



CITY OF DAHLONEGA

Council Meeting Minutes

June 05, 2023, 6:00 PM

Gary McCullough 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.

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.

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Mayor Taylor called the City Council Meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

PRESENT

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

ABSENT

Councilmember Ryan Reagin

PRAYER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

Mayor Taylor asked Councilmember Larson to lead the Prayer.

Mayor Taylor asked Councilmember Gaddis to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve the agenda.

Motion made by Councilmember Larson, Seconded by Councilmember Bagley.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT – PLEASE LIMIT TO THREE MINUTES

Mr. Todd Garrick asked if the open container ordinance could be updated.

Mr. Jim Guy thanked the Mayor and the City Council for all their efforts and hard work. He expressed concerns about the leap in property taxes and how he thinks people are not paying their fair share. He shared his opinions on how local government is essential.

Mrs. Kathy Glendon argued her statement on tax issues. She states that she supports education in her community and voluntarily pays school taxes.

Mrs. Susan Garrick asked for the open container ordinance to be updated. She then read a letter from Angela Wilson, owner of Dahlonega Tasting Room, stating that the open container ordinance should be updated.

Mrs. Sabrina Walker asked if the open container ordinance could be updated.

Mrs. Deb Rowe supports the open-container alcohol ordinance being updated.

Mrs. Kim suggested ideas for doing a trial run of the open container ordinance. She supports the idea of updating the open container ordinance.

Mr. Mike Feagin suggests putting the open container ordinance on a ballot. He voices his opinion on his concerns about the contractors listed on the agenda. He suggests putting a railing on the new sidewalk for safety along North Grove Street.

Mr. Jim Griffin states that he supports business owners regarding the open container ordinance. He suggests multiple ideas to the council about zoning, traffic, city/county relationships, and going to outside investors and contractors to improve Dahlonega.

Mrs. Marsha Bennett suggests there should be “common sense alcohol laws” when updating the open container ordinance.

Mrs. Penny Sharpe asked for the open container ordinance to be updated and for the liquor license to be reviewed.

Mr. Tom Gaudier suggested alternatives to the leak protection program policy. He indicates that restaurants should put bars outside on the third Thursday of the month if updating the open container ordinance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve Emergency Special Called Meeting Minutes Executive Session Litigation - March 28, 2023, City Council Special Called Meeting Minutes - March 29, 2023, Council Meeting Minutes - May 1, 2023, City Council Public Hearing Minutes - May 15, 2023, Clerk City Council Work Session Minutes - May 15, 2023

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis, Seconded by Councilmember Ariemma.

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

- a. Emergency Special Called Meeting Minutes, Executive Session Litigation - March 28, 2023
Mary Csukas, City Clerk
- b. City Council Special Called Meeting Minutes - March 29, 2023
Mary Csukas, City Clerk
- c. Council Meeting Minutes - May 1, 2023
Mary Csukas, City Clerk
- d. City Council Public Hearing Minutes - May 15, 2023
Mary Csukas, City Clerk
- e. City Council Work Session Minutes - May 15, 2023
Mary Csukas, City Clerk

APPOINTMENT, PROCLAMATION & RECOGNITION:

1. Quataunda Armstrong – Swearing-in Ceremony as Voting Member of the Cemetery Committee, Chris Worick – Chairman Cemetery Committee

Mr. Worick swore in Quataunda Armstrong as a voting member of the cemetery committee.

2. Proclamation - City Clerk Week May 1-7, 2023

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve the Proclamation for City Clerk Week May 1-7, 2023.

Motion made by Councilmember Larson, Seconded by Councilmember Gaddis.

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

3. Proclamation - American Legion Auxiliary National Poppy Day

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve the Proclamation for the American Legion Auxiliary National Poppy Day.

Motion made by Councilmember Larson, Seconded by Councilmember Shirley.

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

4. Holly Theatre Presentation to the City, Ivana Pelnar-Zaiko, Chairman Emerita, Holly Theatre Community Center, Inc.

Ivana Pelnar-Zaiko informed the public of The Holly Theatre's 75th anniversary on July 9, 2023.

Chairman Emerita thanked City Hall employees for their hard work in the city. He recognized the public works department and provided those employees with two tickets for their upcoming plays.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Taylor stated that Dahlonega is the #1 Historic City in Georgia and mentioned that Dahlonega is one of the best and coolest small towns in the United States. Mayor Taylor notes that the information is from TravelCurator.com and Southern Living Magazine. Mayor Taylor thanks the City Council, Historical Preservation, Tourism Director, Tourism Board, Historic Preservation Commission, and Volunteers for making these accolades in Dahlonega, GA.

