



MINUTES
CITY OF MCDONOUGH
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
CITY HALL – 136 KEYS FERRY STREET
AUGUST 6, 2020
6:00 PM

The Regular Workshop of the City of McDonough City Council was held on Thursday, August 6, 2020, at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Copeland called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The City Clerk Ms. Janis Price called roll for the meeting, as follows:

Mayor Billy Copeland	Present
Mayor Pro Tem Craig Elrod	Present
Councilmember Benjamin Pruett	Present
Councilmember Roger Pruitt	Present
Councilmember Rufus Stewart	Present
Councilmember Kamali Varner	(Arrived after the meeting started)
Councilmember Sandra Vincent	Present

Others in attendance were: City Administrator, Mr. Preston Dorsey; City Attorney, Mr. Jim Elliott; City Clerk, Ms. Janis Price; Police Chief, Mr. Ken Noble; Fire Chief, Mr. Steve Morgan; Community Development Director, Mr. Rodney Heard; Finance Director, Mr. Mike Clark; Human Resources Director, Ms. Carla Tuck; Public Works Director, Mr. Ronnie Thompson; Technology Supervisor, Mr. Steve Sikes; Executive Assistant, Ms. Trisha Colpetzer; Executive Assistant, Ms. Euretha L. Olokodana; and Network Administrator, Mr. Brian Linton.

Mayor Copeland called for a motion to approve the Agenda. Councilmember Roger Pruitt motioned and Councilmember Stewart seconded.

Councilmember Vincent asked to clarify with the City Attorney as to whether Item A should be removed from the Consent Agenda, since she has it as a discussion item on the agenda as Item 15. Mr. Elliott suggested that Ms. Vincent make a comment of clarification during her discussion of Item 15.

The vote was six in favor. Those voting in favor were Mayor Copeland, Mayor Pro Tem Elrod, Councilmember Pruett, Councilmember Pruitt, Councilmember Stewart and Councilmember Vincent. Councilmember Varner was not present for the vote.

Councilmember Roger Pruitt led the Pledge to the Flag; and Councilmember Vincent gave the Invocation.

6. Consent Agenda
Public Works

- A. Approval for American Engineers, Inc. (AEI) to perform the following scope of work at West Alexander Park;
- Survey area between gravel lot and sidewalk where pavilion will be constructed.
 - Provide construction plan sheets for LPD and construction of pavilion.
 - Revise construction plans based upon any comments received by the City.
 - Provide construction specs, contract, and bidding information.
 - Provide construction inspection for project.

Also after the above work is completed, approval to seek bids on the above project. The cost of the above work will be \$27,500.00 and will be funded by SPLOST III.

- B. Approval to allow Turnipseed Engineers to provide professional engineering services for the booster pump station at Richard Craig Park; authorization for the Mayor to sign all related documents. The cost will be \$10,500.00 and will be funded by the Water Treatment Plant's budget. The scope of work will include:
- Topographic survey of the private site.
 - Preparation of construction drawings and technical specifications for the pump station and required controls.
 - Preparation of bid documents

Administration

- C. Approval of Minutes: July 20, 2020 Regular Scheduled Meeting and July 27, 2020 Special Called Meeting

Mayor Copeland called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Items A through C. Councilmember Stewart motioned and Councilmember Benjamin Pruett seconded. The vote was six in favor. Those voting in favor were Mayor Copeland, Mayor Pro Tem Elrod, Councilmember Pruett, Councilmember Pruitt, Councilmember Stewart and Councilmember Vincent. Councilmember Varner was not present for the vote.

Councilmember Vincent offered remarks about the life and legacy of Congressman John Lewis, and she thanked the Mayor for his leadership in having the signatures of the Council added alongside his on the Proclamation.

Mayor Copeland called for a motion to make the Proclamation Honoring and Remembering Congressman John Lewis a part of the minutes of the meeting. Councilmember Stewart motioned and Mayor Pro Tem Elrod seconded. The vote was six in favor. Those voting in favor were Mayor Copeland, Mayor Pro Tem Elrod,

Councilmember Pruett, Councilmember Pruitt, Councilmember Stewart and Councilmember Vincent. Councilmember Varner was not present for the vote.

