

DAHLONEGA CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

SEPTEMBER 7, 2010

CALL TO ORDER:

The Dahlonega City Council met in regular session at City Hall on September 7, 2010. Council members present were Johnny Ariemma, Sam Norton, Terry Peters, Michael Clemons, Gerald Lord and Ralph Prescott. Mayor Gary McCullough called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was opened with prayer by Frank Colladay and the Pledge to the American Flag was led by Ralph Prescott.

PRESENTATION:

The City was presented with an American flag that was flown in our honor over NMCB twenty-one in Kandahar Afghanistan on April 14th, 2010 during operation enduring freedom. The flag is framed with a certificate of authenticity and was given to the City by a representative for the family in ownership of the flag. Mayor McCullough stated the City would proudly display it in City Hall.

MINUTE APPROVAL:

A motion was made by Ralph Prescott to approve the minutes of the regular Council meeting held on August 2, 2010 as distributed. This motion was seconded by Sam Norton and approved by all members present.

PUBLIC HEARING:

City Manager, Bill Lewis asked Finance Director, Christopher Austin to give an overview of the budget for 2011. Mr. Austin stated that the budget is a similar budget to prior years, in that there are no tax increases however there are proposed increases to water and sewer rates. The budget this year also includes one new fund, which is the Streetscape Fund. This is the fund that is used to account for the ongoing streetscape improvements to West Main and South Chestatee streets. He also informed Council that the General Fund budget is a very similar amount to last year. The only increases in this fund would be the proposed street and sidewalk improvement program. The only increases in the Water and Sewer Fund are for the increased operating cost of the water plant. Most all the other funds are holding the expenditures to or at levels of last year. He also explained that the Solid Waste Fund was projected to earn a profit in the new budget year. At this time City Attorney Doug Parks asked if anyone in the audience had any comments concerning the budget overview. Stephen Smith, Tourism Director for the Chamber of Commerce asked if the Hotel Motel Tax Fund was a conservative projection on the decrease. Mr. Austin explained that it is due to the decrease in collections over the past two years. If the collections were to be more the budget would be amended and the Chamber would be paid the amount collected. With no more questions, City Manager, Bill Lewis informed Council that this is the first reading on the budget in accordance with State law and there will be one other public hearing on the budget for final adoption. A motion was made by Ralph Prescott to accept the budget as presented for first reading. This motion was seconded by Terry Peters and approved by all members present.

CITIZENS:

Mr. Paul Hoffman with Leadership Lumpkin County, Class of 2010 informed Council that they were supposed to decide on a project. They agreed they wanted their project to be planting trees. This would be something permanent and they would be raising the money for the project. Mr. Hoffman met with City Manager, Bill Lewis, City Engineer, Ricky Stewart and County Extension Agent, Greg Sheppard. During this discussion Mr. Lewis suggested three projects that they might consider. These were Chestatee Street, Parks Street from the Chamber of Commerce to the Methodist Church and Main Street from Rite Aid to J. & J. Foods. The class chose the Main Street project because they felt this could be looked at as another entrance into Dahlonega, which is not as noted as others. They estimated that the project would need thirty five (35) trees, which would be Eastern Redbud, Dogwoods and Crepe Myrtles. Cost estimation for the trees was \$3,500.00. The class has raised \$2,400.00 for this project and feels that additional revenue will come in from Leadership Lumpkin County alumni. Mayor McCullough thanked Mr. Hoffman for the support and assured him the contributions will be used wisely.

Ms. Jane O’Gorman was present as the representative for Community Helping Place. Ms. O’Gorman was presented with a Proclamation for the Community Helping Place Ornament. She stated this was the second year of the ornament and six hundred will be ordered and sold at a cost of \$20.00 each. Mayor McCullough informed everyone that these are great gifts for out of town family and the proceeds will go to fund the Community Helping Place, which is a very worthy cause.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Mayor McCullough advised that reports have been received from the Dahlonega Planning and Code Enforcement Departments concerning activities of those departments during the month of August, 2010. Councilman Ariemma asked the Chamber of Commerce Tourism Director, Stephen Smith to inform Council where they were with the project of having WIFI in the downtown area. He advised that the Chamber is still working to broaden the WIFI capabilities around the square and has talked with NGCSU to be part of this project as well. He also informed Council the Chamber is submitting a request application with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to have Dahlonega become a trail friendly community. This means they are trying to tie all the towns on the trail from Georgia to Maine to give more marketing ability. Councilman Norton noted that the Code Enforcement report showed a lot of activity and asked City Manager, Bill Lewis if he had considered filling the vacant position. Mr. Lewis stated that he agreed this should be considered, however with the difficult economic times it was not in the City budget.

