



**WORK SESSION NOTES
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
CITY OF DULUTH, GA
FEBRUARY 25, 2019**

PRESENT: Mayor Harris, Council members Bomar, Carden, Jones, Kelkenberg and Whitlock, City Manager, Department Directors, City Attorney

5:30 - PM CALL TO ORDER

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jenny Nguyen came forward and spoke about the desire to become an Associate Judge.

II. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. APPOINTMENT OF ASSOCIATE JUDGES

Judge Barrett explained that the Duluth City Charter provides for the appointment municipal court judges, by ordinance. State law mandates that appointed municipal court judges be appointed for a term of not less than one year. OCGA 36-32-2. Such term is to be memorialized by agreement, ordinance, or a charter provision. Accordingly, the Municipal Court offers to reappoint the Court's currently serving associate judges. The following Associate Judges are recommended for appointment or reappointment on March 11, 2019 - Margaret Gettle Washburn, Claude Mason, and Chung Hun Lee.

Councilmember Bomar said she felt that adding new members to boards keeps them fresh while allowing mentoring opportunities for succession planning. Councilmember Whitlock asked if this was the only time per year that someone could be appointed, and Judge Barrett said that appointments could be made anytime. Councilmember Carden asked for information about the expenses associated with required training and certification.

Staff was authorized to place an ordinance of appointment on the next Council agenda for approval.

2. APPOINTMENT OF URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

City Clerk Teresa Lynn explained that the City received three applications from individuals who expressed an interest in serving on the Urban Redevelopment Agency. (URA). Interviews were conducted by current Chair Steve Gaultney along with the City Clerk Teresa Lynn and recommends the appointment of Theo Sowah to the Urban Redevelopment Agency, term ending March 31, 2023. Mr. Sowah is a 2018 Graduate of the LEADS program, Citizens Budget as well as the Police Academy.

Staff was authorized to place an ordinance of appointment on the next Council agenda for approval.

3. APPOINTMENT OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS

Planning Director Bill Aiken came forward to explain that four applications were received for the two open positions for the four-year terms expiring April 2023. There will be also be one vacancy next year as Gary Canter will reach his full term limit prior to the expiration of his most recent appointment.

All four applicants were interviewed. Staff recommended the re-appointment of Manfred Graeder and also recommended reappointing Bernard Robertson as the alternate commissioner. Mr. Aiken said he would like to encourage the other applicants to attend the meetings to stay informed so that one of them would be ready to step in next year. Typically, the current alternate would move up to full voting member and any new appointee becomes the alternate.

Councilmember Carden asked about a specific applicant and also asked if a qualified person could take a current member's position. Mr. Aiken responded that he received one application today. Councilmember Bomar said that she agrees the current board members are excellent, but she would love the opportunity to meet new candidates. Mr. Aiken explained that experience is needed from the current board so that one can take over for Mr. Canter who is the Chairman. Councilmember Whitlock outlined a logical path for people to experience city involvement prior to any appointment, but would not recommend replacing people whose terms are not yet fulfilled.

Staff was authorized to place an ordinance of appointment on the next Council agenda for approval.

4. APPOINTMENT OF ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEMBERS

Planning Director Bill Aiken explained that one application was received for ZBA who also applied for the Planning Commission. Staff recommended the re-appointment of Carey Fisher to the Zoning Board of Appeals in the role of Chairman. Due to Chairman Fisher reaching the maximum number of years served, this is a one-year appointment expiring in April 2020. Staff also recommended the re-appointment of Verdi Avila as the alternate member of the Zoning Board of Appeals. This is a four-year appointment expiring in April 2023.

Council discussed terms and qualifications to ensure the integrity of the current appointment process. Councilmember Kelkenberg wanted to ensure that applications for those who are not selected would not automatically expire after one year. Council also wanted to ensure that LEAD graduates were contacted directly notifying them of board vacancies.

Staff was authorized to place the ordinance of appointment on the next Council agenda for approval.

5. SOLID WASTE RFP RESULTS

City Manager James Riker reported that the current solid waste contract with Republic Services is set to expire in April of this year. He gave a brief overview of the RFP, results of the evaluation and a recommendation.

The solid waste RFP scope included commercial and residential pickup, yard waste, and glass recycling options as well as community clean-up days for NOW. The proposals also asked for discounted dumpsters for neighborhoods who schedule a community clean-up on their own. It does not include dumpster for construction debris. The RFP also specifically stated that proposals would not be evaluated solely on cost.

Mr. Riker pointed out the key dates for advertising and reported that six companies attended the pre-bid meetings but only two submitted proposals, Waste Pro of GA and Republic Services (aka BFI). Evaluations were based on the following criteria: cost of services, experience of the proposer in the market, the quality and number of references provided by the proposer, the City's own experience with various proposers, the ability of the proposer to perform the services, customer response time, and the proposer's financial viability and stability.

