



# CITY OF DAHLONEGA

## Council Work Session Minutes

September 19, 2022, 4:00 PM

Gary McCullough Council Chambers, Dahlonega City Hall

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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.

Vision - To be an open, honest, and responsive city, balancing preservation, and growth, and delivering quality services fairly and equitably by being good stewards of Dahlonega's resources.

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### 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 406 PM

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve the Agenda.

Motion made by Councilmember Shirley, Seconded by Councilmember Reagin.  
Voting Yea: Councilmember Larson, Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma,  
Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley

Mayor Taylor offered some words prior to the meeting regarding the sanitation department.

She stated that we are considerably understaffed, and a notice was sent to all customers about using the approved can and not having items outside the can. Currently, supervisors and management staff are riding the trucks. To continue to offer the services, we have had to make some changes. We met recently and have a few ideas to encourage more folks to apply for those jobs and incentives to our employees for improving their skills; She encouraged those looking for a job working in sanitation; we are taking applications.

Mayor Taylor then addressed the removal of the pecan tree in front of Spirits. She stated a different tree in front of an owner's building, a large branch fell from a tree, and expounded this is why we pay so much attention and care. We take care to protect our citizens and visitors. The pecan tree will come down in the next few weeks. The tree has been deemed a danger, and the arborist recommended removal.

Mayor Taylor continued that she had received a call a few weeks ago from a company to do a short documentary on the City of Dahlonega. The show is Viewpoint by Dennis Quaid. She has spoken with the Tourism department and, as a result of the filing, will receive a 5-6-minute-high quality video. This will be shown on PBS and get some narrow casting advertising. This production will give some history and education about our community and will take a couple of months to complete.

Councilmember Bagley asked about the timeline, and Mayor Taylor indicated they would be writing scripts and then one day of video. They picked us out of several cities competing for this opportunity. Councilmember Larson stated this reminded him of the Gold Museum movie, which may offer some references.

#### BOARDS & COMMITTEES:

1. Cemetery Committee—August 2022

Chris Worick, Committee Chairman

Mayor Taylor announced the report, and Ms. Jane Mellor, the Vice Chair of the Committee, stated the information was in the packet, and Chairman Worick was working in the Cemetery this afternoon.

2. Downtown Dahlenega – August 2022

Ariel Alexander, Downtown Manager

Mayor Taylor announced the item and invited Manager Alexander to the podium.

Manager Alexander stated she had the exciting news that a food truck was added to the First Friday concert in October. She said that Downtown Dahlenega was participating in the Chamber's State of Economic Development luncheon and giving out awards to businesses who have excelled in specific categories. They are accepting nominations for those awards.

Council discussed various signage concerns around town and how information comes from the Downtown Dahlenega board. There was some question and discussion about the 147 N Park Street Committee property movement. They also discussed the progression of the Parking Committee in preparation for the high tourism season. Council also asked for additional information for the upcoming walkabout on Thursday.

#### TOURISM: Sam McDuffie, Tourism Director

3. DLCVB Tourism Report

Sam McDuffie, Tourism Director

Mayor Taylor invited Director McDuffie to the podium, and he referred to the submitted report and asked if there were any additional questions.

Council thanked Director McDuffie for his report. They discussed ways to increase tourism dollars, such as lodging. The report Director McDuffie referenced showed that some counties have more short-term rentals and hotels and more seating in the eating establishments. They discussed the numbers of visitors over the past couple of years and expected 2019 numbers or above for this year. Director McDuffie added that they built a visitor profile to find where folks are coming from.

#### DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

4. Community Development – August 2022

Jameson Kinley, Planning and Zoning Administrator

5. Dahlenega Police Department – August 2022

George Albert, Chief of Police

6. Finance and Administration Department - August 2022

Allison Martin, Finance Director

7. Public Works - August 2022

Mark Buchanan, PW Director/City Engineer

8. Water & Wastewater Treatment Department Report - August 2022

John Jarrard, Water/Wastewater Treatment Director

Mayor Taylor reminded Council that they received the reports before the meeting.

