



# CITY OF DAHLONEGA

## Council Meeting Minutes

July 05, 2022, 6:00 PM

Gary McCullough 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 Johnny Ariemma  
Councilmember Ryan Reagin  
Councilmember Ross Shirley  
Absent:  
Councilmember Lance Bagley  
Councilmember Roman Gaddis

### CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Mayor called the meeting to order at 6 pm and thanked members of the audience for attending.

### PRAYER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

Councilmember Ariemma was asked to lead the pledge. The Mayor asked for a moment of silent prayer to heal the divides in our country.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor asked for a motion to move item 6 to another agenda.

Motion made by Councilmember Larson, Seconded by Councilmember Ariemma.

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

### PUBLIC COMMENT – PLEASE LIMIT TO THREE MINUTES

Mayor read a letter submitted to her from another citizen: The letter from Shirley Pruitt Carlisle stated, "Dear City Councilmembers, I am writing to express my concerns regarding nighttime ghost tours being conducted within the Mt. Hope Cemetery by a local business in Dahlonega. I was born and raised in Dahlonega. I have family living in Dahlonega and visit whenever I can. I try as much as possible, living out of state, to remain engaged with the community and support Mt. Hope Cemetery's preservation efforts. My grandparents, Jacob M Pruitt and Olivia Anderson Pruitt are buried there. Their son and my uncle Walter Lee Pruitt served in World War I. He died in France in the 1918 pandemic and was buried in France. In 1922, his family, Mike Lanier, had him reinterred at Mt. Hope to have him close at hand and surrounded by his family. It was that important to them. I believe that the cemetery should not be used as a commercial endeavor in this fashion. Mt. Hope Cemetery is not a place of entertainment. It is the final resting place of our

ancestors and loved ones and should be a place of dignity and respect. Commercial operations should not be allowed past the stated visiting hours. I trust that Dahlonge City Council will make a fair decision and put an end to commercial tours at night. Please treat this cemetery as you would your family's final resting place to be treated with sovereign reverence and respect. Sincerely, Shirley Pruitt Carlisle.”

Mr. Terry Grizzle introduced himself as a cemetery committee member and thanked the Council for allowing him to serve in that capacity and for allowing him to speak. Mr. Grizzle feels this is a considerable liability risk and should not be taken lightly. He reminded Council that all plots and headstones are private property, and it is the City's responsibility to prevent accidental damage by vandalism. He feels this is in poor taste. He asked who would enforce the rules set by the special permit, the consequences, and who would be responsible for the damage. He is against the tours in Mt. Hope Cemetery. Mr. Grizzle wants to preserve the respect and honor of those buried.

Chris Worick introduced himself as the chair of the cemetery committee. Mr. Worick is opposed to allowing visitors into Mt. Hope Cemetery past the regular visiting hours. Mr. Worick discussed respect for those buried, safety and security, and vandalism.

An unidentified third Gentleman favors allowing the tours in the cemetery to promote tourism downtown. His impression is that the tours are done respectfully, and he hopes the Council supports entrepreneurial businesses. It gives people a reason to come downtown.

Ms. Penny Sharpe introduced herself as the owner of Dahlonge Walking Tours. She thanked the Council for hearing her request to amend the current special permit. She explained the history of her tours and the tour section involving Mt. Hope Cemetery. Her concerns involve the portion of the permit she currently holds that requires her to have the tour no later than 30 minutes after sunset.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. City Council Meeting Minutes June 6, 2022, Danna Foster, Assistant City Clerk
- b. Council Work Session Minutes June 20, 2022, Danna Foster, Assistant City Clerk
- c. City Council Special Called Meeting Minutes, June 20, 2022, Danna Foster, Assistant City Clerk

Mayor Taylor identified each meeting's minutes and called for a motion to approve all minutes. Motion made by Councilmember Ariemma to approve all three, Seconded by Councilmember Reagin.

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

#### APPOINTMENT/RECOGNITION

1. Officer Recognition- Christopher Weeks, George Albert, Chief of Police  
Mayor Taylor read the recognition of Officer Weeks, highlighting the recovery of a stolen \$1500 bicycle and a citizen contact that aided the LCSO in recovering over \$5,000.00 of

jewelry and a stolen gun. These items were returned to their rightful owners. Chief Albert also reported to Council Officer Weeks' involvement with a visitor whose car broke down that he assisted by getting them to the auto parts store. Chief Albert also spoke to Officer Weeks' heart for serving and commended him for his service. A photo opportunity was taken.

#### ORDINANCE AND RESOLUTION:

2. Resolution 2022-11 - Authorization to Use Purchase Card Program, Allison Martin, Finance Director

Mayor Taylor introduced the item. Director Martin directed that there were no changes since the Work Session.