CITY REPORTS:

5. Financial Report - April 2023, Allison Martin, City Manager

City Manager Martin reviewed the April 2023 Financial Report.

- Sales Tax remained strong despite a slight decline in April.
- Permit Revenue is year-to-date greater than last year. Department Expenditure is in line with budget expectations.
- Downtown Developmental Authority's operational results are exceedingly slight.
- The Hotel/Motel Tax fund failed this month to trend by 2.41% less than FY22 but is still trending higher than previous pandemic numbers.
- Water and Sewer Funds are trending with budget projections.
- Department Expenses are in line with the budget.
- The Solid Waste Fund and the Stormwater Enterprise Fund are stable.
- Our most significant capital project is underway.

A discussion was had between councilmember Ariemma and City Manager Martin about the decline in numbers for April. City Manager Martin states that numbers should increase in the upcoming months.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve the April 2023 Financial Report.

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis, Seconded by Councilmember Larson.

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

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

6. Ordinance 2023-01: Zoning Map Amendment - James and Joann Gribben on behalf of Applegate Cottages, LLC (Parcel No. D07-065), Doug Parks, City Attorney

City Attorney Parks informed the council that a prior application had been submitted to rezone Parcel No. D07-065, from R1 to R2. At the most recent meeting, the council was

asked to continue deliberating on the ordinance in favor of requesting a report from the City's outside zoning consultant. The conclusion was that R2 zoning should be approved with the stipulation that any changes to the land or structure must adhere to regular City standards and laws. He requests that the council accept Ordinance 2023-01 with that additional requirement.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve Ordinance 2023-01.

Motion made by Councilmember Shirley, Seconded by Councilmember Larson.

Mayor Taylor called for any further questions about the matter.

A discussion was had between City Attorney Parks and City Councilmembers about the concerns and rules of the ordinance and about Parcel No. D07-065.

Councilmember Shirley withdrew the motion, Seconded by Councilmember Larson.

Mayor Taylor motioned to continue this topic at the next meeting.

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis, Seconded by Councilmember Ariemma.

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

7. Ordinance 2023-05: Zoning Changes Pursuant to HB 1405, Doug Parks, City Attorney

The City Attorney Parks says this is something the City Council has seen several times before at other meetings. The changes are regarding the mandatory zoning changes outlined in HB 1405. The changes include

- (1) Annexation procedures;
- (2) language to be included in a Public Hearing Notice;
- (3) appeal shall be brought within 30 days of the written decision of the appeal;
- (4) designation of officer for the perfection of service. Not required by HB 1405, but added is a requirement for a pre-application meeting prior to filing a request for a zoning decision.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve Ordinance 2023-05: Zoning Changes Pursuant to HB 1405

Motion made by Councilmember Bagley, Seconded by Councilmember Larson.

Mayor Taylor called for further discussion.

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

CONTRACTS & AGREEMENTS:

8. Project # 2023-009 North Grove Sidewalk Construction, Vince Hunsinger, Capital Project Manager

Capital Project Manager Hunsinger spoke about Project 2023-009. It is a sidewalk from the stoplight at Pueblos Restaurant to Subway along N. Grove Street. He has deemed this to be a TSPLOST project.

Mayor Taylor mentioned the public comment about the railing on this sidewalk.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve the transfer of adequate funds, thereby amending the North Grove sidewalk budget to \$275,000 and awarding the project to Hasbun Construction.

Councilmember Larson and Bagley questioned the budget funds for this project.

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis, Seconded by Councilmember Larson.

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

9. Servline Leak Protection Program, Allison Martin, City Manager

City Manager Martin declares Servline Leak Protection Program is a program that the City of Dahlongega has been looking at for several months. As a courtesy, the city partially adjusts the bill for both water and sewer when a request for a leak adjustment is submitted. The adjustment amount varies per account, but this results in not only lost revenue for the city but leaves the customer with dissatisfaction and, in some cases, a payment plan to cover their portion of the leak.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve the agreement with ServLine and offer the \$500 limit for water and sewer for residential customers.

Motion made by Councilmember Ariemma, Seconded by Councilmember Larson.

Mayor Taylor called for further discussion.

A discussion was had between City Manager Martin and Councilmembers Shirley, Councilmember Ariemma, and Councilmember Gaddis about the terms, agreements, and price of the program.

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

10. CPL Consulting Proposal

Allison Martin, City Manager

City Manager Martin states that the CPL Proposal is due to a planning and zoning administrator vacancy. As part of reviewing the delivery of Community Development Services, staff researched several options related to providing these services to our citizens and those that wish to invest in our community. Using a professional firm with staff trained in planning benefits communities. They will have the skill sets to help us with the ordinances in-house, which will also save some money.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to retain CPL for consultant services as outlined in the attached proposal.

