



CITY OF DAHLONEGA
City Council & Main Street Program/ Downtown
Development Authority Board Work Session Minutes
March 15, 2021 3:00 PM
Lumpkin County Parks & Recreation Building 365 Riley
Road Dahlongega, GA 30533

PRESENT – City Council Mayor Sam Norton Council Member Roman Gaddis Council Member Mitchell Ridley Council Member Ron Larson Council Member JoAnne Taylor Council Member Joel Cordle Council Member Johnny Ariemma	PRESENT – Main Street / DDA Board Chairman Ryan Puckett Treasurer DeEnna Walters Board Member Tony Owens Board Member Eddie Wayne Board Member Donna Logan Board Member Amy Thrailkill – absent Board Member Ryan Reagin - absent
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OPEN MEETING

Mayor Norton opened the Joint Work Session at 3:05 p.m.

1. Introductory Comments - Mayor Norton

- DDA has been instrumental in everything Dahlongega stands for and has been for a long time, and the council appreciates all of the efforts of this volunteer's situation that requires time away from home. Sometimes our positions require big decisions that leave contention in the wake. Still, like our downtown hotel, in hindsight, we have been justified in our actions, but at the time, it was mighty contentious for the Council, me, and the DDA.
- Sometimes some big decisions need to be made, and sometimes we get all twisted up in the little choice's personalities. The important thing is the community and what is suitable for the taxpaying public and us and how it will play out in the next twenty years.
- Dahlongega's portfolio is strong and very diverse. We have things in our portfolio more so than most cities - history, waterfalls, and gold. While our footprint may be small, we have a powerful brand that makes our job easy, but somebody had to help create all of this, and we are just adding to it and sometimes taking away each time we meet. The bigger picture is the brand is what we need to protect, and sometimes it is hard to overlook the small things that are on the plate right in front of us today.
- Different junctures in our political and volunteer careers may be launching points where big things can happen or maintain the past. The kindergarten property is one of those opportunities in life. The kindergarten property has sat unused for the past 21 years, I do not see this as a missed opportunity, but an opportunity is waiting for the right project. It is a strategic opportunity. Criticized or not, we, the council and board, did not always see eye to eye on this property's uses. The Kindergarten property is valuable, and it is worth our caution and deliberation. The firm decisions we make have gravity that will impact future generations once we are out of our short time on council.
- Thank you for taking your elected and appointed positions thoughtfully.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

2. Overview Main Street Program / DDA - Council Member Joel Cordle

Conditions:

- ❖ The MS/DDA is special among Dahlonaga boards because state law sets requirements for DDA board member training and qualifications, and MS has its mandatory training.
- ❖ Multiple new members of MS/DDA board and city council, staffing changes.
- ❖ Dahlonaga must submit its annual recertification presentation to the Georgia Main Street office on March 24, 2021.
- ❖ Refresh, refocus, and be prepared for the future with solid partnerships and commitment.

Essentials:

- ❖ Main Street is the prescribed economic development system (design, promotion, organization, economic vitality).
- ❖ DDA powers add financial tools for specific projects and services; and
- ❖ Focus work on the central business district.
- ❖ The City Council appoints the Board of Directors.
- ❖ Assets in Dahlonaga include 120 small businesses, location, consumer market (locals, visitors, UNG), active historic shopping district, unique architecture essential partners, and stakeholders.
- ❖ Downtown district ahead of competitors in the consumer market.
- ❖ GA Main Streets 2020 economic impact: 105 cities, 1,170 new/expanded businesses.
- ❖ GA Main Streets 3,764 new jobs, 1,219 building rehab projects, \$910 million private & public investment.

Next Step in the Future:

- ❖ Complete required MS and DDA (online) training for all board members not yet certified.
- ❖ Conduct electronic surveys for required public and leadership input to guide priorities for the necessary annual work plan.
- ❖ Bring in Georgia Main Street staff to facilitate the planning session with the board, council partners, and staff.
- ❖ Develop specific and measurable projects with measurable goals and actions.
- ❖ Build a board's meeting agenda around the strategic plan content.
- ❖ Maximize the partnership of the MS/DDA board with the council.
- ❖ Include specific details in the annual DDA service agreement, such as the strategic plan.
- ❖ Specified communications and reporting; consider appointing a council member to board.
- ❖ Achieve appropriate and consistent staffing levels.

Council Member Cordle discussed tools needed to garner positivity with local agencies to ensure a positive communication and partnership level. The tools allow for developing a plan of work priorities for regular communication between leaders of local agencies.

Council Member Cordle discussed the value of the façade grant that exists to better our downtown environment.

Chairman Puckett hopes for a framework that will ensure new board members' training and guidelines for engaging and retaining a dedicated full-time director.

City Manager Schmid requested guidance on the Director's direction as strong on the Main Street and GEMS program or Real Estate growth.

Council Member Taylor is looking for a strong Director who can attract and assist development to our community under the DDA Board's leadership.

Mayor Norton requested three job descriptions from City Manager Schmid, searching for a robust Main Street Program/ DDA Director.

Council Member Cordle reminded both the Council and Board that economic development is a vital part of the program and the Main Street and GEMS program.

Chairman Puckett believes our focus is on retaining local citizens with reasonable housing in our town.

3. Open Discussion - Council and Board Members

- Mayor Norton asked for guidance on the upcoming 4th of July celebration.
- City Manager Schmid will review the holiday event's direction to ensure the celebration is respectful of the festive holiday with family events, parade, food, and music with social distancing in support of the CDC guidelines. A final plan is due to Council and the Board in the coming seven days. Fireworks may be the final determination for having a 4th of July celebration.

4. Presentation Mixed Use Redevelopment Concept - 147 N Park Street

Robert Goode and the Harris Family are interested in a mixed-use development on the property at 147 N Park Street, better known as the kindergarten property, which is 2.62 acres, and the adjacent property of 1.04 acres. These would be signature projects with historical value.

- The Multi-family rental condos for professionals and young retirees with a parking deck for up to 427 cars, a pool, and a rooftop restaurant is on the kindergarten property.
- The hotel's concept with retail, restaurant, and condo on the rooftop was adjacent. The condos would be for sale. This property would require rezoning for a hotel concept.

Mayor Norton reminded Council and the board that the kindergarten property requirement is mixed-use with a parking deck. This concept is a legacy for the Harris Family, who is willing to invest in the Dahlonega downtown area.

Council and Board Members expressed the importance of historic preservation in the design work for these properties and adherence to the night skies ordinance.

Board Member Owens requested confirmation of the potential funding for the DDA with the parking garages and rental properties.

Chairman Puckett requested a market study for rental rates and sale prices on these properties and the possibility of safety issues with the proposed building's height.

Board Member Walters, who expressed concern for traffic patterns with the parking decks' multiple parking spaces, was assured a traffic study is required.

City Manager Schmid stated two other projects are considering the kindergarten property with a two-week time frame for a presentation.

The Harris Family agrees with the concept, including an emphasis on Dahlonega's Gold history.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Norton adjourned the meeting at 4:27 p.m.