

MINUTES
CITY OF MCDONOUGH
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL-CALLED MEETING
COMFORT SUITES
THE GEORGIA MEETING ROOM
64 HIGHWAY 81W. AT EXIT 218
MCDONOUGH, GA 30253
FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 2019
10:00 AM

The City Council Special Called Meeting was held at the Comfort Suites, McDonough, Georgia, on Friday, January 11, 2019, beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Mayor Copeland welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

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

Mayor Billy Copeland	Present
Mayor Pro Tem Kamali Varner	Arrived in the afternoon
Councilmember Craig Elrod	Present
Councilmember Benjamin Pruett	Present
Councilmember Roger Pruitt	Present
Councilmember Rufus Stewart	Present
Councilmember Sandra Vincent	Present

Others in attendance for the meeting were: City Administrator, Mr. Keith Dickerson; City Clerk, Ms. Janis Price; Police Chief, Mr. Preston Dorsey; Attorney, Jim Elliott; Facilitator, Mr. Gordon Maner; Community Development Director, Mr. Rodney Heard; Executive Assistant, Ms. Euretha Lyles Olokodana; and Executive Assistant, Ms. Trisha Colpetzer.

Councilmember Roger Pruitt led the Pledge to the Flag; and Councilmember Benjamin Pruett gave the Invocation for the meeting.

Mayor Copeland called for a motion to approve the Agenda, with the addition of Councilmember Vincent's nomination for the appointment for the Planning and Zoning Commission and BOZA. Councilmember Pruitt motioned and Councilmember Pruett seconded. The vote was six in favor. Those voting in favor were Mayor Copeland, Councilmember Elrod, Councilmember Pruett, Councilmember Pruitt, Councilmember Stewart and Councilmember Vincent. Mayor Pro Tem Varner was not present for the vote.

Facilitator, Mr. Gordon Maner with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government discussed the purpose, overview and goals for the meeting.

City Administrator, Mr. Keith Dickerson presented an update regarding City projects and services:

- Property Tax is up 6.74 percent
- LOST Tax is up 7.35 percent
- Insurance Premium Tax is up 7.25 percent
- Hotel/Motel Tax is up 2.09 percent
- No plan to raise in water rates for 2019
- SPLOST V will be on the ballot in November 2019
- Some joint projects with the County include Racetrack Road, Ivy Edwards Lane and Bridges Road
- Keep SPLOST V list of projects simple, i.e.; transportation improvements; public safety facilities and equipment; cultural, recreational and historic improvements; and parks and recreation including facilities
- Need to have SPLOST workshops early in the year
- Need three projects from each councilmember to discuss for SPLOST V
- Census is coming up in 2020
- Redistricting will take place in 2021
- Will continue to work on Service Delivery Strategy (SDS)
- We are currently working on a mandated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance study for all city facilities
- We will need to staff the Polk Museum
- Look at adding a City-Wide Event Planner to handle all events
- Sidewalks are completed at Bridges Road, Veterans Drive and Racetrack Road
- Lighting projects may be considered for SPLOST V
- The City currently owns 64 properties
- Work towards building more online activities to help streamline business needs
- Put together a business inventory for available locations and rent costs to compare to other areas around McDonough
- Develop a workforce inventory to determine what types of workers are available in McDonough
- Proposal to transition Public Information Officer role to create social media policy, update social media and design new City website
- Continue discussions with school system about use of old Henry County High School and Middle School athletic fields and facilities
- Park improvements to consider include constructing outdoor wedding sites, sports tables, fun art and conversation circles
- Consider a Proclamation for how to officially pronounce McDonough

During the presentation, some discussion took place. At the conclusion of the presentation, Mr. Maner called for a short break.

After the break, Community Development Director Mr. Rodney Heard presented updates from the Community Development Department.