8. Community Development

Mr. Rodney Heard

Preliminary Plat Approval

Hampton Preserve

Council District: 1, Rufus Stewart

Applicant(s): Bernie Smith on behalf of Manor Restorations

Address/Location: 235 Hampton Street

Petition Request: Preliminary Plat Review, Chapter 16.12 Procedure, Section 16.12.060 (A-D)

Existing Zoning: RTD (Residential Townhouse District) with conditions per ORD 19-03-18001(Z)

Location: Hampton Street Corridor southwest of Bridges Road intersection

Tax Parcel ID: M02501005000

Land Lot(s): 133 & 156 of the 7th District Tract Acreage: 8.89 +/- total acres
City Council

CDD Review Report (08/06/20)

Request for Approval via Consent Agenda (08/17/20)

Community Development Director Mr. Rodney Heard reviewed the preliminary plat for Hampton Preserve. Some of the points he reviewed are listed as follows:

- The existing zoning is RTD (Residential Townhouse District) with variances.
- There is no reduction in the heated square footage.
- This allows for a one-car garage versus a two-car garage.
- There has been a reduction in the right-of-way setbacks for the units along Bridges Road, from 30 to 20.
- There will be 71 units on 8.92 acres, or eight units per acre per the City Code.

Councilmember Stewart said he had an opportunity to speak with the Applicant about the possibility of a roundabout and sidewalks being installed down Bridges Road. Some discussion ensued.

This item will come back to Mayor and Council for approval at the August 17, 2020 Council Meeting, via the Consent Agenda.

9. Unscheduled Public Comments

(1) Ms. Jea Gackowski

- There are 4,996 registered voters in District 2; and out of the 409 who voted, 254 voted for Councilmember Sandra Vincent.
- We have filed FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) requests for information from the City.
- Ms. Vincent has requested reports from the City that appear to be political in nature and not people-centric.
- Councilmember Vincent has recorded meetings without the knowledge or permission of others.

- Ms. Vincent posted an offensive depiction on her Facebook page, as well as a clip of the Mayor that gives the impression that she was being silenced, after having spoken for more than two hours during the meeting.
- We are requesting that the Mayor and two At Large Councilmembers meet with Sandra and assist her in representing the entire district in a way that is people-centric and without political rantings.
- We are also asking that a parliamentarian be put in place to ensure that all districts get representation.
- To Ms. Vincent: Why not leave the City governing to the Departments and you represent us, the people in District 2? Can we get current reports on the two-way pairs? Why are we not getting educational reports? Why are we not seeing reports of traffic solutions and job growth?
- Is Ms. Vincent going to file a police report and pay for the damage where she hit a parking meter with her car on the square?
- Ms. Vincent recently attended a meeting to defend the police department.
- Ms. Gackowski said that Ms. Vincent owes fines for not filing some state reports

(2) Ms. Annette O'Banion

- A lot of the discourse we see today has to do with the mistrust of government.
- I caution you that we are in the age of the Millennials, and they want collaborative government.
- You should find a way to collaborate with the public differently than you do today, without with excessive rules that make it harder for people to speak.
- The public deserves to know the subject matter before you deliberate.

(3) Ms. Lynette Dorsey

- Ms. Dorsey identified herself as a 20-year business owner in District 4; and she stressed that her comments would be made as a business owner only.
- Ms. Dorsey said she received a phone call from a member of the community who told her about a recent conversation the citizen had with District 4 Councilmember.
- Ms. Dorsey was informed that during the conversation with the citizen that the Councilmember made the claim that Ms. Dorsey was a member of a racist group called McDonough 1776.
- Ms. Dorsey stated for the record that she is not a member of McDonough 1776, nor is she a racist.
- Ms. Dorsey quoted Ms. Varner as having said, "We need to reach across the table. We need to unify our community and respectfully listen to others". In closing, Ms. Dorsey challenged Ms. Varner to act on her words as this behavior is unacceptable.

(4) Ms. Vanessa Thomas

- There is obviously animosity between some of the councilmembers, and it needs to stop.

- The residents of McDonough voted for you so that you could represent the people; and that is what we expect.
- We need to come together and make decisions together for the betterment of the residents of the City of McDonough.
- Please consider holding virtual meetings to give citizens an opportunity to provide feedback and participate in meetings going forward.