Motion made by Councilmember Ariemma to approve, Seconded by Councilmember Reagin. Mayor discussed that these cards would make travel much more manageable. Voting Yea: Councilmember Larson, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley

3. Resolution 2022-12 - Resolution to Authorize Changes to Georgia Fund 1 Authorized Users, Allison Martin, Finance Director

Director Martin explained this was correcting a clerical issue.

Motion made by Councilmember Shirley to approve, Seconded by Councilmember Larson. Mayor discussed that these cards would make travel much more manageable.

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

4. Ordinance 2022-09: State Standards Adoption for Construction, Doug Parks, City Attorney

Mayor Taylor introduced the item. City Attorney Parks presented that the city routinely updates current building codes to give the city building inspector a foundation.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion.

Motion made by Councilmember Shirley to approve, Seconded by Councilmember Ariemma.

Administrator Kinley explained the codes are generally updated annually by the ICC. Georgia adopts the codes every three years based on the time for the information to be processed and approved.

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

#### ANNOUNCEMENT/CITY REPORTS:

5. Financial Report - May 2022, Allison Martin, Finance Director

Director Martin presented the report.

Mayor Taylor asked for any questions about the report.

Councilmember Ariemma commented that the numbers were exceptional.

He asked for clarification on the DDA's fund, and Director Martin explained that the DDA always maintains a fund balance. Larson also expressed his appreciation for the finance department and the professionalism of city staff in handling the public's tax dollars.

#### OLD BUSINESS:

6. Housing Needs Assessment, JoAnne Taylor, Mayor – Removed
7. Cemetery Visitation Permit - Dahlonaga Walking Tours, Jameson Kinley, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Mayor Taylor expounded that the discussion point for the Council was whether to extend the visiting hours for the Cemetery. Councilmember Larson asked Ms. Sharpe to clarify her requested amendment. Ms. Sharpe explained she was asking to amend the hours to be a set time.

Motion made by Councilmember Ariemma to approve with the stipulation that signage will say they have to have a permit to be in the Cemetery after closing. Seconded by Councilmember Shirley.

Councilmember Larson explained having been on the Council for almost seven years, this has come to us numerous times in the past. He feels the council should appreciate the Cemetery Committee's feedback and take their comments and concerns seriously. He expressed this item has been the item he has been most contacted about in his seven years. He said he worries about other people seeing people in the cemetery and then going in without a permit. Councilmember Ariemma indicated he did not make his decision lightly. He has been on tour, and she follows the guidelines of her tours. He thinks there's a misconception about the tour. Councilmember Reagin added he had been on the tour, and it was respectful.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley  
Voting Nay: Councilmember Larson

#### NEW BUSINESS:

8. FY2023 City Manager's Proposed Budget, Bill Lewis, Interim City Manager  
Mayor Taylor introduced the item.

Director Martin brought the proposed budget on behalf of Interim City Manager Lewis. She explained this is a balanced budget with conservative spending plans, and she did not have the Milage rate information yet but will be shared it once that information is ready. Director Martin explained the net budget:

- No utility increases for retail customers.
- Proposed to add the following positions: police officer, full-time trainee for the water department, and one employee for cross-connection and backflow.
- Continue to fund a 5-year capital improvement fund.
- Does not reflect an increase in employee salaries due to trends toward recession.

The Mayor asked if this budget currently represents the code enforcement officer position, and it does. The Mayor also asked about the public hearing date, and Director Martin shared those dates with the Council.

## COMMENTS – PLEASE LIMIT TO THREE MINUTES

There were no additional comments from the City Clerk.

The City Manager requested the outstanding surveys for City Manager qualities so that the Carl Vinson Institute can further the search for a permanent city manager.

City Attorney Parks voiced appreciation for the Dahlonega Police Department.

Councilmember Shirley talked about the items he learned at the GMA Conference and said that he feels the city operates professionally. He also appreciated Downtown Dahlonega's efforts during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend.

Councilmember Ariemma expressed his appreciation for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend and suggested that the roads be cleared earlier for the end of the fireworks.

Councilmember Larson also commended the Downtown Dahlonega team for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend and voiced some concerns about traffic control. Additionally, he requested an update for the Head House. Director Martin said that the projected completion date remains at the end of August, and all landscaping and sidewalks will be completed.

Councilmember Reagin voiced his appreciation for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities and requested that the Visitor's Center bathrooms be opened earlier in the day for the 5K race.

The Mayor noted the Visitor's Center Bathrooms would be renovated beginning in August. She expressed her gratitude as well for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend.

## ADJOURNMENT

The Mayor called for the meeting to be adjourned at 7 pm.

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