

The Mayor and Council met for their regular meeting.

Those Present:	John Howard	Mayor
	Larry Bradley	Vice-Mayor
	Lee Malcom	Council Member
	Myoshia Crawford	Council Member
	Ross Bradley	Council Member
	Norman Garrett	Council Member
	Tyler Gregory	Council Member
	Nathan Little	Council Member
	David Dickinson	Council Member
	Logan Propes	City Administrator (via phone)
	Debbie Kirk	City Clerk
	Paul Rosenthal	City Attorney

Staff Present: Danny Smith, Jeremiah Still, R.V. Watts, Andrew Dykes, Beth Thompson, Tommy McClellan, Chris Bailey, Patrick Kelley, Brad Callender, Les Russell

Visitors: Sharon Swanepoel, Denise Etheridge, Todd Hardigree, Frank Masiello, Joseph Zalatan, Laurie Hawks, Julie Sams, Shauna Mathias, Clayton Mathias, Kim Jolly, Ken Gauthier, Martha Gauthier, Michelle Mirolli, Jay Filipiak, Janice Hiatt Hawks, Carole Queen, Hugo Bryan-Porter, Joanne Campbell, Jim Campbell, Theresa Mitchell, Todd Mitchell, Vic Lazich, Jason Sams, Travis Pegram, Amy Maughon, Lynn Brooks, Ashley Dykes, Eli Dykes, Matt Bidwell, Carole Hamby, Kevin Seifert, Lee Rowell

## I. CALL TO ORDER – JOHN HOWARD

### 1. Invocation

Pastor Hugo Bryan-Porter of Lighthouse World Outreach Center gave the invocation.

### 2. Roll Call

Mayor Howard noted that all Council Members were present. There was a quorum. He stated City Administrator Logan Propes was present via telephone.

### 3. Approval of Agenda

To approve the agenda as presented.

*Motion by R. Bradley, seconded by Malcom.  
Passed Unanimously*

### 4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- a. September 7, 2021 Council Minutes
- b. September 14, 2021 Council Minutes
- c. September 14, 2021 Executive Session Minutes
- d. September 28, 2021 Planning & Code Committee Minutes
- e. September 21, 2021 Planning Commission Minutes
- f. September 9, 2021 Historic Preservation Commission Minutes
- g. September 28, 2021 Historic Preservation Commission Minutes
- h. Approval – HVAC Purchase and Installation – Paulson-Cheek Mechanical for a total cost of \$15,800.00. (Recommended for Council approval by Public Safety Committee October 5, 2021)

To approve the consent agenda as presented.

*Motion by Little, seconded by R. Bradley.  
Passed Unanimously*



**II. PUBLIC PRESENTATION****1. Proclamation – Domestic Violence Awareness Month**

Ms. Ashley Dykes, with Project ReNeWal, stated one in four women and over 15 million children are affected by domestic violence nationwide. Project ReNeWal is a domestic violence shelter and intervention program that serves Walton, Newton, and Rockdale Counties. She explained they would not be able to provide this service without community support. They have the only men's units in the State and a children's outreach. Their mission is to ensure that victims of domestic violence learn to live a violence free life and empower survivors to thrive without their abusers. Dancing with the Stars of Project ReNeWal will be on February 26; the event was postponed in 2020, due to COVID.

Mayor John Howard presented the Proclamation for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

*No Action.*

**III. PUBLIC FORUM****1. Public Comments**

Mr. Travis Pegram, of 497 Cedar Ridge Road, stated he is a former pastor. He was the 2021 Leadership Walton Class President and fell in love with Monroe and Walton County. His family moved to Cedar Ridge Road. He expressed his concern for the big developments and how they will affect their quality of life. His family bought a two-acre property because they did not want to live in a subdivision. He questioned the City having smart growth, organic growth, and generational growth. He discussed struggles with traffic, street racing, and accidents.

Ms. Amy Maughon, of 1735 Double Springs Church Road, stated she has lived there for 20 years. She is concerned about the largest proposed subdivision in the City of Monroe, which will definitely impact the quality of life for the residents on Double Springs Church Road. It is a rural road with agricultural land and large lots ranging between five and 100 acres. There will be thousands of additional vehicles traveling the road due to the new massive development. As a result, the current and long-time tax paying citizens will have quality of life issues. Many of their residents ride their horses, drive tractors, and walk their dogs down the road; the additional traffic will make these activities unsafe. She discussed how the new shopping center is already going to cause there to be more traffic. Ms. Maughon requested for the new development to be tabled until due diligence can be finalized or the impact of the traffic from the new shopping center can be assessed.

