

CITY OF DAHLONEGA

City Council Meeting Minutes January 9, 2012

The Dahlonega City Council met in regular session at City Hall on Monday, January 9, 2012. Members present were Bruce Hoffman, Ralph Prescott, Gerald Lord, Terry Peters, Sam Norton and Johnny Ariemma. Also present was City Manager Bill Lewis and City Attorney Doug Parks. Mayor Gary McCullough called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Prayer was led by Mayor McCullough and the pledge to the American Flag was led by Ralph Prescott.

OATH OF OFFICE:

Mayor Gary McCullough requested that all newly elected officials come forward to be sworn into office. The Oath of Office was administered to Bruce Hoffman, Sam Norton and Terry Peters by City Clerk Lou Stewart.

AGENDA APPROVAL:

Mayor Gary McCullough requested approval to amend the agenda to include appointment of a Mayor Pro-Tem, appointment to the Historic Preservation Commission and discussion of the Council Chamber microphones. A motion was made by Councilman Peters to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Councilman Prescott. Mayor McCullough asked for all in favor to raise their hand, all opposed, motion carried unanimously.

MINUTE APPROVAL:

Mayor McCullough requested approval of the December 5, 2011 Council minutes. A motion was made by Councilman Prescott to approve the minutes as distributed, seconded by Councilman Lord. Mayor McCullough asked for any corrections or additions. Councilman Ariemma requested an addition be added to the minutes to include the Mayors comments concerning the re-appointment of Donna Gessell to the Historic Preservation Commission. At this time, Mayor McCullough asked Council if there was a second concerning Councilman Ariemma' comment. Hearing no second to approve, Mayor McCullough asked for all in favor of the motion originally stated, raise their right hand, all opposed, motion carried with the following vote: Ralph Prescott, Gerald Lord, Terry Peters and Sam Norton. Councilman Ariemma voted against the motion. Councilman Hoffman abstained. Mayor McCullough informed that minutes are not meant to articulate everything said in a meeting. Minutes are to itemize what was done, to state the motion and record the vote of City Council.

DEPARMENT REPORTS:

Mayor McCullough asked if Council had any questions concerning any of the department reports that were submitted. At this time, City Manager Bill Lewis was asked to give a project update. Mr. Lewis informed City staff had installed a sump pump under Corkscrew Café for drainage of ground water. Staff removed a pipe during construction and replaced it with the pump. The owner of Corkscrew, Rob Rotunno is aware of the installation. Mr. Lewis also informed Council the Choice Street parking lot improvement project is completed except for planting trees.

The City is working with Greg Sheppard to determine what type of trees would be best for this area. Also, staff will be starting this month on sidewalk repairs and are looking to begin at South Park Street. Mr. Lewis further informed that the City had received one quote and one pending for the resurfacing of Calhoun Road. Councilman Ariemma questioned if all was finished with the South Park Historic District surveying. Mr. Lewis stated it had been completed and Joel would begin with design guidelines.

At this time, Mayor McCullough stated he wanted to welcome Bruce Hoffman to Council and that he was looking forward to working with him for the next four years. Also, Mayor McCullough congratulated Terry Peters and Sam Norton on their victory and look forward to continuing working with them.

Joel Cordle, DDA Director and Rebecca Shirley, DDA Project Coordinator gave a 2011 Activity Report. Mr. Cordle informed Council that their report would be broken down into four points, with the first being Promotion. Ms. Shirley informed Council the DDA tries to always promote the downtown area in regards to shop and dine. They partnered with the Chamber and Merchants Association for the Shop Your Dhalonega Campaign and it was a local focus as well as a tourist focus and the results turned out very well. They have also placed sixteen signs directing people back into downtown. They partnered also with the Chamber on a Comcast cable campaign for a commercial, which is currently running and will go through February. The two main event sponsorships were Old Fashioned Christmas and the Fourth of July. There were also very large turnouts for annual events at Hancock park as well.

Mr. Cordle informed Council concerning the design points of Main Street. Some of the highlights were the downtown flower program, which are changed twice yearly and the Bronze History Plaque program. A plaque was placed on the Sergeant building, owned by Dale Solomich and is located on the South side of the public square. Also, the Shopping promotion banners were redesigned and they were replaced with new decorative pole arms of black wrought iron.

Ms. Shirley informed Council concerning some of the Economic Development promotions. One of the promotions consists of sending out lists of available spaces for sale or lease. These are also put on the DDA website. A monthly business tip newsletter is also mailed to approximately seventy-five businesses.