Motion made by Councilmember Larson, Seconded by Councilmember Bagley.

Mayor Taylor called for further discussion.

Councilmember Larson tells the audience that this came before the Work Session a couple of weeks ago and has had a lot of dialogue and discussion.

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

11. Charles Abbott and Associates – Agreement for Services

Allison Martin, City Manager

City Manager Martin states that Charles Abbott and Associates is requested as a contract for renewal. They currently inspect the commercial projects in our community. This service will allow the city to increase code enforcement staff, take a shared administration position, and dedicate it entirely to police operations.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve Charles Abbott and Associates - Agreement for Services.

Motion made by Councilmember Larson, Seconded by Councilmember Gaddis.

Mayor Taylor called for further discussion.

Councilmember Bagley mentioned how this could benefit this small community and asked when the termination would be on this service.

Councilmember Sherly says he was looking at the two options for adopting this service, and he asked what the impact is. He also voiced his concerns about how significant a considerable increase was.

Councilmember Ariemma says that we have had a hard time finding the right people, and he says that he would prefer to do things internally. He says he agrees with council member Sherly and wanted to know if other cities around us have the same numbers and wanted to know the last time it changed. He also asked what the city would be losing by hiring them.

Councilmember Larson reminded everyone that the contractors that do business with the city say it is difficult to do business with the city. He complimented City Manager Martin for being creative and trying to find a good person for this.

Councilmember Gaddis suggested reviewing more options within the next six months.
Voting Yea: Councilmember Larson, Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Bagley
Voting Nay: Councilmember Shirley

OTHER ITEMS:

12. Leak Protection Program Policy

Allison Martin, City Manager

City Manager Martin states there is an update as part of the transition to the ServLine Leak Program. The City is recommended to adopt a policy that mirrors the plan chosen for our customers. It changes the current policy from a 3-month average to a 2-month average. Not updating the existing policy could cause conflict with the new program and cause the City to continue to write off revenue for specific classes or leaks. It will only become effective after the 90-day rollout.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to adopt the Leak Protection Program Policy as submitted.

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis, Seconded by Councilmember Larson.

Mayor Taylor called for further discussion.

Councilmember Ariemma questioned the probability of getting a leak in the City of Dahlonaga.

Mayor Taylor asked if the Leak Protection Program Policy can opt-in for more coverage.
Voting Yea: Councilmember Larson, Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley

13. Fee Schedule Update – 2023

Allison Martin, City Manager

The fee schedule for the City of Dahlonaga was updated as needed by the council to account for operational costs or mandates increases. The fee schedule has not been updated in at least two years, and should the agreement by Charles Abbot and Associates be accepted?

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to update the fee schedule as presented.

Motion made by Councilmember Larson, Seconded by Councilmember Ariemma.

Mayor Taylor called for further discussion.

Councilmember Ariemma made a statement about raising the fee schedule.

Councilmember Gaddis said that the last time these were changed was in 2009 and asked what determined the low end versus the higher end.

Mayor Taylor told the audience that it would come from the taxpayers if we did not raise the Fee Schedule. She says everything is designed not to have taxpayers pay for things we must do.

Councilmember Bagley asked if Charles Abbot recommended the Fee Schedule or if they were internal.

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

Voting Nay: Councilmember Shirley

COMMENTS – PLEASE LIMIT TO THREE MINUTES

Clerk Comments

City Manager Comments

City Attorney Comments

City Council Comments

Mayor Comments

City Clerk Csukas had no comment.

City Manager Martin had no comment.

City Attorney Parks had no comment.

Councilmember Shirley thanked all who showed up to the City Council Meeting. He states that the Dahlonega Arts and Wine Festival was terrific. He discussed his opinion on the open container ordinance.

Councilmember Ariemma recognized Joel Curdle and John Gaston for attending the City Council Meeting.

Councilmember Gaddis states that the city does not do property evaluations, which is the county's function. He is happy to see the Holly Theatre is running again. He voiced his open-container ordinance concerns.

Councilmember Larson thanked all citizens who showed up to the City Council Meeting. He discussed his concerns about the Open Container Ordinance.

Councilmember Bagley congratulated the University of North Georgia Lady Nighthawks' Softball Team for winning the National Championship. He voices his reasons why citizens enjoy living in Dahlonega without open containers. He appreciates comments from the public.

Mayor Taylor thanked all citizens who came to the City Council Meeting and gave feedback on the Open Container Ordinance.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to adjourn the City Council Meeting at 7:53 P.M.

Motion made by Councilmember Larson, Seconded by Councilmember Gaddis.

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