Ms. Laurie Hawks, of 1730 Double Springs Church Road, stated her concern for the River Pointe Subdivision and other subdivisions. They will impact their community on Cedar Ridge and Double Springs dramatically. She has lived there for 15 years and has had a family farm for 50 years. There are at least four families that have three generations living on Double Springs Church Road. Council has the ability to influence whether the next generation stays. She is a planner in the water industry and plans for the impact of development and protecting water resources. She questioned the water and wastewater infrastructure, the capacity of the school system, and fire protection. The City needs an infrastructure plan, instead of trying to play catch up. She discussed Double Springs Church Road being curvy and super dangerous, even without the future development. There will be some very significant impacts. She thinks there is an opportunity to pause, and the City and County should coordinate more. Ms. Hawks suggested buffer areas between a 30-acre farm and a 300-lot subdivision. She requested for Council to pause, to take the time to plan, and to consider a moratorium on land disturbance permits.

Mr. Todd Hardigree, of 1627 Highland Creek Drive, discussed his concerns. He read the traffic study but did not see anything about the new Publix, YMCA, or subdivision across from the school. He moved here three years ago to keep from living in Gwinnett. He discussed his concerns about traffic, speeding, water pressure volume, and adequate police protection. He requested the subdivision to be tabled.

Mr. Jay Filipiak, of 1904 Highland Creek Drive, stated he used to build houses. He is concerned about the variances on their street. There has been a lot done to the streets and downtown; he does not have a problem with growth. He believes Cedar Ridge Road would be straightened, but questioned whether the County is going to pay for it. Mr. Filipiak questioned zoning allowing that many houses so close together. They have nice homes, and he is concerned about protecting his own investment. He discussed the façade, traffic issues, and the variance from the Highway. He complimented Publix and the YMCA.



Mr. Lynn Brooks, of 471 Cedar Ridge Road, stated he has lived on Cedar Ridge for 38 years. He discussed R1 Zoning having a 14,000 square foot minimum, which would be 120 feet by 120 feet wide. That would be a lot of houses. There would be nine houses across from his fence line. He discussed speeding, wrecks, and traffic issues. Double Springs Church Road is already like a highway, and there is also a subdivision coming on Alcovy River, at the end of the road. Mr. Brooks discussed the land having a complete drop off just past his pasture. He suggested for Council to come out and take a look at the property.

#### IV. NEW BUSINESS

##### 1. Preliminary Plat Review – Mountain Creek Estates

Code Enforcement Officer Patrick Kelley presented the Preliminary Plat Review for Mountain Creek Estates located at 935 McDaniel Street. He stated the plat was reviewed for conformance with the Development Regulations, which is the criteria utilized for preliminary plat recommendations. The 75-lot plat has been revised to have 73-lots on 49.82 acres, and they may have to make some more corrections. The Planning & Zoning Commission and Code Office recommend approval, with the corrections noted in the staff report. He stated there were some technical issues that they are working on getting fixed.

Council Member Norman Garrett questioned the 73-lots.

Mr. Kelley stated the lot quantity changed, due to the comment corrections. They may lose one or two more lots when they get in complete compliance with the development regulations. Currently, there would be a maximum quantity of 73-lots. His recommendation is for approval once the recommended corrections have been made to the plat, which the developer has agreed to make.

Council and Mr. Kelley discussed the process for approval, revision requests, approval stipulations, and whether all changes need to be made prior to approving the plat.

Mr. Kelley explained this is a preliminary plat not development plans; the preliminary plat basically shows the division of the property.

City Attorney Paul Rosenthal stated this is the second stage in matters coming to Council. The first matter would be a rezone or a variance. Then, they would come back for preliminary plat approval. Then, they come back for final plat approval. The rezone stage is where policy issues are generally made. He stated this project has been approved for a very long time. This item is not completely technically administrative in nature, but it is certainly much less legislative policy decision in nature than a rezone decision. Preliminary plat and final plat approvals are administrative type decisions. He stated it is common for preliminary plat approvals to be approved subject to staff conditions being met. This allows a land owner to proceed with a land disturbance permit, to proceed with construction or building plans, and then to begin construction. They must then come back to Council for final plat approval, which is when the public infrastructure will be accepted.

