirmed it was. City manager Schmid indicated revenues are above projections, which is an appropriate way to recognize the staff. Council discussed the cost, funding, and actions other cities have taken during this time to compensate staff.

11. Amendment of Personnel Management System Policies

Allison Martin, Finance Director

Director Martin reminded Council that this was a living document and highlighted changes to the Marshal's reference and policy for on-call work.

12. FY2021 Fourth Quarter Budget Amendment

Allison Martin, Finance Director

Director Martin is awaiting a call from the Auditor who has rescheduled, and once we have a word, this may not need on the regular agenda.

13. Servline Leak Protection Program

Allison Martin, Finance Director

Director Martin indicated that the National League of Cities endorses the Servline Leak Protection program. Currently, staff spends many man-hours researching leaks and adjusting. We would look at the average of all our leaks to determine the coverage level. It is an opt-out program. First, we need an updated leak adjustment policy and sixty days of advertising. Before we invest time and resources, did Council want to support this program? In the event of a leak, the customer would work with ServLine, pay their average bill to the city, and Servline will manage the rest. It is a Win/Win for \$1 to \$2 per month for the customer. This program is only for residential customers. Council and Director Martin discussed costs, the process to notify the public, opting out and filing a claim, the cost of line breaks to the city and customers, and the possibility of Commercial coverage. Director Martin proposes an opt-out program where everyone is included in the program and must choose to opt out.

14. 2022-009 Parking Lot Overlay for City Hall

Vince Hunsinger, Capital Projects Manager

Director Buchanan presented this budgeted item. The bids for this capital project are due now, and the bid results will be presented at the next Council meeting.

15. 2022-007 Storm Drain Repair - Mechanicsville Road

Vince Hunsinger, Capital Projects Manager

Director Buchanan stated the Mechanicsville Road ditch area around the Head Start building was budgeted at \$138K and had a bid of \$142 which seems high but is not too bad with current conditions. We want to award and bump \$25K to pay the vendor and room for changes.

Council and City Manager discussed budget changes planned for 2021 and the rising fuel prices on the current budget. Mayor Taylor clarified it would come for a vote next meeting. Director Buchanan indicated two parts, one to award and one to change the budget.

16. Morrison Moore Pedestrian Bridge & Sidewalk Supplemental Agreement for Preliminary Engineering (PE)

Mark Buchanan, City Engineer

Director Buchanan explained that this is the project for the sidewalk from Walmart to the boat ramp and includes the bridge. The design was a single-span pedestrian bridge, and the latest information indicates they can cut \$700K of cost by making a 3-span bridge. There is an additional cost of \$40 K, of which GDOT will cover 80% \$32K, leaving the city \$8K, shown in the supplemental agreement. The City Manager and Council commended Director Buchanan's resourcefulness and contacts.

17. Park Street Design Firm Selection

Mark Buchanan, City Engineer

Director Buchanan explained that this project is water and sewer on South Park and a portion of North Park. Most pipes are close to one hundred years old. The water lines are necessary for fire protection pressures and continue to break; water and sewer will be completed in conjunction as the sewer are just as old. There are two firms in the selection process. No recommendation in the packet, and by Council Meeting, we will have a suggestion for a vendor. The American Rescue Plan Act funds will fund it.

Council and Director discussed the process to complete the work- whether to do it in phases or at once, the cost, the possibility of adding broadband and electricity upgrades, stormwater necessity, funding options, and design and construction timelines. Next week, firm selection will happen with results at the Council on April 4th.

COMMENTS – PLEASE LIMIT TO THREE MINUTES

City Clerk Mary Csukas reminded the Council of the upcoming retreat at Camp Glisson on April 8th and ninth.

The City Manager and City Attorney had no additional comments.

Councilmember Gaddis, will dinner topics for the retreat be forecasted out? Mayor Taylor responded with a deep dive into housing, and if anyone has another essential issue on the agenda, we can add it.

Councilmember Larson would like to have a LOST discussion. Councilmember Gaddis added that he would like to see recycling in a future work session if not at the retreat. Councilmember Reagin had nothing to add. Councilmember Larson asked Director Martin if the \$150K requested for the staff increases included taxes. Councilmember Bagley asked if, in the future, as we discuss beautification, if we look at burying the power lines, it also limits storm damage. Councilmember Ariemma had no additional comments.

Mayor Taylor discussed how fortunate we were to have forward-looking people in the past who had the power lines buried in the square. She commended the cooperative efforts happening right now. She indicated that UNG is undertaking a project to bury the power lines on South Chestatee St. It is a \$1.5 M project and expects completion around August.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Taylor made a motion to adjourn at 5:16 pm.

Motion made by Councilmember Bagley, Seconded by Councilmember Shirley.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Larson, Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley