



CITY OF DAHLONEGA

Council Work Session Minutes

November 21, 2019, 4:00 p.m.

<p>PRESENT Mayor Sam Norton Council Member Bruce Hoffman Council Member Helen Hardman Council Member JoAnne Taylor Council Member Mitchel Ridley Council Member Roman Gaddis Council Member Ron Larson</p>	<p>PRESENT City Manager Bill Schmid City Clerk Mary Csukas Director Melody Marlowe Director Mark Buchanan Director Kevin Herrit Superintendent John Jarrard Assistant Director Kimberly Stafford</p>	<p>PRESENT City Attorney Doug Parks Director Shannon Ferguson Tourism Director Sam McDuffie Chamber Present Rob Nichols</p>
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OPEN MEETING

Mayor Norton called the Work Session to order at 4:02 p.m.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

1. City Marshal’s Department Report - October 2019
 - Completed end of year compliance checks for alcohol server permits.
 - Finalizing road closure plans for the upcoming Christmas Parade and the annual Lighting of the Square.
2. Community Development Department Report – October 2019
 - Hotel under construction on Choice street is placing stormwater pipes in the hotel and will be hooked to the City system this week.
 - Mayor asked if there are any modifications to the original plans concerning the hotel on Choice Street, and the response was no changes.
 - Mayor Norton stated that the plans for the hotel on Choice street had been on display in the Council Chambers.
 - Mayor Norton congratulated Director Herrit and his department on an outstanding job handling business license compliance with only three of 453 business licenses outstanding in Dahlonega.
 - Director Herrit informed Council that plans for apartments on Vickery Street have been received by the Community Development Department.
 - Council Member Gaddis was informed that the ADU’s are being reviewed and will go to the planning commission in January 2020.
 - Director Herrit informed Council Member Ridley that six apartments were under construction on Riley Road, and one newly constructed house is also on this property. The Brooksre property has been sold and the new owners have a setback variance that will go to the Board of Zoning Appeal for remodeling plans.
3. Downtown Development Authority Department Report - October 2019
 - Director Ferguson Informed Council that her comprehensive department report had not changed since the last Council Meeting.
 - The Head House property’s third property cleaning project is moving forward as expected, and signage will be installed to promote the retail availability at this site.
 - Christmas is upon us, and we are lucky to have many volunteers to assist with the coming events. City Manager Schmid has been informed that the tent issue was resolved administratively.

4. Financial Services Department Report – October 2019
Director Marlowe honored Angi McDonald, who has completed her Level 2 Certified Local Government Finance Officers training through the Carl Vinson Institute. This prestigious program takes many hours of training and years of dedication, and we are very proud of Angi for her accomplishment.

5. Public Works Department Report - October 2019
 - Director Buchanan informed Council that the Mechanic street sidewalk project is moving along with completion by Friday. Columbarium bids will be accepted tomorrow, November 22, and asphalt bids will be accepted on December 18, 2019.
 - During a recent joint meeting with the City of Dahlonega, GDOT and Lumpkin County, there was a strong indication of a round-about at Grove and Oak Grove, this is a City, GDOT and Lumpkin county project. Mayor Norton states that the round-about project timeline is possibly Summer 2020 with the kids out of school.
 - Council Member Taylor wondered if there was a possibility of eliminating the pigeons at the Dive Bell through the assistance of the Falconry at Turners Corner. Director Buchanan understands the need to find a solution to the issues of pigeons at the Dive Bell.
 - City Manager Schmid asked for a follow up to the Barlow Road stormwater project shown in the monthly report. Currently, this project has escalated and will be out for bids soon. Director Buchanan is looking for LMIG funding from GDOT to assist with this project as it is expensive.

6. Water & Wastewater Treatment Department Report - October 2019
 - Water Plant Superintendent Jarrard informed Council that the Achasta lift station bid process is ongoing with five bids, and Turnipseed is reviewing the bids, and we expect a response by December so we may present to Council at the next work session.
 - Superintendent Jarrard reminded Council that City Manager Schmid spearheaded a Capital improvement project five years ago to rehab the five stations with the same motor and pump to allow for compatibility. The rehab project is an ongoing project that is at the half waypoint.
 - The City Bottled Water is expected by December 5 to distribute by December 7 for the Christmas events, with a minimum order of 10 pallets.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEE'S:

7. Cemetery Committee October 2019
Chairman Chris Worick, will be at the War of 1812 Event in Mt Hope Cemetery at 2 p.m. on Sunday. This event will involve the firing of muskets. The Downtown Development Authority will be present at this event.