Council Member Lee Malcom requested for Mr. Kelley to explain the by-right development situation for both of these plats to the citizens, prior to going forward with either of the preliminary plat approvals.

Mr. Kelley explained they have the right to develop in the pattern prescribed by the Zoning Ordinances for the property, if they follow all of the zoning regulations and development regulations. The only time the City has any input is when they are asking for a rezone or some type of variance. They can build what the City prescribes for that zoning classification, as a by-right use. The City is required to recommend approval of the preliminary plat if they meet those perimeters, because there is no reason to recommend denial.

Ms. Malcom stated these were both approved 15 to 20 years ago as zoned today, which is why public hearings are not being held for either of the developments.

Mr. Kelley stated this project was rezoned over 15 years ago, and the downturn affected the project. The next project was rezoned to R1 in 2001, but that is another issue all together.



Mr. Rosenthal stated that R1 Zoning is the least dense residential single-family zoning classification in the City Zoning Ordinance, which means it has the largest lots.

To approve the Preliminary Plat for Mountain Creek Estates as presented.

*Motion by Dickinson, seconded by Malcom.  
Opposed: Garrett.  
Passed 7-1.*

## **2. Preliminary Plat Review – River Pointe**

Code Enforcement Officer Patrick Kelley presented the Preliminary Plat Review for River Pointe subdivision located at the corner of Double Springs Church Road and Cedar Ridge Road. He explained The Pacific Group submitted the Preliminary Plat Review in order to pursue development plans. The Planning & Zoning Commission and Code Office recommend approval of the Preliminary Plat, with the four conditions listed in the staff recommendation. He stated the four corrections have all been made.

Vice-Mayor Larry Bradley stated the property has an R1 Zoning today, which says that by-right the people have the right to build based upon that zoning, as they have proposed. However, it is incumbent upon Council to ensure that the infrastructure is satisfactory for any development being built.

Council Member Norman Garrett questioned Council previously approving that infill development allows 10 houses to be built on an acre.

Mr. Kelley answered that only applies to the prescribed IOD area, which basically surrounds downtown. It is a limited geographic area, and this particular development is not in that geographic area. He and the developer have discussed potentially phasing the project, due to the infrastructure and other concerns. The developer has also given the Code office a draft development agreement, which would need to be submitted to the City Attorney's office. He stated it may be best to give this project time for some further consideration. The project could possibly go to a phased approach or they may need to start over. Mr. Kelley explained as presented, his recommendation is still for approval of the plat based on ordinance compliance.

Council Member Tyler Gregory thanked the citizens for giving their input. Council shares their concerns for traffic and the water system. He believes holding off on the project is a good move.

Council Member Myoshia Crawford stated she agrees with postponing the project.

Council Member Ross Bradley stated he feels it is too much, too soon.

Council Member Lee Malcom stated she agrees with the citizens' concerns for fire protection, policing of the area, and the impact from the shopping center. She does not believe that the traffic study is up to date as it should be, and it needs to be further investigated.

To table this matter until the December 14, 2021 Council Meeting. The motion is due to several of the unknown issues concerning water pressure, sewer availability, and fire protection in the area of this development that needs to be further investigated. A phase in may need to be done with the developer, because it is too much too soon. Tabling this matter will give the developer and City staff time to work through putting together an appropriate development agreement that will address many issues and concerns about this development.

*Motion by Malcom, seconded by Garrett.  
Passed Unanimously.*

## **3. 1<sup>st</sup> Reading – GMEBS Amended and Restated Defined Benefit Retirement Plan Ordinance**

Mr. Les Russell explained the proposed amendment will change the pension plan to 50 years of age and 20 years of service for Public Safety Personnel. The change will cost the City an additional \$103,000.00. This will not affect the budget until 2023, because the evaluation for 2022 has already been accomplished.



Council Member Norman Garrett questioned how many employees the change will affect within the next five years.

Mr. Russell stated there are three employees that would qualify as of today. He stated one of the three already qualifies for retirement, and a second one is about to qualify. The third will qualify later this year. There would be three to qualify in 2022, one in 2023, one in 2024, and two will qualify in 2025.

Council and Mr. Russell further discussed years of service, pay percentages, and qualifying requirements for retiring.

Mr. Garrett questioned how many employees would be able to retire with 20 years of service, without being 50 years of age, and why it is not being offered to all of the City employees.

