



# CITY OF DAHLONEGA

## Council Work Session Minutes

November 20, 2023, 4:00 PM

Gary McCullough Council Chambers, Dahlonega City Hall

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Vision – Dahlonega will be the most welcoming, thriving, and inspiring community in North Georgia

Mission Statement - Dahlonega, a City of Excellence, will provide quality services through ethical leadership and fiscal stability, in full partnership with the people who choose to live, work, and visit. Through this commitment, we respect and uphold our rural Appalachian setting to honor our thriving community of historical significance, academic excellence, and military renown.

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### OPEN MEETING

Mayor Taylor opened the Work Session at 4:00 p.m. and informed the Council that the scheduled Public Hearing is postponed until January 2024 due to technical difficulties.

### PRESENT

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

### 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 Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin,  
Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley

DEPARTMENT REPORTS AVAILABLE AT: <https://dahlonega.gov/category/department-reports/>

### BOARD & COMMITTEES

1. Cemetery Committee—October 2023

Chris Worick, Chair, Dahlonega Cemetery Committee

Mayor Taylor informed the Council of the dedicated effort of committee members, volunteers, and UNG students to preserve the cemetery and headstones at Mt. Hope Cemetery. The Cemetery Committee is working with other historic cemeteries in our region to assist with forming committees to preserve these cemeteries.

2. Dahlonega Downtown Development Authority/Main Street – October 2023

Ariel Alexander, Downtown Development Director

Mayor Taylor praised Director Alexander for her outstanding job representing the City of Dahlonega at the recent Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce Luncheon and her organization's endeavors this year.

#### APPOINTMENT, PROCLAMATION & RECOGNITION: (Vote at Council Meeting)

##### 3. Appointment to Downtown Development Authority

Mayor Taylor asked for input from Director Alexander and City Manager Martin on actions needed for appointments to the Downtown Development Authority Board.

City Manager Martin informed the Council that two members of the Board will be stepping down at the end of this year, leaving two vacancies.

Director Alexander updated the Council on two recent applications, Dr. Melanie Dunlap and Anita Wheeler, a local Broker and Real Estate Agent

Councilmember Larson ensured these appointments were to the DDA Board.

#### PRESENTATION

##### 4. TSW Consultant Report - SP #1 - Effectively Manage Growth

The planning firm of TSW gave an overview of their firm and how their expertise can assist Dahlonega with updating Zoning Codes. They outlined the four-part process for updating Zoning codes: Analysis and Listening, Charting a Course, Draft Changes, and Final Updates. Charting a course is essential only if there is community interaction and staff agreement.

Dahlonega's diagnostic report has four parts: Introduction, Process, Findings, and Next Steps. This report will be the road map for understanding what is or is not needed in the community and will be used by all parties involved in updating the zoning code. The creation of this report was manifested by immersing ourselves in Dahlonega's comprehensive plan, zoning codes, housing study, and various other plans and reports, as well as an extensive walkthrough of Dahlonega with staff. This report allowed our team to understand what the Council, staff, and community expect for the future.

The recurring themes have been identified as house affordability and design. Central Business District and Citywide Regulations. The TSW team gave recommendations outlined in the report attached to the agenda packet from this meeting to address these themes. These recommendations are the starting process for the discussion.

The TSW team is looking at a six-month timeline that can only be confirmed with clear directions from the Council to allow code writing. We will have staff involvement and the engagement of a steering community, and then an open house review with citizens.

Councilmember Bagley asked questions about housing in the community

Councilmember Shirley asked questions about housing and use permits.

Councilmember Ariemma was pleased with the presentation and feels our quality of life has turned upside down with the traffic on Morrison Moore Parkway in conjunction with a city of less than 6 square miles. A housing study is essential, as is the number of houses

built. He was informed what worked well and what didn't work well; he wanted to know if there were questions for stakeholders. There were questions and discussions with stakeholders.

Mayor Taylor reminded everyone that our zoning ordinances are out of date and were last revised in 1991, so the Morrison Moore Parkway long-range plan will be a community discussion. She informed the group that the stakeholders that convened with us were from various walks of life: bankers, teachers, churches, etc.

Councilmember Reagin had questions about the presented overlay map that was discussed.

Councilmember Larson inquired into interaction with developers and was informed that is part of our dynamics with this project.

Councilmember Gaddis wondered if manufacturing was part of the zoning for downtowns. He was informed that manufacturing in commercial storefronts allows for candle making, beverages, etc., in CBD but only light manufacturing with hand-held equipment. Also, dwelling accessories will be reviewed to enable R1 and short-term rentals as required. The plan is to look at the big picture of our corridors and entryways.

Councilmember Shirley asked for information on projects handled by this company and was informed that the Statesboro project was comparable to our area.

Councilmember Ariemma believed short-term rentals may be hurting our long-term rentals.

Mayor Taylor discussed the need for hometown and tourist communities with housing for people working there.

Councilmember Bagley applauds this team for a good start.

City Attorney Parks agreed to work on moratorium needs for the current zoning code.

## AGREEMENTS & CONTRACTS

5. GEFA Service Line Inventory Grant Program SP# 2 – Infrastructure, Allison Martin, City Manager

City Manager Martin informed the Council that with the assistance of our grant writers, the city applied for funds from GEFA to aid in the completion of the mandatory federal lead and copper service line inventory and reporting. The city was awarded \$66,000 under this program. GEFA has decided to make this program a draw-down grant and has sent forms for a 100% loan forgiveness program.

Staff met with GEFA last week to ensure this was a program the city should enter. After the meeting, staff recommends proceeding as these dollars are retroactive for any eligible expenditures in the past year and can be used for communication, inventory, and reporting costs the city will incur. Staff recommend the use of this program.

Mayor Taylor reminded the Council that the program's subject matter is lead and copper.

Councilmember Shirley asked about the termination date of the loan; City Manager Martin stated the funds must be used by the October 2024 deadline.

Councilmember Ariemma was informed that the federal government mandates an inventory to determine the service line on the water system side and the customer side. This new inventory requirement is due to a lack of due diligence in other communities.

Councilmember Larson requested moving this item to the consent agenda.

6. GDOT Safety Action Plan 2023-13 – SP #2 – Infrastructure, Vince Hunsinger, Capital Projects Manager

Capital Projects Manager Hunsinger informed the Council of the GDOT - Safety Action Plan Grant that is in place to assist with signage and stripping of the roads and crosswalks in a community for safety-related items on the streets: speed bumps, road signs, approach, and stop bars, etc.

Mayor Taylor reminded the Council this grant had already been awarded to the City.

Councilmember Ariemma and Manager Martin discussed using the requested flashing digital speed signs for the community's safety.

Councilmember Larson recommended moving this item to the consent agenda.

7. Koyo Lift Station Rehabilitation Bid Award – SP #2 – Infrastructure, John Jarrard, JWS

Director Jarrard informed the Council that this is the last large lift station project. It has been on the capital improvement program for several years and is part of the city's program to rehabilitate the older lift stations. This project was included in the FY2024 budget and is slated to start in late spring 2024.

The lowest bid for this project came in just over the budget of \$725,000. The difference can be paid from the contingency funds in the water/sewer fund without adversely impacting the funds' financial position. If the federal budget is approved, the city will receive \$350,000 from congressionally directed spending funds for this project. Director Jarrard discussed the funds, bid process, and needed training for the Lift Station projects now and in the past with the Council and Mayor.

8. 2024 Agreement for Tourism Development Services – Strategic Priority #3 – Communication, Allison Martin, City Manager

City Manager Martin informed the Council and Mayor that feedback and comments from the Lumpkin County Chamber Board and Sam McDuffie, the Executive Director of Tourism, were incorporated into this draft of the 2024 Agreement for Tourism Development Services, most specifically clearly defining the holidays that the visitors and welcome center remained open.

Councilmember Larson praised the parties involved in creating the tourism agreement after many years of struggle.

9. Park Street Construction Inspection Services - Wiedeman and Singleton - SP #2 – Infrastructure, Mark Buchanan, City Engineer/Public Works Director

City Manager Martin and Director Buchannan discussed the many phases of this project and that the council previously approved construction contracts and contingency funds to cover these items in a project. Given the nature and scope of the construction and the desire to reduce liability, the city's staff recommends using outside construction inspection services.

We received a letter proposal from the engineer of record for this project and recommended using their services for the Park Street Utility Replacement Project. The proposal for this project is being reviewed by the construction manager, possibly allowing for single-street access in two-phase projects. This proposal would allow one traffic lane to open for the residents during this construction project. We plan to prepare this updated proposal when we meet with residents in December.

Councilmember Shirley found this company's outline included an excellent explanation of the funds needed for the project.

Councilmember Ariemma inquired about the project timeline and was informed it was based on the budgets.

Councilmember Larson recommended this item for the consent agenda.

## OTHER ITEMS:

### 10. Nighthawk Tavern LLC dba Nighthawk Tavern, SP # 3 Communication

Doug Parks, City Attorney

City Attorney Parks informed Council that this application is for a new 2023 alcoholic beverage license for Nighthawk Tavern LLC dba Nighthawk Tavern, owned by Randy Harris, location to be 84 Public Square N, Ste 1 & 2,

Mr. Harris requests a 2023 Consumption on Premise Alcoholic Beverage License for Beer, Wine, and Distilled Liquor at the establishment. The alcoholic beverage license application is in order with all payments and completed paperwork. This location is zoned for restaurants and was previously held by the restaurant Capers, which served food and alcoholic beverages.

This license will be heard at the upcoming Special Called Meeting, as the owner hopes to be approved to sell in the last few weeks of 2023.

### 11. Leah Kay Catering LLC, dba Yahoola Grill, SP # 3 Communication, Doug Parks, City Attorney

City Manager Parks informed the Council and Mayor that this is a change in ownership for an existing restaurant for a 2024 alcoholic beverage license. The current owner's alcoholic beverage license will not be renewed for 2024.

Leah Kay Catering LLC, dba Yahoola Grill, owned by Leah Lloyd, location to be 1810 South Chestatee Street, requests a Consumption on Premise Alcoholic Beverage License for Beer, Wine, and Distilled Liquor at the establishment. The alcoholic beverage license application is in order with all payments and completed paperwork. This is a change in ownership for a 2024 Alcoholic Beverage License.

### 12. 39 Stargel St Encroachment Agreement, Doug Parks, City Attorney

City Attorney Parks informed the Council and Mayor of this Encroachment and Easement Agreement for 39 Stargel St to allow current residence/structure(s) to remain in place as is but deny the current and or any future owner(s) from building new additions, improvements or rebuilds into the right of way.

## ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to adjourn the Work Session and move the comment section to the end of the Special Called Meeting tonight.

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis, Seconded by Councilmember Larson.

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

## COMMENTS – PLEASE LIMIT TO THREE MINUTES

Clerk Comments - There are no comments tonight.

City Manager Martin reminded everyone that this Friday will be the Lighting of the Square, comprising staff and many volunteers' hours of work. We have a special work session next Monday to discuss SPLOST and a joint county work session on December 4th before our meeting that day.

City Attorney Comments - There are no comments tonight.

## City Council Comments

Councilmember Bagley thanked the Christmas Committee for all their hard work in creating our Christmas downtown.

Councilmember Reagin celebrated our local high school's continued winning season. Councilmember Larson discussed the status and timeline for our area's paving and sidewalk projects with the city manager. I think the need for a long-term plan is very evident for the traffic issues on Morrison Moore Parkway, which will need to be handled with GDOT as we move forward with a solution.

Councilmember Gaddis, thank everyone for all the hard work this year and have a great holiday weekend.

Councilmember Ariemma agreed with celebrating our high school winning season and the need for a long-term plan for Morrison Moore Parkway.

Councilmember Shirley wished everyone a great holiday season and looks forward to more interaction with the community and staff with our upcoming zoning project.

Mayor Taylor wished everyone a wonderful and safe Thanksgiving weekend and thanked the teams that created our special downtown celebrations.