8. Tourism Board Report - October 2019
Director McDuffie's report has been distributed to the Council and Mayor with highlights as follows;
 - Newsletter subscribers have increased by 8000.
 - Facebook followers have increased by 14,000 with the assistance of Pineapple PR.
 - Instagram influencer this past weekend is up by 85%.
 - Fox Business interview to discuss the Winery industry in Dahlonega and Tourism.
 - Tourism focus on hotels will be on small groups to the Dahlonega area.
 - Christmas Filming will take place in town on December 15th, 16th, and 17th.
 - Chamber President Nichols stated that currently, the Chamber site is data-oriented, which is not necessarily suitable for tourism viewing. Director McDuffie is looking for an alternative. Booking reservations from the site is something we are looking for to enhance our site.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

9. Flexible Spending Account (FSA) Bank Account

- Assistant Finance Director Stafford informed Council that the City would be offering the FSA account to eligible employees in 2020. The Finance Department is requesting approval to open a banking account to facilitate these transactions.
- Director Marlowe stated that the Flexible Spending Account is a mechanism that is authorized by the Internal Revenue Service, which allows pre-taxed money to be saved by the employee for medical expenses not covered by their insurance. The City will withhold payment for an employee that must be used within the calendar year, but up to \$500.00 can be rolled over to the next calendar year.
- The City engaged a third party to handle the disbursement of these funds, so there is a small cost to the City that is offset by the pre-taxed savings.

10. Ordinance to allow licensed farm wineries to conduct sidewalk wine tastings

- City Attorney Parks informed Council that to allow Farm Winery's portion of the sidewalk for wine tasting, other criteria and changes will be needed that would allow the Farm Winery the same standings as a restaurant with a consumption on premise alcoholic beverage license. The configuration of the retail business and the allotted sidewalk will be a factor in permitting each tasting room in Dahlonega access to this outside wine tasting. We are asking for direction to move forward with making the necessary changes to the zoning ordinance to make this happen.
- Council Member Ridley stated that this is a tool to enhance the downtown area. The Council, Chamber President, and Tourism Director concur with moving this process forward. Mayor Norton is pleased that we use caution as we move forward with this concept and hope to have something in place by Spring 2020.

11. Resolution Approving 2019 Municipal General Election and Special Election Results

- City Attorney Parks informed Council that Lumpkin County handled the General Election and Special Election with official results posted. This Resolution will be a tool to establish permanent results through the City of Dahlonega for election results. The election results will be presented for vote at the Special Called Meeting following this Work Session.
- Mayor Norton welcomed Johnny Ariemma as a newly elected Council Member who will be sworn in at the Regular Council Meeting on January 6, 2020.

12. Proposed Tourism Board Changes to the Bylaws

- City Manager Schmid led a discussion with the Council and Mayor concerning the Tourism Board Bylaws.
- Council Member Hardman is opposed to the bylaws. The tourism board will be a part of the Chamber and report to the Chamber. They are not independent, and only a committee, and this concept goes against what initially was perceived when we built the board. A Chamber Director is accountable to its members while the Tourism Director is accountable to the City and or County. These are two completely different initiatives, and we need edits to the bylaws.
- Chamber President Nichols stated that to make the Tourism Board independent, it will need a separate 501C, and I am open to a discussion with the Council.
- Council Member Gaddis and Ridley understands these bylaws to be a compromise with the one umbrella idea, and it achieves this goal.
- City Manager Schmid and Mayor Norton stated that the Lumpkin County Chamber contract with the City of Dahlonega would not be affected by the tourism bylaws as these are internal to the Tourism Board. Council Member Gaddis stated the Council is not required to vote on these bylaws as we have a representative currently on the Tourism Board.

13. Water System Projects Update

City Manager Schmid informed Council that initiatives are in place to update the City's Water System Master Plan.

COMMENTS

Clerk Comments

Consumption on Premise Alcoholic Beverage renewal applications are complete except for Kingwood International Resort in Achasta.

City Manager Comments

Department Director Reports will be on the Work Session only going forward, and Department Directors will attend Regular Council Meetings as needed.

City Attorney Comments

City Manager Schmid and City Attorney Parks will be discussing possible changes to mandate buffer restrictions to allow for development.

City Council Comments

Council Member Taylor is requesting changes to the requirements for membership to the City Boards and Committees.

Mayor Comments

Mayor Norton reminded everyone to be grateful for all that we have in this season of Thanksgiving.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Norton adjourned the meeting at 5:05 p.m.