WATER AND SEWER RATES:

Mayor McCullough asked for a motion to approve the first reading of the new Water and Sewer Rates. Councilman Peters made a motion to approve as amended. The motion was seconded by Gerald Lord and approved by all members present.

CITY MANAGERS COMMENTS:

City Manager, Bill Lewis informed Council that Georgia DOT manages all federal funded streetscape projects, such as Transportation Enhancement Grants and federally earmarked monies. The streetscape project is funded by both. He advised that this agreement specifies what responsibilities are the DOT's and which ones are the City's. It also indicates what we can spend our money for and what we can be reimbursed for. This is done with all grants that we have and this is DOT's way of contracting with the City for federal monies for projects. Mr. Lewis recommended approval of this agreement. A motion was made by Sam Norton for approval as submitted. This motion was seconded by Gerald Lord and approved by all members present.

Mr. Lewis also informed the Council that the City has received a certificate in recognition of the hard work in establishing ourselves as a Better Hometown. The National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Georgia Main Street Program certify that Dahlonega Better Hometown has been accredited as a 2010 National Main Street Program for meeting the ten standards of performance for a Main Street organization in 2009. This entitles the City to certain recognitions and also has certain advantages to grants. At this time, Mayor McCullough informed Council that the City had also been recognized and received a plaque from GEFA for certificate of completion for the construction of the dam and reservoir project using a low interest loan from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority. Mr. Lewis also informed Council of the grand opening ceremony on September 28, from 9:30 until 12:00 noon for the Water Plant Dedication. The governor has been asked to speak at 9:30. There will be refreshments served and VIP invitations will be sent. This event is also open to the public and will be advertised in the Dahlonega Nugget for two weeks prior.

Mr. Lewis asked the Council for discussion on the East Main Sidewalk Construction. This includes improvements from Rite Aid to Greenbriar Shopping Center. Mr. Lewis explained expenditures for this project and asked for a budget of \$35,000.00, which may be less if private donations are received. Council asked that Mr. Lewis follow up with DOT and get a written commitment from them on installing the pedestrian crossing at Main Street and Morrison Moore Parkway. After further discussion, Sam Norton made a motion to approve the East Main Sidewalk construction. This motion was seconded by Ralph Prescott and voting for the motion was Michael Clemons, Gerald Lord and Terry Peters. Johnny Ariemma voted against the motion.

CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilman Michael Clemons informed Council of the complaints he had received for the roads needing paved in Sky Country. He asked if a survey could be done of the roads in Sky Country and pay for repaving out of the General Fund. Councilman Johnny Ariemma stated that he agreed that the roads in Sky Country were in need of paving, especially Misty Way and Hyalite Road. City Manager, Bill Lewis informed Council that the City Engineer, Ricky Stewart had already prepared a survey on these roads and some of them have already been submitted to DOT for review.

Councilman Gerald Lord stated that last year when Council went through the budget process it was discussed about preparing the budget thirty (30) days in advance, so there would be more time from when it is approved to when it goes into effect. He informed Council that he wanted to make a motion to direct the City Manager to prepare an ordinance that the budget be approved thirty (30) days before it goes into effect. After further discussion, Mayor Gary McCullough stated that a motion could not be made because this item was not on the agenda.

Councilman Johnny Ariemma asked staff to look at the probability of installing a crosswalk from North Grove Street to Hawkins Street. He felt with the extended stay lodge being built at the corner of Wimpy Mill Road and North Grove Street that this would be needed. After further discussion, this was determined that DOT approval would have to be met since North Grove Street is a state highway.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Johnny Ariemma to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m. This motion was seconded by Ralph Prescott and approved by all members present.

APPROVED BY ME THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2010

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk