



MINUTES
CITY OF MCDONOUGH
CITY COUNCIL MEETING WORKSHOP
CITY HALL – 136 KEYS FERRY STREET
SEPTEMBER 3, 2020
6:00 PM

1. Call to Order

Mayor Copeland

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

2. Roll Call

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	Absent
Councilmember Roger Pruitt	Present
Councilmember Rufus Stewart	Present
Councilmember Kamali Varner	Present
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; Finance Director, Mr. Mike Clark; Human Resources Director, Ms. Carla Tuck; Public Works Director, Mr. Ronnie Thompson; Community Development, Mr. Eric Pitts; Executive Assistant, Ms. Euretha L. Olokodana; and Network Administrator, Mr. Brian Linton.

3. Approval of the Agenda

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

4. Pledge to the Flag

Mayor Pro Tem Elrod led the Pledge to the Flag.

5. Invocation

Councilmember Stewart gave the Invocation.

**6. Consent Agenda
Administration**

- A. Approval of a Letter of Agreement between the City of McDonough and Building Owners of 21 & 23 Hampton Street in McDonough for the purpose of a private/public partnership to commission a muralist to paint a rendition of the original McDonough Fire Station and a Dalmatian dog on the side of the building. The mural fee will not exceed \$8,000.00 and will be paid by the budgets of Main Street, McDonough Beautiful and McDonough Tourism; Authorization for the Mayor to sign the agreement.
- B. Approval of the minutes of the August 17, 2020, City Council Meeting.

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

7. Scheduled Public Comments

- A. Ms. Jea Gackowski, Transparency

Ms. Jea Gackowski discussed transparency issues in District 2; and she reviewed some of Councilmember Vincent's recent interactions with her on social media. Ms. Gackowski stated that Councilmember Vincent has failed to file financial reports that are mandatory for elected officials. Additionally, she expressed concerns related to emails written by Councilmember Vincent to both councilmembers and staff.

8. Discussion and potential vote on proposal for Elected Officials' training regarding Race Equity and Implicit Bias. Ms. Carla Tuck

Human Resources Director Ms. Carla Tuck presented two proposals that have been submitted to provide Elected Officials' training related to Race Equity and Implicit Bias; and she requested direction from Mayor and Council on how to move forward. Mayor Pro Tem Elrod responded that he would support the proposal that was submitted by Workable Options, as it offered specific guidelines for the training.

Councilmember Vincent motioned to adopt the National League of Cities proposal for Elected Official training on Race Equity and Leadership and Implicit Bias, and Councilmember Varner seconded. There was further discussion.

Mayor Copeland called for the vote. The vote was four in favor and two in opposition. The motion passed. Those voting in favor were Mayor Pro Tem Elrod, Councilmember

Stewart, Councilmember Varner and Councilmember Vincent. Mayor Copeland and Councilmember R. Pruitt voted in opposition. Councilmember B. Pruett was not present at the meeting.

9. Adoption of a Resolution for Municipal Court Restructuring Councilmember Vincent

Councilmember Vincent discussed the adoption of a Resolution for Municipal Court Restructuring. She asked if any of her fellow councilmembers had any questions about moving forward. Councilmember R. Pruitt requested that the City Attorney research if any other municipalities that are similar in size to McDonough have restructured their Police and Municipal Court Departments; and Mr. Elliott agreed to do so. Discussion ensued. Mr. Elliott noted that he had shared the information with Mayor and Council from the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) regarding Municipal Court and Police restructuring; and he said that the recent trend is to separate the two departments.

Police Chief Ken Noble said that he is confident that the Municipal Court is running properly, and he noted that he is not involved in the day-to-day operations there.

Councilmember Vincent motioned to adopt the Resolution for the restructuring of the McDonough Municipal Court and Councilmember Varner seconded. The vote was two in favor and four in opposition. The motion did not pass. Those voting in favor were Councilmember Varner and Councilmember Vincent. Those voting in opposition were Mayor Copeland, Mayor Pro Tem Elrod, Councilmember R. Pruitt and Councilmember Stewart. Councilmember B. Pruett was not present at the meeting.

10. Task Force, Police Department Citizen Review Board, Discussion and Vote Councilmember Vincent

Councilmember Vincent discussed forming a task force for the purpose of developing a process to establish a Citizen Review Board, in which this group would serve as a sounding body for the community to administer concerns and make recommendations related to policing. Additionally, she said that this would provide a mechanism to minimize lawsuits by engaging the public in policing.

