



# CITY OF DAHLONEGA

## Council Work Session Minutes

September 21, 2020 4:00 PM

Gary McCullough Council Chambers, Dahlonega City Hall

<p>PRESENT            Mayor Sam Norton            Council Member Mitchell Ridley            Council Member JoAnne Taylor            Council Member Roman Gaddis            Council Member Johnny Ariemma            Council Member Ron Larson            Council Member Helen</p>	<p>PRESENT            City Clerk Mary Csukas            City Manager Bill Schmid            Director Kevin Herrit            Director Melody Marlowe            Director Mark Buchanan            Superintendent John Jarrard</p>	<p>PRESENT            City Attorney Doug Parks            Tourism Director Sam McDuffie</p>
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### OPEN MEETING

Open the meeting at a 4:00 p.m.

### BOARDS & COMMITTEES:

1. Cemetery Committee - August 2020, Chris Worick, Cemetery Committee Chairman
  - Council and Staff discussed Dahlonega Walking Tours request for an extension of hours.
2. Dahlonega Downtown Development Authority, Shannon Ferguson, Executive Director
  - Director Shannon Ferguson resigned effect September 18, 2020.
  - Ms. Csukas will assist DDA intern Lucas Cheney with upcoming events and City Manager Schmid with Main Street and DDA function.

### TOURISM DEPARTMENT REPORT:

- The Webcam at the Chamber of Commerce/Visitors Center is slated for replacement December 2020.
- The Tourism Marketing Committee is working on CY2021 plans.
- The Tourism website will launch the first week of November 2021.
- An article discussing Dahlonega, written by a South Carolina Travel writer, will appear in the Charleston Living Magazine, Columbia Living Magazine, and Wilmington Living Magazine. The circulation will be upwards of 657,000 people.
- The Dahlonega Visitors Center is now open 7-days a week, from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. These hours will be extended with the arrival of the Fall peak season.
- Our tourism numbers are trending at 67,000, down from 103,000, which are realistic for a pandemic.
- Council discussed the upcoming Lightening of the Square event.

### DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

3. City Marshal's – August 2020, Jeff Branyon, Chief Marshal
  - The Marshal's Department has an open position for a Deputy Marshal.
  - Citizens Contact is a section on the Monthly Report that outlines daily operations that do not rise to the level of citation or charges.
  - Grant funds for a city vehicle is in the paperwork stage.

4. Community Development – August 2020, Kevin Herrit, Director
  - The Main Street Hotel will have awnings installed this week, and the sign package for the hotel arrived at City Hall.
  - The delay of Waffle House is a national issue relating to COVID-19
5. Financial Services – August 2020, Melody Marlowe, Finance Director
  - The first phase of the COVID-19 relief fund netted approximately \$132,000.
  - Assistant Financial Director Kimberly Stafford did a diligent job compiling the COVID relief expenses and securing the netted funds.
  - Paperless options for utility billing are at 6%, with over 100 accounts included.
6. Public Works – August 2020, Mark Buchanan, PW Director/City Engineer
  - The Wimpy Mill Park renovation is progressing nicely.
  - The depth for the kayak ramp varies from 3-6 feet.
7. Water & Wastewater Treatment - August 2020, John Jarrard, Water/Wastewater Treatment Director
  - The water loss is staying steady at 26% and will be reviewed with Finance at year end.
  - Satellite technology is available to detect water leaks; we are at the quote stage.
  - The three filter racks at the water plant will be changed one each year and within budget.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

8. 2021 Employee Benefits Program, Melody Marlowe, Finance Director
  - Matt Bidwell, MSI Benefits Group, Inc. presented our GMA insurance employee package.
  - GMA insurance requested an 8% increase, and we finalized at a 4.98 % increase. The City plan is far and above other government insurance plans.
  - The single employee cost will be at 10% of the price, and the family cost is 25%.
  - The GMA insurance has a \$1000 deductible and a \$500 deductible; these plans will have some employee payment changes.
  - The employee contribution will increase by 4.98%, but employees are offered a credit of \$240 to offset medical insurance payments with a yearly physical.
  - The City also offers a flexible spending account to offset some medical costs.
9. Lighting Ordinance Discussion, Bill Schmid, City Manager
  - Dr. Gregory Feiden presented information concerning dark skies that outlined adverse lights to human health, and a decline in bird and insect health due to light pollution. A Dark Sky Ordinance will attract visitors to Dahlenega.
  - Council discussed many aspects of a Lighting and Dark Sky Ordinance and agreed this is a topic for discussion at an upcoming work session. The City is currently working with Georgia Power for cost savings of LED lighting in Dahlenega, and they may assist with Dark Skies.
  - Discuss with DDA 2000 Façade grant to include dark sky lighting.
  - City Manager Schmid recognizes the need for a dark sky ordinance, but the City budget would not support staff assistance in this endeavor.
  - While the University of North Georgia is exempt from City Ordinances, this may be an ordinance the University embraces.

- City Attorney Parks will revisit a Lightening and Dark Sky Ordinance for an upcoming work session in the next sixty days.
10. Morrison Moore Pedestrian Bridge Engineering Services Contract, Mark Buchanan, City Engineer
- Staff recommends awarding this aspect of the project to Wood Engineering for the Pedestrian Bridge at \$75,000.
  - Council discussed the impact of COVID 19 on construction projects; COVID is covered under GDOT guidelines.

COMMENTS – PLEASE LIMIT TO THREE MINUTES

Clerk Comments – No comments

City Manager Comments – No comments

City Attorney Comments – No comments

City Council Comments

- Great weekend on the square.
- Staff and Council need to review tourism due to the loss of the Main Street/ DDA Leadership Team.

Mayor Comments – The City will need to review upcoming events for the holidays at the next Council Meeting. The DDA and Main Street programs will be examined in the coming weeks.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Norton adjourned the Work Session at 5:37 p.m.