- Focus of the Community Development Department is to collaborate and enhance the quality of life for maintaining optimum growth management through vision, platform and expansion
- Expected completion of Unified Development Code (UDC) in 2019
- Initial Livable Communities Initiative (LCI) Plan in 2004 set out goals and objectives for the City, i.e.; strengthening linkages between Town Square and Alexander Park; redesign of Big Spring Park; increasing storefront space; expanding the downtown residential population; developing performing arts venues; and improving mobility, connectivity and parking efficiency options
- LCI Program Strategy for 2011-2012 for Town Square Revitalization Program included mix of land uses, mobility options, network of streets and pathways, and promotion of a mixture of housing types to create sustainable development patterns
- Mr. Heard reviewed the Community Development Department (CDD) Team performance from 2014 to 2018, showing cumulative totals increasing revenues by \$1,371,184 during the five-year period.
- Recommended FOCUS areas for 2019 are health and wellness; connectivity; pedestrian access and transit; neighborhood retail and services; dwelling types; social interaction; and code enforcement
- UDC will focus on image and character to support cluster development and will include development standards to support specialty retail businesses and provide open space/green space
- Complete streets policy and development standards to create interconnectivity, support multi-use design formats and complement existing historic context
- Forecasted development places and spaces for 2019 include the historic town square and town center; South Point; city gateways; village activity centers; and the Blacksville Community

After the presentation, discussion ensued. Councilmember Vincent said that she would like to see a sustainability plan for District 2, as it relates to the Jonesboro Road corridor.

Councilmember Elrod asked about the progress of the UDC, and Mr. Heard responded that once the legal review is completed, public information sessions will be scheduled.

Prior to lunch, Mayor Copeland called on Ms. Janis Price to offer a blessing; and a break was taken for lunch.

After lunch was concluded, Mayor Copeland called the meeting to order.

Mayor Copeland called for a motion to approve the recommendations of Councilmember Vincent to appoint Mr. Sam Humphries to the Board of Zoning Appeals for 2019; and to appoint Ms. Yolanda Williams to the Planning and Zoning Commission for 2019. Councilmember Pruett motioned and Councilmember Pruitt seconded. The vote was five in favor. Those voting in favor were Mayor Copeland, Councilmember Elrod, Councilmember Pruett, Councilmember Pruitt and Councilmember Vincent. Mayor Pro Tem Varner and Councilmember Stewart were not present for the vote.

Mayor Billy Copeland was the first to offer discussion topics of the Governing Body. Mayor Copeland expressed his concerns related to the proposed removal of the County Courthouse from the McDonough square.

- County spent \$127,000 for a study regarding the proposal in conjunction with the expansion of their offices
- The current discussion is about moving the courthouse to the old golf course property
- Moving the courthouse would gravely effect the City of McDonough
- Merchants Association and citizens are concerned
- Concerned moving the courthouse would devastate the town square

Councilmember Vincent shared her thoughts that if the courthouse is moved, the City may have a golden opportunity to consider conversion of the building into a dormitory for the technical college. Councilmember Elrod said he feels it's very important to do everything possible to keep the courthouse in town; but that if it does happen, the City will have to find the best way to make it work. Mayor Copeland said he will give a copy of the survey to Council to review.

Councilmember Craig Elrod discussed the need to look down the road at what the goals of the City will be moving forward regarding economic development.

- The City has a great portfolio of restaurants and industrial development - How do we plan to attract professional jobs?
- McDonough needs to be the leader in promoting the south side workforce
- Consider two different economic development plans; one for historic downtown and one for outside the downtown area
- Water bill payments should be online to make processes more business/user friendly
- Consider limiting certain types of businesses in the City

After Councilmember Elrod's comments, some discussion took place. Councilmember Pruett said that the lack of "Class A" space could be a downfall for attracting businesses to McDonough.

Councilmember Benjamin Pruett discussed developing a Proclamation to establish the proper pronunciation of McDonough.

- Develop light-hearted marketing strategy for how to say McDonough
- Send out to media outlets
- Suggestions include a big framed Proclamation at City Hall and videos of citizens correctly pronouncing McDonough

Councilmember Roger Pruitt raised the topic of the City providing funding for a back entrance to the Senior Center and Library.

- Consider making this a SPLOST project with the County
- Look into the costs associated with the project
- There were previous discussions about tying this into Heritage Park

Councilmember Elrod said that the proposed roundabout at Postmaster Drive might alleviate the traffic issues. Councilmember Pruitt said that the County has discussed making it one-way running westward, and that they would like to build a covered bridge as well.

Councilmember Rufus Stewart brought forth the topic of how to bring good paying jobs to the City.

- People are catching the bus to go outside of McDonough for professional jobs
- Young people need jobs in this area
- Look at bringing government jobs to McDonough

Councilmember Elrod said that part of the issue with jobs is not having the business space to support those employment needs. Mr. Dickerson said that the Henry County Water Authority has done very little to support industry in this area by not providing adequate sewer.

Mayor Pro Tem Kam Varner was not present at this time.

Councilmember Sandra Vincent discussed festivals and city events.

- Discussions for new festivals and/or events need to come before Mayor and Council
- Clarify what it means to sponsor events
- Need to trademark City logo
- City of McDonough provided a tent and a stage for toy drive
- The City of McDonough deserves to get credit

Councilmember Elrod said that the Council voted that all City-sponsored events should come before Mayor and Council for approval. Councilmember Vincent stated that with Mainstreet being in District 3, there will always be activities sponsored by Mainstreet that do not come before Mayor and Council for approval. Mr. Dickerson said that there needs to be policies in place for City-sponsored events that include proof of insurance by the sponsored event holder.

City Administrator Mr. Keith Dickerson discussed ticketing persons in possession of less than one ounce of marijuana.

- Cities are issuing citations for possession of less than one ounce of marijuana in lieu of arrests
- Consider increasing fines related to subsequent offenses

Councilmember Pruett questioned if state law would supersede a City Ordinance. Attorney Elliott said that it is within the bounds of the law for Municipalities to invoke these ordinances. Councilmember Pruett verified with Police Chief Dorsey that the change would also eliminate the misdemeanor charge for possession of less than an ounce of marijuana to a simple citation. Councilmember Elrod said he could support the change, but that limitations on citations would need to be in place; i.e. a three strikes and you're out kind of rule. Councilmember Stewart and Councilmember Vincent suggested that drug education should be included with any proposed changes.

After some discussion, it was determined that the City Administrator and Police Chief would bring a policy back for Mayor and Council for consideration.

Mayor Copeland discussed another topic regarding weeds and vegetation throughout the City.

- Need to get ordinance in place regarding new guidelines for grass, from 12 to six inches
- Leaves and branches have always been an issue at the city cemetery
- Yesterday, the cemetery looked as good as it ever has and we should be proud

Councilmember Elrod discussed the need for a public relations plan.

- One person is needed to speak on behalf of the City to all media outlets and social media
- Message needs to be clear across all platforms
- Develop social media based partnerships
- Put together a short list of public relations firms in the event of an unforeseen emergency
- Put together a social media policy for staff/employees to be included in the personnel policy

Councilmember Pruett discussed the need for the adoption of a Park-Use Ordinance.

- Park-Use Ordinances have been discussed previously
- Previous discussions included carrying firearms into parks
- Has that ordinance been adopted?

Mr. Dickerson said he will ask Mr. Elliott to review the revisions that were previously proposed for the Park-Use Ordinance. Councilmember Pruett said he would love to see the City follow through and complete what was started with the Park-Use Ordinance. Councilmember Elrod mentioned including rules regarding pets in the Ordinance as well. Lastly, Councilmember Pruett asked that any ordinances that were previously discussed be placed on an upcoming consent agenda for a vote.

Councilmember Roger Pruitt discussed the topic of the saving the Railroad depot.

He asked if there was any interest in purchasing the depot and moving it to downtown.

Councilmember Elrod commented that his understanding is that the railroad will only sell the depot if the crossing is closed. Councilmember Pruitt said that his understanding is that if the depot is moved, the railroad will consider selling it. Mr. Dickerson said further discussions need to take place with the railroad. Councilmember Pruitt said his main objective is to save the depot.

Councilmember Vincent discussed the topic of quality of life in McDonough.

- Would like to get some movement on the Jonesboro Road Park
- Would like to expand trail system at Alexander Park
- Continue working on beautification
- We need to be deliberate in the approach to the arts and historic preservation
- Consider an Arts Ordinance
- Concentrate on banners throughout the City

Councilmember Elrod expressed the need to spread art projects throughout the City instead of focusing specifically on one area. Councilmember Vincent suggested focusing on the gateways to provide an anchor for art projects throughout the City. Councilmember Vincent suggested integrating some of these ideas into SPLOST V projects.

Mayor Copeland raised the topic of issues on College Street.

- Four speed humps are too many for one street
- Need to address the issue and bring it to a close

Councilmember Elrod discussed the topic of Code Enforcement.

- Tall grass is a Code Enforcement issue
- Code Enforcement needs to be strong and sensible while also remaining fair and balanced
- Look at all codes and authorize staff to have more authority
- Need to modernize the department to make ticketing processes more streamline and easier to track
- Add yellow lights to the trucks for identification and safety purposes

Councilmember Pruett discussed the topic of considering a multi-family zoning moratorium.