Mr. Russell stated there would be 17 employees that would qualify for retirement on the service side for having 20 years within the next five years. He explained this will encourage employees to stay with the City and will make recruitment easier. The City is not a highly competitive organization, but this will help set the City apart. Mr. Russell explained the reason it is not being offered to all employees is due to cost. It will affect about 40% of the workforce with police and fire; it would cost approximately \$350,000.00 for the entire workforce.

Council Member Lee Malcom stated this is for the traumatic jobs for police and fire, which is different than a normal City worker.

Mr. Russell explained the objective is to retain the current officers and make recruiting easier. It is a tough job that has a lot of mental stress.

Council, Mayor, Mr. Propes, and Mr. Russell discussed the history behind the changes. They discussed keeping existing Public Safety staff and getting replacements when they leave, particularly in the Police Department.

City Attorney Paul Rosenthal presented the first reading of the ordinance.

#### **4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – Zoning Ordinance Code Text Amendment #11**

City Attorney Paul Rosenthal gave the second reading of the ordinance to amend the Official Zoning Ordinance with Amendment #11 by implementing text amendments and changes identified in Exhibit A. Article VI – Use Provisions by District, Section 630.3, Table 6 – Industrial Zoning District Land Use Regulations – to add the principle use of Agriculture: Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production–indoor food crop production; and under the principle use of Industrial: Industry, heavy-manufacturing, repair, assembly, or processing – to add biodiesel fuel production. The added land uses will be permitted by right in the M1 Zoning District.

To adopt the Zoning Ordinance Code Text Amendment #11 as presented.

*Motion by Malcom, seconded by L. Bradley.  
Passed Unanimously.*

#### **5. Renewal – Health and Ancillary Insurance**

Mr. Les Russell discussed the COVID Wellness deductible that was added into the health plan, with the goal of spurring employees to get vaccinated. There were 28 employees vaccinated in May and now there are 64. He discussed the costs caused by COVID this year. In May, the COVID costs were about \$400,000 for the City. It is the beginning of October and the claims are already up to \$480,000 for COVID related illness, and there are still two large claims to come. Total claims are estimated to be 102% of what was estimated for the year, which will affect next year's renewal. He stated the biggest emphasis this year is to get employees to socially distance, wear their mask, or get a vaccine. Vaccinated people going into the hospital are usually out within a couple of days. Long term COVID illnesses are costing around \$275,000 per claim; costs would be down without the COVID claims. The pharmacy management program is saving the City \$192,000 plus the \$350,000 that was saved by closing the clinic has resulted in the City having a great year for claims.



Mr. Matt Bidwell, with MSI Benefits Group, reviewed the changes made last year and the lowered deductibles for participating in the wellness program. He discussed the clinic closing in March, getting generic drugs without a copay, and getting six free doctor visits. He compared insurance renewals and claims for the last few years. Mr. Bidwell explained that if the renewal is accepted today the large October claims can not be used against the renewal. He discussed the renewal offer in detail. He recommends renewal with Aetna, with the deductible being raised from \$60,000 to \$70,000. This will drop the fixed cost for the stoploss insurance. The City will not have any laser liabilities for the upcoming year. He suggests a 2% increase in employee contributions for 2022. There will be a 5.7% increase on the dental plan with MetLife. The City offers a high plan and a low plan for dental coverage. The City pays all of the employee cost and half of the family cost for the low plan, and the employee pays the difference if they choose the high plan. Mr. Bidwell suggested changing the higher plan option maximum annual amount from \$2,000 to \$3,000. This will only affect the employees with the high plan and will not impact the City's cost.

Mayor, Council, Mr. Russell, and Mr. Bidwell further discussed insurance costs, percentages, reinsurance amounts, and wellness credits.

To approve renewal of the 2022 Health & Ancillary Insurance Policies as recommended, with the \$70,000.00 reinsurance deductible.

*Motion by Dickinson, seconded by R. Bradley.  
Passed Unanimously.*

#### V. MAYOR'S UPDATE

Mayor John Howard stated Publix is on schedule to be selling groceries in January. He visited the site today. He explained Council can talk to Mr. Lee Rowell to schedule a tour. Fall Fest had a great turnout for an awesome day.

Council Member Ross Bradley read an email sent to the Public Safety Committee concerning the amendments to the retirement plan for Public Safety Personnel. He stated he feels it is important to focus on the physical and emotional dangers of Public Safety.

#### VI. ADJOURN

*Motion by Little, seconded by Gregory.  
Passed Unanimously.*

  
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MAYOR  
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CITY CLERK