Councilmember Vincent requested an update regarding equity training for Mayor and Council. City Administrator, Mr. Preston Dorsey called on Human Resources Director, Ms. Carla Tuck who offered an update on the efforts that have been made to provide equity training for Mayor and Council. She said the companies that she has contacted about training need more information about the type of training that is needed in order to provide an estimate of costs. Some of the questions are listed below:

1. Does the training have to be in person; or is there a possibility of virtual training?
 - Councilmember Vincent said that she believed virtual training would be beneficial so that the information could be shared with staff and the public.
 - Mayor Pro Tem Elrod said that he likes the option of having a recording of the training so that it can be revisited after the conclusion of the training.
 - Councilmember Pruett said it is imperative that the company has training in virtual learning.
 - Councilmembers Varner and Roger Pruitt said they would be fine in-person or virtual training.
2. Some of the vendors have suggested a half-day of training. How long should the training be?
 - Councilmember Vincent said that a half-day of training is not sufficient.
3. Will the training be on a weekday or on the weekend?
 - Mayor Pro Tem Elrod said he would prefer training during the week, but he is open to either.
 - Councilmember Varner asked that quotes be requested for weekday and weekend training, and she stated that she is open to either option.
4. What is the budget for training?
 - Mayor Copeland said that there is a training budget, and the City Administrator can provide that information.

Councilmember Vincent said that each councilmember provided content for the training, which she believes would be the basis for the costs. Ms. Tuck said that a spreadsheet was compiled with the information that was received from the three councilmembers who responded and that information has been shared with each of the companies. Councilmember Vincent requested that a copy of the responses that were received be shared with the entire Council to ensure that everyone is on the same page moving forward. After further discussion, Ms. Tuck said she will gather the information from the vendors and bring it back to Mayor and Council.

Councilmember Vincent said the discussion about Municipal Court restructuring is a continuation of a previous discussion. She asked that the City Attorney review the recommendations that have been provided by the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA).

Mr. Elliott responded that the nationwide trend is to remove the Municipal Court from the Police Department to be a free-standing department, which is what the legal staff at GMA is also suggesting. Mr. Dorsey offered no comments, but he did acknowledge that the Probation Department will also need to be considered if these changes are implemented by Mayor and Council. Discussion ensued.

Councilmember Vincent said that in the wake of the unrest that the nation is experiencing, she believes that the Council should invoke a citizen review board to make recommendations on best practices. She said that this discussion is a way to start the conversation of how this can help the police officers and citizens, and that the details of the formation of the review board will be discussed at a later date.

City Attorney Mr. Elliott said that preliminary discussions with Ms. Vincent have included the nomination of one citizen by each councilmember to form a task force together with representatives from the County Bar Association, the NAACP, ministerial associations, and the Chamber of Commerce, who will then make a recommendation on how the citizen review panel would be structured. Discussion ensued. Councilmember Vincent stressed that this discussion is intended to offer a proactive solution to a potential situation.

Councilmember Vincent said she has provided a copy of the 21st Century Policing Update to Police Chief Noble for his review, and she asked that he provide feedback on the recommendations that are a part of the update. She said that the 21st Century Policing Update should act as a guide to audit current practices and ensure that things are not overlooked which could be potentially problematic. She noted that while the City is already implementing some of the recommended practices, she believes this would be a great opportunity to show leadership. She said she would appreciate any feedback from Mayor and Council so that more conversations can take place with the end goal of adopting the document.

Councilmember Vincent asked for an update relative to Jonesboro Road Park. Public Works Director, Mr. Ronnie Thompson was in attendance for the meeting, and he discussed the Jonesboro Road Park project. Mr. Thompson said that drawings were submitted; however, the drawings were returned by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) due to some high pressure gas mains that were on the right-of-way. Mr. Thompson said that the Water Department will be doing a hydro-blast to determine how deep the lines are, and then he will resubmit the drawings to GDOT for approval of the permit.

Councilmember Vincent noted that the Alexander Park discussion was listed on the Consent Agenda.

Councilmember Vincent shared her ongoing concerns as the Coronavirus continues to spread, and she noted that other government agencies have successfully held virtual meetings to allow for citizen involvement. She said that she has recommended the Zoom

platform with Facebook interface as a mechanism for the City of McDonough to hold virtual meetings, in lieu of cancelling meetings going forward.