Councilmember Vincent motioned to establish a task force to determine the criteria for a Citizen Review Board, and this is an affirmative vote for the establishment of a Citizen Review Board. Councilmember Varner seconded. There was further discussion.

The vote was three in favor and three in opposition. The motion did not pass.

Councilmember Vincent requested a roll call vote on the motion. Those voting in opposition were Mayor Copeland, Mayor Pro Tem Elrod and Councilmember R. Pruitt. Those voting in favor were Councilmember Stewart, Councilmember Varner and Councilmember Vincent. Councilmember B. Pruett was not in attendance at the meeting.

Councilmember Varner remarked that the City established a Citizen Review Board many years ago in response to an officer-involved shooting that occurred in McDonough. She said that she supports the creation of a task force and Citizen Review Board as a proactive measure in light of all that is happening throughout the country.

**11. 21st Century Policing Update
Adoption of Document**

Councilmember Vincent

Councilmember Vincent discussed the 21st Century Policing Update, which she noted has been reviewed at previous meetings. She said the effort behind the update is to make policing more friendly and less interpreted as being military in structure. She said there is a national concern relative to policing, and this is an implementation guide to improve and enhance community policing. She reviewed the six pillars that are discussed in the document, as follows:

1. Change the Culture of Policing
2. Embrace Community Policing
3. Ensure Fair and Impartial Policing
4. Build Community Capital
5. Pay attention to Officer Wellness and Safety
6. Technology

Police Chief Ken Noble stated that the City of McDonough Police Department is already implementing the practices that are referenced in the 21st Century Policing Update on a daily basis. Additionally, he said that the department is currently working on 100 percent Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training.

Councilmember Vincent said that this would essentially allow the City to provide a score card to citizens to make them aware of all that the Police Department is currently doing. City Administrator Preston Dorsey said he saw no issue with adopting the policy; and he would move forward at the direction of Mayor and Council. There was some additional discussion.

Councilmember Vincent motioned to adopt the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing Implementation Guide, and Councilmember Varner seconded.

The vote was three in favor and three 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 and Councilmember R. Pruitt. Councilmember B. Pruett was not present at the meeting.

**12. Discussion of the Coronavirus Aid,
Relief, and CARES Act regarding funds**

Councilmember Vincent

Councilmember Vincent said that the City has been allocated \$1.4 million dollars through the CARES Act; however, the decision on how those funds would be utilized did not come before the Council. Mayor Copeland offered the clarification that the City spent

\$2.2 million dollars on Public Safety as a result of COVID-19; therefore, it was determined that the best use of the funds received from the CARES Act would be used to offset those costs to the City.

Finance Director Mr. Mark Clark noted that this is a reimbursement grant that had established deadlines for submissions. He noted that both the Department of Treasury and the State of Georgia agreed that public safety salaries for first responders would qualify under the COVID-19 mitigation definition.

Councilmember Vincent expressed that her concerns are related to unilateral decisions being made without a vote, when the City of McDonough has a Mayor and Council form of government. Decisions should be made by Mayor and Council. She said that other Cities have to abide by the Rules of Governance, while the City of McDonough seems to make up the rules as we go.

**13. Discussion and adoption of meeting
guidelines Resolution**

Mayor Pro Tem Elrod

Mayor Pro Tem Elrod requested that the discussion and adoption of a meeting guidelines Resolution be postponed until the next meeting, since the entire Council was not present.

Councilmember Vincent stated her concerns about the systematic reduction of the authority of the Council as the Governing Body. She reviewed some of the items listed in the proposed Resolution for meeting guidelines, and she commented that it is an attempt to remove the power of Council and to defer those powers to the position of Mayor.

Mayor Pro Tem Elrod clarified that while the Mayor would set the agenda, Council can request and approve additional items on an agenda with the support of four councilmembers; so the final say is that of the Council.

14. Park Ordinance

**Councilmember Pruett
Mr. Jim Elliott**

City Attorney Jim Elliott noted that Councilmember Ben Pruett has been the advocate for this particular subject, and he suggested that the discussion be postponed since Mr. Pruett was not in attendance at the meeting.