She discussed the wastewater situation in Jackson, Mississippi, and commended our superintendent because Dahlonoga is paying close attention to the maintenance to protect the water supply. She thanked that department for their diligence in keeping our water safe.

Councilmember Gaddis requested an update on the Head House project. Director Martin informed the council that the low voltage would not cable for another two weeks, and the project is on pause. Once the cabling is complete, McCallan will need to patch the walls. There is a delay in custom millwork, and they should anticipate a couple of weeks of uncertainty. Landscaping is included in the project. Council had a deeper conversation regarding the Head House utilities, sidewalks, and the maintenance of the roads around it.

Council discussed the Department of Natural Resources Affidavit. Chief Albert responded that the affidavit was to reaffirm there was no hunting without permission on City Property and that it would be bow only. They also discussed the most recent event, Trail fest. Most agreed that the turnout was not as large as anticipated. There was a discussion regarding the upcoming backflow ordinance and trash pick-up after events. A discussion of the maintenance and security of the upcoming restrooms at Lake Zwerner was also had.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

9. LOST - Local Option Sales Tax

JoAnne Taylor, Mayor

Mayor Taylor announced that the City has met with the mediator, and there will be a joint meeting on October 3, which is open to the public when in joint session.

10. Resolution 2022-15 and Intergovernmental Agreement for use and distribution of proceeds generated by the 2023 transportation special purpose local option sales tax referendum

Doug Parks, City Attorney

Mayor Taylor introduced the item and turned the thing over to the City Attorney.

City Attorney Parks spoke of the existing TSPLOT, which is ending. The recommendations for the City and County split and projects either party has decided to entertain. The IGA identifies who pays expenses and when and limits comingling of funds for certain elements. This IGA is for the full five years, which was changed during the last legislative session in May and contains provisions about who pays expenses of the election. City Attorney Parks commended the County for taking the election costs. He also reviewed the expenses of debt in this project. The debt will be joint debt; there will also be some debt in County projects but no debt in the City projects. He invited Director Martin to comment on the process. She explained she felt it was important not to treat the TSPLOST as the previous one was done as the debt was backloaded, which meant that for the last eight months, there had been no TSPLOST. This has been structured so that the city will not have a check for three months each year. For the full life of the five years, we will have adequate funding. We ensured that any proceeds or residual funds under the estimated budget would be applied to the debt

fund service. Mayor Taylor reminded Council that the reason for explaining this was because this item is on the Special Called meeting.

11. Ordinance 2022-12: Ordinance to allow for commercial walking tours of Mount Hope Cemetery.

Doug Parks, City Attorney

Mayor Taylor introduced the item and said it would be voted on at the next meeting. She then turned the item over to City Attorney Parks, who stated this was a suggestion, and they put together some recommendations for regulations for walking tours. He indicated he was looking for feedback on what direction to go.

Council thanked City Attorney Parks for the work and wanted to ensure the Ordinance reflected their desire to respect those buried in the cemetery and their families and allow the company to conduct tours respectfully. One Councilmember had recent visitors who took the tour, and they said everyone had a flashlight, stayed on concrete, and the tour guide was clear to explain to keep off the grass. They said it was more historical and not a ghost tour.

Mayor Taylor asked for this item to be at the next meeting.

12. Ordinance 2022-13 - Cross-connection

Mark Buchanan, City Engineer & John Jarrard, JWS

Mayor Taylor asked John Jarrard to come to the podium.

Mr. Jarrard explained that the Ordinance is mainly for industrial/commercial usage. Protections are already in place for residential housing. These items are installed before the building and before the Planning department. These units need to be tested every year by a qualified tester. This plan has met EPD approval and should be assigned outside the Water Department. This item is already budgeted.

Mayor Taylor added that this is to meet new regulations.

13. Choice Street Parking Lot Resurfacing

Vince Hunsinger, Capital Projects Manager

Mayor Taylor stated this was part of the overall planning for the completion of Head House. Discussion for this item and item 14 – Choice Street Sidewalk were comingled. Manager Hunsinger indicated that the bid opening is scheduled for 9/23, and he would have the numbers before the next council meeting.

