



# CITY OF DAHLONEGA

## Council Work Session Minutes

April 19, 2021 4:00 PM

Gary McCullough Council Chambers, Dahlonega City Hall

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### PRESENT

Mayor Sam Norton  
Council Member Ron Larson  
Council Member JoAnne Taylor  
Council Member Mitchel Ridley  
Council Member Roman Gaddis  
Council Member Johnny Ariemma  
Council Member Joel Cordle

### OPEN MEETING

Mayor Norton called the Work Session to order at 4:00 p.m.

1. Joint Proclamation - Lumpkin County High School Girls Basketball Team Day
  - Mayor Norton read the Lumpkin County High School Girls Basketball Team Day Proclamation and praised the accomplishment as a winning Team at the regional championship.
  - Mayor Norton, Council, and Team Members had a photo opportunity to memorialize this occasion. Mayor Norton awarded the coaching staff with two Dahlonega gold coins, and each team member came forward to receive engraved plaques commemorating this accomplishment.
2. Joint Proclamation - Lumpkin County High School One Act Play Team Day
  - Mayor Norton read the One Act Play proclamation and congratulated the One Act Play Team as the first Lumpkin County team to be a recognized AAA State One-Act Champions.
  - Mayor Norton, Council, and Team Members had a photo opportunity to memorialize this occasion. Mayor Norton awarded the One Act Play staff Dahlonega gold coins, and the Team will be receiving an engraved plaque for this accomplishment.
3. 147 N Park Street - Expression of Interest / Pope & Land Real Estate - Zoom Meeting
  - Representatives from Pope & Land, via a Zoom presentation, analyzed the property usages through a drone video of the three elevations of the site 50 ft, 75ft to 100 ft to highlight physical aspects of this property. Pope & Land established three critical standpoints Destination, Gathering Place, and Connecting Point, and an outline of potential uses: Boutique Hotel, Retail, and Residential.

- Council, Mayor, and Staff discussed the pros and cons of the outlined potential uses. They reiterated the need to ensure the architecture's final design is in keeping with the look and feel of downtown Dahlonega.
  - Pope & Land stated they are looking for an opportunity to have their Team collaborate with the City of Dahlonega to bring our ideas together.
  - Mayor Norton stated City Manager and Staff would follow up with some questions of interest to assist with our final determination of this property.
4. 147 N Park Street - Expression of Interest / Dover Realty
- City Manager Schmid informed the Council of a new presentation by Dover Realty; Mayor Norton and Main Street DDA Chairman Ryan Puckett viewed the original Letter of Interest.
  - Mr. Stephen Pamplin, Dover Realty, outlined their vision of the highest and best use of the property: a premium five-story, 109 room select hotel with rooftop dining, bar, and observation deck with surface parking.
  - Mr. Patel, Rivermont Hospitality, informed Council their design would complement the aspects of the downtown area and tell a story. A Hilton or Marriot brand understands a city ordinance will drive the hotel's exterior concept. The design would include a 1200 square foot convention center room and a premier restaurant that would be a tourist destination; Rivermont has had a food and beverage department to make these concepts work. He also stated that if retail is to be part of the design, they will partner with an agency to give the City more designated retail areas.
  - Rivermont Hospitality presented the City of Dahlonega a letter of interest to purchase this property as a simple fee but is open to other suggestions.
  - Mayor Norton informed Mr. Patel of a possible ground lease and finance through the Downtown Development Authority and thanked him for the presentation. The City Manager and Staff will follow up with questions of interest to assist with the final determination.

#### BOARDS & COMMITTEES:

1. Cemetery Committee - March 2021, Chris Worick, Committee Chairman  
Director Buchanan reminded Council that the annual cemetery cleanup is Saturday, April 24, 2021.
2. Main Street Program - March 2021, Ariel Alexander & Skyler Alexander Main Street Program Staff
  - Ms. Ariel Alexander outlined the upcoming Independence Day Celebration on Saturday, July 3, 2021. The celebration includes a parade, food trucks, a concert, and other events in Hancock Park.
  - Ms. Skyler Alexander informed Council the City of Dahlonega is certified once again as a Georgia Exceptional Main Street Program.
  - Council discussed the upcoming events and projects to assist local businesses and potential new business owners.

TOURISM: Sam McDuffie, Tourism Director

Tourism update for Dahlonega and Lumpkin County

- The Tourism newsletter has a tremendous increase to 36,000 subscribers, which is above the industry average.
- Leads generated by our advertisement purchased last year are up to 18,000 hits this quarter, being topped by Southern Living.
- Tourism website launch gives a 53% increase in usage and Social Media campaign up to 53,000 followers on Facebook and Instagram.
- Paul Milliken, Fox 5 News, is returning next Tuesday to highlight the Smith House gold history and southern food.
- The roof repair project is complete at the visitor center; staffing is back to four staff members. Visitation numbers are at 26,000 YTD as the tourism team continues to do an excellent job getting the word out.
- Council and Mayor, President DDBA Ellen Mirakovits, and Director McDuffie discussed ideas to grow mid-week foot traffic for family and evening entertainment to attract restaurants and shops to stay open later in the day.
- Expect the June Baseball Tournament and the Fire Chief Association this summer in town.

#### DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

##### 1. Community Development – March 2021

- Council discussed the job well done on the updates to the HPC Guidelines.
- Occupational Tax penalty procedures were discussed due to late payees so far into the year.
- Short Term Rental logged complaints are submitted to the City and County and require a follow-up call to the owner. Questions arose about STR requirement notification to properties within a 300 ft range of the establishment.
- City Manager Schmid and Director Herrit are to continue with the update of the Dhalonega Comprehensive Plan.

##### 2. Finance Department – March 2021, Melody Marlowe, Finance Director

- Our Financial Auditors Presentation will be at the May 3rd Council Meeting.
- The State will furnish Cities with guidelines for handling the American Rescue Plan distribution of the expected funds.
- Director Marlowe assisted Mayor Norton with the 2021 Senior Graduation Letter to include verbiage on encouragement to stay and apply to work with the City of Dhalonega.

##### 3. Marshal's March 2021, Jeff Branyon, Marshal

- Mayor Norton praised Marshal Branyon on a letter of commendation for his professionalism while issuing a citation.
- The Independence Day parade will mirror the route used recently for our 2020 Christmas parade route, and the Iron Mountain parking issue has been resolved and will better handle fireworks this year.
- Council Member Gaddis and Marshal Branyon outlined the new camera system that is IP-based and connects as one network through a web browser with remote access; both recommend replacement of our old system with this IP-based system. The digital storage of this information follows State guidelines.

4. Public Works—March 2021, Mark Buchanan, PW Director/City Engineer
  - Director Buchanan praised his Team for their work beautifying downtown Dahlonega these last few weeks and handling repairs of the Wimpy Mill Park water flooding due to a storm a few weeks ago.
  - Staff will begin an analysis of the parking meters on South Meaders street.
5. Water & Wastewater Treatment Department Report March 2021, John Jarrard, Water/Wastewater Treatment Director
  - An emergency bypass between the Barlow and Koyo pump stations was installed, allowing discussion of the W.K. Master Plan Inspection report sent out to facilities.

#### ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Discussion of Desired Strengths in a Main Street Program / DDA Director
  - Council approved City Manager Schmid's plan to work with a Council Member and the DDA Board to improve the Main Street/ DDA bylaws and create the Main Street / DDA Director job description. City Manager Schmid had submitted to Council a group of job descriptions as a starting point for this team's review. Council appointed Council Member Cordle to this Team. Jessica Reynolds, Director Georgia Main Street, will also assist along with her team members. Council Member Taylor believes real estate characteristics are essential for the Main Street/DDA Director as redevelopment opportunities will be in our future.
  - Finance Director Marlowe outlined the Head House renovation financing opportunities with the Council, which would involve funding opportunities for the DDA Board; this topic is on the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Council Meeting Agenda.
  - The finalization of the bid process for the Demolition project on 147 Park Street will be next week.
2. Schermerhorn Properties, Bill Schmid, City Manager
  - City Manager Schmid and Council discussed possible opportunities for the City at the Schermerhorn property.
3. Park Street Utilities Funding, Mark Buchanan, PE, Public Works Director and City Engineer
  - Director Buchanan, City Manager Schmid, and Council discussed the need for an engineering study to allow a clear path for the multiple utility needs on South Park Street, should the projects coincide or stay in stages.
4. Wimpy Mill Sidewalk Extension, Vince Hunsinger, Capital Projects Manager
  - Capital Project Manager Hunsinger requested contingency funds to extend the sidewalk from the Golden Hills subdivision to the Wimpy Mill Park pedestrian bridge. Soul Construction was the low bidder on this project.

## COMMENTS – PLEASE LIMIT TO THREE MINUTES

City Clerk – No comment

City Manager

- City Manager Schmid requested a correction for comments in the Nugget concerning the Wimpy Mill Park Canoe Launch article.
- The interviewing process for a Director of Finance is going well.
- The minutes from our recent Council Retreat facilitated by GMRC will be forthcoming.
- Council requested parking implementation recommendations at the June Work Session.

City Attorney – No comment

City Council Comments

- Council Member Cordle is producing a Job Fair with the Main Street staff and UNG, as the loss of students during the COVID pandemic has created a shortage of employees for local businesses.
- Council Member Ariemma understands the labor shortage and utilizes High School students to supplement staffing shortfalls.
- Council Member Ridley discussed the next step in changes to our current Alcoholic Beverage Ordinance to align with new state regulations. City Attorney Parks will review the process and report to Council at an upcoming work session.
- Council Member Larson discussed the need to market the new Memorial Park Columbarium. Director Buchanan is coordinating several projects at the cemetery which including lighting and marketing.

Mayor Comments

- Mayor Norton is pleased with the low COVID numbers in Lumpkin County and reminds everyone of the vaccines available to the public. Vaccines will assist with outdoor gatherings and keeping a stable workforce in Dahlonega.

## ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Norton adjourned the Work Session at 6:50 p.m.