Technology Services Director Mr. Steve Sikes offered a presentation about how other agencies have successfully held virtual meetings. He also discussed Granicus, which is the method of recording and streaming meetings that the City of McDonough currently uses. Mr. Sikes then offered the staff recommendation that the City Council should utilize Zoom to hold virtual meetings, which would be streamed through Granicus to the City's website. Alternatively, he discussed the use of Facebook, which he noted would require a Facebook moderator to address any comments if it were published through Facebook Live.

After the presentation, discussion ensued. Councilmember Vincent reiterated that the reason for this conversation is because meetings have been cancelled, and this would allow for meetings to continue moving forward.

Councilmember Vincent motioned to move forward with the recommendation of the Technology Services Director to hold virtual meetings; and Councilmember Varner seconded.

Councilmember Roger Pruitt asked about the legal provisions that only allow for two virtual meetings per calendar year. Mr. Elliott said that there is a specific provision of the Open Meetings Law that provides for virtual meetings under emergency conditions. Mayor Pro Tem Elrod also expressed some concerns about holding virtual meetings in lieu of in-person meetings moving forward, and he said he would need some time to find answers to some of his questions before making a decision. Mr. Sikes said that he will need to do additional research as it relates to integrating secondary audio for virtual meetings; and discussions continued.

After the discussion was concluded, Councilmember Vincent called for the vote. The vote was three in favor and four in opposition. The motion did not pass. Those voting in favor were Councilmember Stewart, Councilmember Varner and Councilmember Vincent. Those voting in opposition were Mayor Copeland, Mayor Pro Tem Elrod, Councilmember Benjamin Pruett and Councilmember Roger Pruitt.

Mayor Pro Tem Craig Elrod discussed meeting and agenda decorum. He noted that the Council currently operates under an Ordinance which was passed in 2006. He said that the purpose of the agenda item is for discussion in hopes of drafting an updated Ordinance at a future time. He said that the suggested bullet points had been put together by the City Attorney and shared with Mayor and Council prior to the meeting. Mr. Elliott clarified that the items listed in the document are not recommendations; they are a collaboration of suggestions based on what other Cities have done.

Mayor Pro Tel Elrod reviewed some of the specific items he would like to address in a new ordinance which are relative to elected officials and citizens alike. He asked that Mayor and Council review the proposed changes and reach out to either Mr. Elliott or

himself with any suggestions so a draft Ordinance can be put together for all members to review at a future meeting. Discussion ensued.

Councilmember Vincent noted for the record that the City Council adopted updated rules of decorum at the City Council Retreat in 2009; and she expressed her concerns about some of the rule changes that were suggested. She said that the proposed suggestions include giving the Mayor the sole power to set the meeting agendas and to determine what types of meetings will be held, which she believes would be a disservice to the Council and the public. Mayor Pro Tem Elrod clarified that the purpose of that suggestion is to ensure that someone other than staff is held responsible for setting the published meeting agendas.

Discussion continued. Councilmember Vincent said that the majority of her concern is that this appears to be an attempt to tack things onto legislation that are unrelated to the document and potentially binds the power of Council to represent the citizens. Mayor Pro Tem Elrod clarified that he did not write any of the suggestions that are in the document, nor did any citizen. He said that the purpose of the document was to provide an opportunity for discussion only.

Councilmember Vincent then asked Mr. Elliott what prompted his drafting of the suggestions. Mr. Elliott said that the prior City Administrator had a conversation with him about updating the rules of decorum, as Mr. Dickerson was aware of that Mr. Elliott provides training in that specific area with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Councilmember Vincent shared her continued concerns that with the apparent division among Council, some Councilmembers will not be able to fairly represent the voice of the citizens in their Districts if the proposed changes are made.

Mayor Copeland commented that each Councilmember's voice is equally important; and the purpose of the discussion is to ensure that every Councilmember can review the suggestions and come to an agreement on how to move forward.

City Clerk Ms. Janis Price addressed Mayor and Council regarding planning for 2020 City of McDonough Christmas Parade. She expressed her concerns about Covid-19 and social distancing with crowds at the parade. She said that the decision about the parade is up to Mayor and Council; however, she offered her recommendation that the parade should be cancelled.