Mr. Cordle informed Council that DDA had applied for five grants projects in 2011 and prepared for re-certification for a Georgia Main Street City. He further informed DDA had assisted in the parking study and hosted two state events being the Main Street training and the October Ramble. These events brought approximately 200 people to stay and dine in downtown.

Councilman Norton questioned if there were still interest in expanding the Downtown Historical District. City Attorney Doug Parks informed Council this was being looked at with the consideration of converting the area to a floating zone, opposed to a more structured way. This would allow the City to add more Historical sites without including them in the B-3 District.

Chamber President Amy Booker informed Council the Chamber Board monthly luncheon will be on January 26th. The luncheon will be held at the Smith House at 12:00 noon. Ms. Booker also informed the Eggs & Issues Legislative Forum on Saturday was successful and thanked the Mayor and Council for their attendance and support.

Chamber Tourism Director Jay Markwalter informed Council he wanted to share some statistics from 2011. The visitor center had a count of 215,600 visitors for last year and 4,300 of them were from Christmas to New Years. They also mailed out 225 packets for information on relocating to Dhalonega.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS:

City Manager Bill Lewis requested approval from Council on the 2012 Tourism Contract renewal. Mr. Lewis informed Council the Chamber had also submitted their Cost Allocation Plan for 2012 to include the separation of the bed tax revenue, showing the allocation for City and County. The amount on the cost allocation plan of 142,114 for City revenue is more than the approved budgeted amount of \$110,500.00 however, the Chamber estimated more revenue based on last year projections. A motion to accept the renewal was made by Councilman Prescott, seconded by Councilman Norton. Mayor McCullough asked for any discussion, hearing none, he asked for all in favor to raise their hand, all opposed, motion carried unanimously.

City Manager Bill Lewis informed Council the West Main Street Island project for traffic calming was discussed at the last Work Session and needed Council approval. Mr. Lewis further informed that NGCSU has agreed to pay for one-half (1/2) of all cost. Councilman Ariemma questioned if the estimated cost of \$14,000.00 was still an accurate figure. Mr. Lewis stated that concrete prices could vary, but he did not expect the cost to vary a lot. Councilman Prescott made a motion to approve this project with NGCSU and move forward, seconded by Councilman Norton. Mayor McCullough asked for any further discussion. At this time, Councilman Hoffman informed this project was discussed in the November and December Work Sessions. He further informed if he could have participated in those he would have asked a lot of questions for his knowledge and comments therefore; Mr. Hoffman stated he would like to abstain from this particular vote. Mayor McCullough asked for all in favor to say aye, motion carried with the following vote: Ralph Prescott, Gerald Lord, Terry Peters, Sam Norton and Johnny Ariemma. Bruce Hoffman abstained.

City Manager Bill Lewis informed Council the Finance Policy Update concerning Water and Sewer leak adjustments had been revised by staff to the best of their understanding. At this time, Councilman Lord informed that this was discussed thoroughly at the last Work Session but did not feel the policy wording update transmitted what was intended. After further discussion, Council agreed to move this to the January Work Session for further clarification.

MAYORS COMMENTS:

Mayor McCullough requested Council approval for the re-appointment of Claudine Earls to the Dhalonega Housing Authority Board. A motion was made to re-appoint Ms. Earls by Councilman Lord, seconded by Councilman Prescott. Mayor McCullough asked for any questions, hearing none, he asked for all in favor to say aye, motion carried unanimously.

Mayor McCullough informed Council that the City Farmers Market Ordinance needs to be updated. He requested to appoint Ralph Prescott and Bruce Hoffman to meet with DDA Director Joel Cordle and DDA Projects Coordinator Rebecca Shirley to update this Ordinance and present to Council for approval.

Mayor McCullough informed Council he would like to appoint Councilman Sam Norton as Mayor Pro-Tem for 2012. At this time, Mayor McCullough thanked Councilman Lord for the great job he did in his 2011 term as Mayor Pro-Tem. A motion to approve Councilman Norton as Mayor Pro-Tem was made by Councilman Peters, seconded by Councilman Ariemma. Mayor McCullough asked for any further discussion, hearing none, he asked for all in favor to raise their hand. Motion carried by the following vote: Bruce Hoffman, Ralph Prescott, Gerald Lord, Terry Peters and Johnny Ariemma. Sam Norton abstained.