- Seems to be a general consensus among Council to limit multi-family zoning
- City has very few estate properties

Mr. Rodney Heard commented that there are a couple of thresholds that need to be evaluated once a legal review has been completed regarding previously zoned properties. Mr. Jim Elliott suggested considering amending the zoning ordinance to eliminate some of the zonings for a certain period of time, in lieu of a moratorium. Mr. Heard reiterated the importance of growth management planning as the City moves forward. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Maner called for a short break.

After the break, Councilmember Pruitt discussed the topic of revising the Trash and Litter Ordinance.

- Need organized work days
- Educate the public about littering
- City may need to write tickets for litter

Councilmember Elrod suggested that this could be a great project for the McDonough Youth Advisory Council. Councilmember Vincent reiterated that beautification has to be a part of this. Councilmember Pruitt stressed the importance of getting the County involved with this initiative as well.

Councilmember Vincent discussed February being Black History Month.

- Issues associated with confederate monuments are due to the fact that the history of the nation is one-sided
- Need monuments that acknowledge enslaved persons and the contributions that enslaved Americans made
- City should pass a Resolution acknowledging the historic significance of those who were enslaved in the community
- Work towards creating a monument that acknowledges all of the combined ancestry of McDonough

Councilmember Pruett said he would be happy to support the initiative in any way, and Councilmembers Elrod and Stewart agreed. Councilmember Vincent shared her belief that this would be a great opportunity to show leadership and encourage other areas to do the same.

Councilmember Elrod discussed the topic of the McDonough Housing Authority.

- Currently there is a five-year waiting list
- Need more resources and to create accountability
- Look at Griffin Housing Authority as an example
- Consider utilizing SPLOST funds to provide resources to the Housing Authority
- Consider partnering with other organizations to bring private funds to the Housing Authority

Discussion ensued regarding the McDonough Housing Authority. Councilmember Vincent said it is imperative not to move people out of their homes because that would trigger displacement laws. She said if the goal is to transition residents into homeownership, partnerships with entities like Habitat for Humanity need to be in place.

Mayor Pro Tem Varner discussed the plan for the McDonough Youth Advisory Council.

- She wanted to bring a curriculum to Council at the June Workshop Meeting for next year's Youth Advisory Council

Councilmember Pruitt continued with a discussion regarding the Rainer parking lot on Hampton Street

- Merchants have asked about purchasing annual parking permits for use of the lot
- Currently merchants have to use meters
- When will the Rainer parking lot be open?

Mr. Dickerson said that studies are being completed before the lot can be opened.

Councilmember Elrod said he would like to see the chain-link fence removed.

Councilmember Vincent brought up gathering places for her next topic for discussion.

- Front porches have historically been core gathering places in the south
- Need to work on bringing together the seniors and youth in the community
- Look at the possibility of repurposing some of the land at Alexander Park for an intergenerational center which would provide recreation for youth and seniors integrated with an arts component
- We need indoor recreation facilities in McDonough

Councilmember Pruitt discussed the grant writer.

- Need an update on grants
- Would love for us to receive grants for pocket parks

Mr. Dickerson said that applications for grants are ongoing.

Councilmember Vincent discussed the possibility of adding golf carts that also act as street cleaners.

- Can we look at some way of helping staff with keeping the gateways clean?
- Sign pollution is an ongoing issue as well

Mr. Dickerson responded that those carts cannot be run on state routes, but the City does have street cleaners with extension hoses.

Councilmember Pruitt suggested some housekeeping ideas.

- Elected officials should receive a set amount of money for expenditures related to City business.
- Need a set dollar amount from \$750 to \$1,000 to cover training costs and other City-related business that is not currently included in the budget

Discussion took place related to additional costs associated with training. City Administrator will consider setting specified funds for elected officials in addition to the Mayors' Day Conference and the GMA Convention expenses.

After the topics for discussion were concluded, Mr. Maner wrapped up the retreat. The retreat summary that Gordon prepared and was agreed upon as the meeting progressed is attached. The date was set with all persons confirming Saturday, January 18, 2020, for the 2020 retreat.

Mayor Copeland called for a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Elrod motioned and Councilmember Pruett seconded. All stood in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Janis E. Price
City Clerk

OPEN MEETINGS COMPLIANCE NOTICE: This is a special called 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 was published in the Henry Herald on January 5, 2019; and a notice of the meeting was posted at City Hall and on the City's website, as required by law.