Mayor Copeland said that he has already made the painful decision to cancel the Veterans Day Breakfast for 2020. Councilmember Vincent said she hoped the City could come up with a safe alternative to cancelling the parade since it such an important event for the City of McDonough. Ms. Price stated that we could not have the parade if the Lions Club members did not assist as they do every year. Mayor Copeland said that the Lions Club is instrumental in the parade line up each year, so he will contact the Dean of the Lions Club for their input before making a final decision about the parade.

Mayor Copeland called for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 20, 2020, 9:00 a.m. meeting. Councilmember Roger Pruitt motioned and Councilmember Benjamin Pruett seconded. The vote was four in favor. Those voting in favor were Mayor Copeland, Mayor Pro Tem Elrod, Councilmember Benjamin Pruett and Councilmember Roger Pruitt. Councilmembers Stewart and Varner were not present for the July 20, 2020, 9:00 a.m. meeting; and Councilmember Vincent did not vote.

**20. Executive Session (if needed) for: Litigation O.C.G.A. 50-14-2
Real Estate O.C.G.A. 50-14-3 (b)(1)
Personnel O.C.G.A. 50-14-3 (b)(2)**

Mayor Copeland called for a motion to go into Executive Session for Personnel O.C.G.A. 50-14-3 (b)(2). Councilmember Roger Pruitt motioned and Councilmember Benjamin Pruett seconded. The vote was seven in favor.

Mayor Copeland called for a motion to go back into Regular Workshop. Councilmember Stewart motioned and Councilmember Benjamin Pruett seconded. The vote was seven in favor.

There were no action items to report.

Mr. Dorsey thanked all of the City staff and citizens who were involved in making the McDonough Beautiful Clean-Up Day a success on Saturday. He also said that Chief Noble will be attending seven-day training starting Monday, to be certified as a Chief of Police in the State of Georgia. He advised that County Commissioner Gary Barham will be in contact with each of the councilmembers regarding a matter concerning the City of McDonough.

Councilmember Vincent also thanked the staff and Ms. Euretha Olokodana for their efforts to make the McDonough Beautiful Clean-Up Day a huge success. She also clarified that during a recent visit to the square, she was concerned that she was being followed so she contacted Chief Noble to make him aware of her concerns. She said that when leaving the square, she hit a parking meter with her car. She notified Chief Noble of that in her phone call as well, expressing that she would take care of any damage that was caused to the meter.

Councilmember Vincent stated for the record that she has not posted a video of the Mayor on Facebook. Further, she said she does not understand why a picture that was posted on her social media would be considered offensive, as it is a depiction of a person who looks like her wearing a mask. She stated for the record that at no time has she ever spoken in a manner that was divisive on social media or otherwise.

Mayor Pro Tem Elrod thanked everyone who was in attendance at the meeting. He commended Chief Noble and the City Administrator on the great jobs they are doing for the City. He offered a reminder of the Art Walk that is taking place on the square as a self-guided tour from the Welcome Center. In closing, he thanked the City staff and citizens who took part in McDonough Clean-Up Day on Saturday, and he said it was wonderful to see the community come together for that event.

Councilmember Roger Pruitt thanked the City Administrator and City staff for the great job they do.

Mayor Copeland said that the County's governing authority is in preparation to find a new location outside of the town square to construct a new courthouse. He noted that in 2019, there was a citizen poll that resulted in a 60/40 vote in support of keeping the courthouse on the square; and he noted that the Merchants have expressed that they are extremely concerned about the proposed change.

In closing, Mayor Copeland said that the public comments made at the meeting need to be addressed; and he called on the City Administrator and City Attorney in regards to discussing and responding to issues and concerns that were expressed.

Mayor Copeland adjourned the meeting at 9:06 p.m.

Janis E. Price
City Clerk

OPEN MEETINGS COMPLIANCE NOTICE: This is a regularly scheduled meeting of Mayor and Council of the City of McDonough duly noticed pursuant to the requirements of the Georgia Open Meetings Law (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1, et seq). Notice of the meeting schedule was published in the *Henry Herald* on January 1, 2020; and a copy the meeting schedule was posted at City Hall and on the City's website, as required by law.