Council expressed concern regarding paving the parking area when discussions were underway for improving the parking in the city and decking. Manager Hunsinger explained that this work was being done relative to the Head House Project, and the lower lot had not been resurfaced since the 70s. With the commercial traffic, parking use, hotel work, and other work in the area over the last few years, there was a need to resurface the lower lot.

14. Project # 2021-019 Choice Street Sidewalk

Vince Hunsinger, Capital Project Manager

15. Proposed Construction Easement Pinetree Way

Allison Martin, Finance Director

Mayor Taylor introduced the item and offered the item to Director Martin, who stated the County requested to grant a temporary construction easement. At the same time, they

and the Board of Education improved Pinetree Way. The document presented to Council in the packet is a draft document as the City Attorney is reviewing the document.

Councilmember Larson asked the City and County to look at the continued backup for traffic going into Zaxby's. Other members of the Council expressed concern and desired to see a site plan. Director Martin stated she knew Director Buchanan had been looking at this and would email him and forward the response to Council. Council asked to see the traffic loop plan. Director Martin stated she would ask Larry (Civil Engineer) to send that over. She added there was also a report on the number of students and staff members arriving and departing, and Council asked if they could have a presentation on that.

Councilmember Reagin left chambers at 5:01 pm

16. Intergovernmental Service Agreement – Downtown Development Authority

Allison Martin, Finance Director

Mayor Taylor announced the item, and Director Martin approached the podium and stated this was a renewal of an existing document for last year. Councilmember Larson requested a summary of the total amount of hotel-motel tax as part of the 3% that stays with the city and how it is being used. Mayor Taylor stated she had requested ideas for using TPD funds, and Director McDuffie plans to send a list of good tourism items.

17. Resolution 2022-14 - FY22 Budget Amendment for Additional Tourism Funds

Allison Martin, Finance Director

Mayor Taylor introduced the item, and Director Martin explained they originally budgeted \$461,394 for hotel/motel tax receipts, and YTD is \$601,000. Statutorily have a requirement to pay for that service. We have additional money that can be used for TPD. The restroom project at the visitor's center came in about double. Director McDuffie and the tourism committee can contribute another \$25,000 to the project, bringing their total to \$105,000. They have a funding gap of \$25K. Our recommendation is to put \$25,000 into the project. Councilmember Gaddis said to do it; we've talked about it for eight years.

18. 2023 Employee Benefits Program

Allison Martin, Finance Director

Matt Bidwell, MSI Benefits Group, Inc.

Mayor Taylor introduced the item and turned it over to Director Martin, who stated they received a notice from GMA in August for a 20% premium increase for employee health insurance. She added that they have been working with our broker, had taken it to market, and received one insurance company that returned with an 8% renewal. GMA has come back with some options and recommends staying with GMA based on pool benefits. We have a high loss run at 135%, and companies like 80% account for the high renewal.

The council discussed the benefits of being in a pool and the city's payment portion.

COMMENTS – PLEASE LIMIT TO THREE MINUTES

City Clerk Csukas reminded the Council of the Employee appreciation on Oct 7<sup>th</sup>. The volunteer sign-up sheet will go out via email. Also, the GMRC October Fall Conference is on October 27<sup>th</sup>, and we will supply dinner. The Christmas Party is on December 8<sup>th</sup> at Camp Glisson.

City Manager Comments- out of the office

City Attorney- no comments this evening.

#### City Council Comments

Councilmember Shirley thanked staff for the work they have going on, many projects, and things important to the community. This weekend we have significant events, including the Six Gap Bicycle Race, and the College has Boars Head weekend for Cadet Corp.

Councilmember Ariemma stated he would be out of town at the GMA training class. He noted he would not be making the walk around but to note the bottom of the telephone pole at Park St as it is uncovered, and wires are sticking out of it.

Councilmember Gaddis had no additional comments.

Councilmember Larson had no additional comments.

Councilmember Bagley stated Lumpkin County football has 4-0 with a home game this weekend, come out and support them.

Mayor Taylor had no additional comment.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Taylor called for adjournment at 5:21 pm.

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis, Seconded by Councilmember Larson.

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