**15. Discussion and Enforcement of a Truck
Ordinance regarding parking on city roads**

Councilmember Varner

Councilmember Varner discussed issues with commercial truck traffic in the Avalon area, as well as issues with large trucks being parked throughout the City of McDonough. She said that she has requested that the City Attorney provide some language to the existing truck ordinance to address those issues. Mayor Pro Tem suggested that dump

trucks and box trucks be addressed in the ordinance as well. Councilmember Vincent asked that axels be included in the description as well.

This discussion will come back at the next council meeting.

16. Discussion of the Emergency Executive Order Councilmember Varner

Councilmember Varner discussed some proposed changes to the Emergency Executive Order related to hero pay compensation. She requested that the City Attorney clean up the Emergency Order and Ordinance to include some language to differentiate between what is operational and what is policymaking; and discuss some best practices. Mr. Elliott will bring back some amended language for discussion.

17. Acceptance by Mayor and City Council from TRG Geranium Park, LLC of 4.618 acres of property pertaining to Case #181009, subject property recognized as a portion of Tax Parcel ID #M18-07001000, formerly known as the Rainer property and now known as Geranium Park, located at 222 Decatur Road. This property is for a Pocket Park area including a pond, funded by TRG Geranium Park, LLC., and after it is established, the park will be maintained by the City of McDonough. Mr. Preston Dorsey Mr. Eric Pitts

Mr. Eric Pitts, Consultant for the Community Development Department reviewed the acceptance of 4.618 acres of property located at 222 Decatur Road and pertaining to case number 181009, to be established as a pocket park with a pond and to be maintained by the City of McDonough. Discussion ensued.

Mayor Pro Tem Elrod motioned to accept 4.618 acres of property that are a part of Tax Parcel M18-07001000, donated to the City from TRG Geranium Park, LLC; and Councilmember R. Pruitt seconded. The vote was five in favor and one in opposition. The motion passed. Those voting in favor were Mayor Copeland, Mayor Pro Tem Elrod, Councilmember R. Pruitt, Councilmember Stewart and Councilmember Varner. Councilmember Vincent voted in opposition. Councilmember B. Pruett was not present at the meeting.

18. Unscheduled Public Comments

(1) Ms. Jea Gackowski commented on District 2 Councilmember working in other districts, and lack of transparency. Ms. Gackowski stated that she had gotten her information through filing Freedom of Information requests and had not been involved in any meetings.

(2) Ms. Samantha Samuels commented about the hostility displayed from Ms. Gackowski. She did not like hearing about the Mayor's comment of how to

handle CM Vincent, which was disrespectful to her. She said that we may all have differences but we treat each other with respect.

(3) Ms. Vanessa Thomas remarked that there must be some vendetta between CM Vincent and Ms. Gackowski but that she couldn't believe what she had heard tonight at the meeting. Specifically, that the funds returned through the CARES Act should have been discussed with Mayor and Council. She believed that there is a conflict of interest and that Police and Municipal Court should be separated. Also that training for Mayor and Council should be taken care of routinely and not have to be voted on for a specific class. Ms. Thomas advocated that the City Attorney give Mayor and Council their duties. Mayor Copeland suggested to Ms. Thomas that she might like to read Chapter 2.19 of The City Charter which give the Powers and Duties of the Mayor.

- 19. 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)**

No Executive Session was held.

20. City Administrator, City Attorney, and City Clerk Comments

There were no comments.

21. Councilmembers (CM) and Mayor Comments

CM Vincent stated that she had met with the City Administrator and the Public Works Director about some challenges concerning grass cutting and cutting in the right-of-ways. Some recommendations will be made about this.

Mayor Pro Tem Elrod thanked all of the guests who had attended the meeting, thanked the Police Department for all that they do, and reminded everyone about the Scarecrow contest.

CM Stewart encouraged everyone to stay safe and he was glad all of the employees were back at work.

CM Pruitt thanked the visitors for attending the meeting and appreciated the good job that staff does for the City.

Mayor Copeland stated that the Henry County Judicial Center located just up the street has been sold to the Association of County Commissioners of GA for \$17 million. He stated that it would be a disaster for the City, if the court system moved out of the City. He encouraged everyone to voice their opinion for the court to stay in the City.

22. Adjournment

Mayor Copeland adjourned the meeting at 8:01 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.