Mr. Riker noted that Republic Services received the higher score. He said that the proposed costs are higher than the previous contract including a per bag increase. He did feel that the City has some negotiating power on certain items and requested that Council authorize staff to negotiate a contract to be presented for approval at the March 11th meeting.

Councilmember Whitlock asked staff to please reeducate the public on the whole refuse collection and recycling process.

Staff was authorized to place a contract for solid waste collection on the next Council agenda for approval.

III. PRESENTATIONS/UPDATES

1. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATE

City Engineer Margie Pozin came forward to report on the status of:

- George Rogers Avenue – completed.
- Buford Highway/Pleasant Hill interchange - Planting underway - to be complete by March 15. Anticipate field work completion by end of April.
- SR 120 Sidewalk improvements Phase I (Buford Hwy to Claiborne Dr)-substantial completion by spring.
- SR 120 sidewalk improvements Phase II – (Albion Farm to Duluth HS)-Council decision needed for design.
- Rogers Bridge-received concurrence with funding partners on cost sharing (20% total, 5% Duluth). Let date is estimated by June 2020.
- Buford Highway medians – substantially complete.
- Willbrooke Trail – house demolition is 99% complete. Construction estimate of approximately 150 days.
- Main Street Trail – Brock Road to Peachtree Industrial, crossing over a signalized section at Rogers Bridge. Design, right-of-way acquisition is estimated to take two to three years.
- SR120 at George Rogers/Duluth HS Traffic Signal – received six bids for design/construction. Estimates are much higher than anticipated. Will not be finished before the next school year; expected operation January 2020.
- Main Street/Rogers Bridge Rd Traffic Signal – estimates and timeline have been affected by availability of materials. Also expected January 2020.
- SR 120 at Pine Needle Dr – design team started surveying in late January.
- Bunten Road sidewalks Phase I (Old Peachtree to Bunten Park) – design team started surveying in late January. Staff will come back with a strategy.
- Davenport Road/Buford Hwy Traffic Signal – “R cut” restricted crossing intersection not the best option. Pending discussions on inter-parcel connectivity. Railroad coordination is a factor. A roundabout might be another option as a signal is not approved at this point. Staff was approved to start with Norfolk Southern regarding roundabout and parallel road as well as obtain high level estimates from a consultant regarding inter-parcel connections.

2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Economic Development Director Chris McGahee came forward to update Council on details relating to citywide economic development. He highlighted the local company Fascinate, who provides creative fabrication for film and screen. They created the giant Lombardi trophy used in Centennial Park for the SuperBowl experience and provides services worldwide. Such a specialty company needed very specific industrial space and Duluth was able to accommodate them. As there is a 0% vacancy rate on current inventory of Industrial space, staff has been exploring available space along Pleasant Hill for possible annexation. He mentioned the U-Haul company and their recent push to acquire vacant Kmart, Sears etc. to convert for self-storage and truck rentals. Former vacancies are being repurposed to meet a demand.

Mr. McGahee highlighted several other areas of importance in the City. He noted that the signalization of Main Street at Rogers Bridge will change the potential land uses in the area as well. The vacancies along Buford Highway are also starting to fill in. The mix of business uses in the downtown area is vital to keep balanced and he noted the need to recruit retail uses. There is a 15% vacancy rate for Office space and that use is not projected to grow. Co-working spaces have been more prevalent.

Lastly, Mr. McGahee identified four big sites they he considers "large impact" areas: Burton Farms, Hudgens Site, Ingles Site and Berkeley Lake Road for Council to be considering when enacting future land use provisions.

3. CITIZEN BUDGET COMMITTEE UPDATE

City Manager James Riker gave a brief presentation of topics planned for discussion with the 2019 Citizens Budget Committee and asked for Council feedback. Current discussions are planned for:

- Capital Reserves
- Stormwater Fees
- Occupational Tax maximum payments

Council suggested adding discussions on recycling efforts, code enforcement (NOW program), and staff compensation packages.

IV. MATTERS FROM COUNCIL

Councilmember Carden would like to take the lead and research what other cities are doing for Youth leadership programs to further enhance our program. He also mentioned the potential of including Election Day as a City holiday. Council discussed pros and cons, the cost factor, and other options for prioritizing needed time off.

Councilmember Whitlock promoted the idea of hosting a reception for boards/commissions and applicants, as a type of "meet and greet" and to show appreciation for service. He also noted that there are three road races three weeks in a row, and he was concerned with impact on local residents and businesses regarding road closures, etc. There was a past discussion about capping the number of these types of events. He feels that communication with residents is lacking and the hotel construction will also create issues. Lastly, he referenced a report on the future of the economy that also mentions the financial strength of other countries, which is predicting a downturn or stagnant economic projection in the near future. He would like to ensure the City is taking measures to budget accordingly.

Councilmember Bomar announced that she would be attending several Town Hall meetings to have transit conversations to educate people on the upcoming special election. If anyone has a group they are meeting with over the next month and would like her to attend for a short presentation, let her know and she will reach out to them.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council is March 11, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.