

DAHLONEGA CITY COUNCIL

WORK SESSION

OCTOBER 21, 2009

The Dahlonega City Council met at City Hall on October 21, 2009. Council members present were Johnny Ariemma, Michael Clemons, Gerald Lord, Sam Norton, Terry Peters and Ralph Prescott. Mayor Gary McCullough called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

City Manager Bill Lewis announced that Mayor's Day will be held January 22-25, 2010. Mr. Lewis asked about closing the square again this year for Halloween. Council members agreed to close from 5:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Mr. Lewis stated that letters will be sent to merchants concerning plans for Halloween. Mr. Lewis advised that he met with the State Coordinator for the Safe Routes to Schools Program and they will do an evaluation to see if the city qualifies for the grant. DDA Director Joel Cordle invited council members to attend the Dahlonega DDA/Better Hometown Board Strategic Planning Retreat planned for November 5 at City Hall.

Anne Dismukes gave a presentation of the history of the diving bell that Achasta has offered to permanently loan to the city. The 1875 bell is the only known one of its type. DNR representatives have recommended that the bell be displayed at Hancock Park. Council members recommended that someone give details on how to display and protect the diving bell. A committee has been commissioned to meet and give recommendations to the council.

City Attorney Doug Parks advised that the Special Events Ordinance has been revised. Case law has been reviewed and the regulations concerning picketing have been revised. Mr. Parks advised that a restricted parade route is not allowable. He recommended that staff give a suggested parade route instead of a defined route. Mayor McCullough advised that the second reading of this ordinance will be heard at the November Meeting.

City Attorney Doug Parks advised that DNR is expected to approve the latest draft of the Stream Buffer Ordinance. They have confirmed that this ordinance will have no bearing on the city's water withdrawal permit. The council was informed that the second reading of the ordinance will be held at the November Meeting if confirmation of approval is received by DNR.

Council members were given pictures of A Frame Signs. They were informed by City Attorney Doug Parks that all true A Frame Signs are now in compliance. The council discussed the use of signs on easels as an A Frame Type Sign. They also discussed the legality of allowing signs to lean against the building and signs that are put in flower pots. Michael Clemons stated that it was not the intent of the council to allow signs to be propped against walls. Terry Peters advised that signs could be easily converted to an A Frame Sign or mounted permanently on a wall. Chris Head advised that if merchants do not have any private areas an informational sign is not allowed. Council members advised that they preferred to keep the definition of an A Frame Sign as it currently is. Johnny Ariemma stated that he preferred the easel format for signs rather than mounting on an historic building. Michael Clemons stated that

temporary signs should be for a short period of time. It was pointed out that real estate signs stay on the property for a long time. Chris Head informed Council that real estate signs are considered informational signs which can stay up indefinitely. Ralph Prescott asked for a definition of what period of time is temporary. Council members recommended that the mounting frame for informational signs be limited to a size of 2 X 2 inches and not exceed 90 days. They also recommended that no information signs be allowed within the right of way or in flower pots or leaning against buildings. This recommendation will be forwarded to the Historical Preservation Commission and the Dahlenega Planning and Zoning Commission.

City Manager Bill Lewis gave a status report on employee life and health insurance. He advised that we were notified that the cost for employee health insurance would increase ten percent this year and the existing PPO 90/80% plan would be discontinued. Each employee will be offered a choice between three different new plan options and they will also be required to pay a portion of their employee coverage. Employees will also be charged more for dependent coverage. The combination of reduced benefits and asking employees to share in the cost of the employee only coverage and increasing the contributions from employees for their dependent coverage will allow the city to provide life and health coverage within budget and without increase in cost to the city. Mr. Lewis also advised that he will be recommending consolidating the city's current IRS 125 Plan into one plan to include life and health insurance. This will allow employees to pay their insurance cost with pre-tax dollars. The council was informed that open enrollment has already begun and must be completed by November 30. Employees will meet with GMEBS staff to guide them through these changes.

City Attorney Doug Parks advised that NGCSU Campus Police are certified police officers and are also sworn in as Lumpkin County Deputies. Citizens should not consider them any different from Lumpkin County Deputies as they are backing up Lumpkin County Officers and Lumpkin County Officers are also backing them up. They are there as a deterrent to crime downtown. Their area of coverage has grown substantially. GSP Officers now work all accidents within the city limits if they are available. They also have an office in the Sheriff's Office. Mr. Parks stated that law enforcement in Dahlenega is working better than any time in history. Michael Clemons stated that campus police are not taken seriously by local citizens and by college students and it is the council's duty to make citizens aware that they are POST Certified and sworn L.C. Deputies. Mayor McCullough advised that he will work to make citizens aware of this fact.

A motion was made by Gerald Lord to go into Executive Session at 5:50 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter. This motion was seconded by Ralph Prescott and approved by all members present.

The Executive Session was adjourned. Mayor McCullough announced that no action was taken during the Executive Session. The meeting was adjourned.