Mayor McCullough requested approval to appoint Donna LaCount to the Historic Preservation Commission. A motion was made by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Peters. Mayor McCullough asked for all in favor to raise their hand, motion carried unanimously.

Mayor McCullough informed Council the microphone system in the Council Chambers needs to be replaced. He requested Council approval to ask City Manager Bill Lewis to get quotes on new microphones. Mr. Lewis informed Council there may be some additional repairs that will need to be done however, the quality of the microphones are the greatest issue. He further informed the last quote that was given to upgrade the microphones only was approximately \$3,000.00 to \$4,000.00 dollars. After further discussion, Councilman Lord made a motion to give the City Manager approval to research and get quotes to replace the sound system, seconded by Councilman Ariemma. Mayor McCullough asked for any other discussion, hearing none, he asked for all in favor to raise their hand, motion carried unanimously.

At this time, Mayor McCullough also stated he would like to include in this new system, a hand held microphone for citizens to use in the audience. Mr. Lewis also suggested that headsets be added in the proposal. Council was in agreement for Mr. Lewis to add these options into the proposals.

CITY ATTORNEY COMMENTS:

City Attorney Doug Parks informed Council the GMEBS retirement benefit update is necessary due to GMEBS electing to re-state their master plan. In order to obtain IRS approval, each member employer must re-adopt the master plan as well. The City is being asked by GMEBS to re-adopt this master plan due to one distinction that makes our plan different from their master plan. This addendum for adoption is for the distinction between the new master plan we have been asked to adopt and the City plan that currently exist. This does not change any other terms or conditions of the master plan. A motion for approval was made by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Lord. Mayor McCullough asked for any discussion. Councilman Norton questioned if this affected anyone in our municipality. Mr. Parks informed this does not affect anyone that is currently on City Council. The class of elected official prior to the specified date that was not required to have five years of mandatory service to be a member of the plan, could be affected. Mayor McCullough asked for all in favor of the motion to raise their hand, all opposed, motion carried by the following vote: Bruce Hoffman, Ralph Prescott, Gerald Lord, Terry Peters and Sam Norton. Voting against the motion: Johnny Ariemma.

City Attorney Doug Parks requested approval from Council to extend the moratorium on the Sexually Oriented Business ordinance until May. A motion was made by Councilman Lord to extend the SOB moratorium until May, seconded by Councilman Ariemma. Mayor McCullough asked for any questions, hearing none, he asked for all in favor, say aye, motion carried unanimously.

City Attorney Doug Parks requested approval of the Indigent Defense Services Agreement. This agreement applies to the current year. It is a June to July contract and takes time to be executed by the Public Defender's office. The City has just received the agreement with the County Officials signatures and there are no changes in any requirements. A motion was made by Councilman Lord to approve the Indigent Defense Services Agreement, seconded by Councilman Norton. Mayor McCullough asked for all in favor to say aye, all opposed, motion carried unanimously.

City Attorney Doug Parks informed Council an issue concerning Cloudland Park Road was resolved at the last City Work Session. This issue was recognizing Cloudland Park Road as a City street. At this point in time, by virtue of multiple maps and stamped plats recognizes it as a City street. Another issue discussed at the Work Session was with regard to whether the cemetery by virtue of being in the location it is in, became the City's responsibility. There was no authority found that requires the City at this point in time to maintain or take any affirmative acts to the cemetery. Councilman Ariemma stated he would like for the President of the Sky Country homeowners association to be sent documentation that the cemetery will not be maintained by the City, in order for them to plan for up-keep of the cemetery. Councilman Hoffman informed Council the HOA would meet January 30-31st and will notify Mr. Parks with the contact name.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilman Norton informed that he had a citizen inquire concerning Sunday Sales of alcohol in the City of Dahlonega, if Council has interest to move this item to a Work Session. Mr. Norton further informed this is the only person who has asked him. After further discussion, Council agreed if they received more interest concerning Sunday Sales they will move to a Work Session for discussion.

Councilman Norton asked City Manager Bill Lewis what the status was on the RFP on the old water plant property. Mr. Lewis informed Council that he had received only one proposal. He further informed that the City may need to consider another approach, such as hiring a real estate agent. After further discussion, Council was in agreement to add this item to the January Work Session agenda.

At this time, Councilman Hoffman stated he wanted to publically thank Ms. Lou Stewart and Mr. Bill Lewis for their assistance in the past month and appreciated their professionalism in helping him get prepared.

Mayor McCullough entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m. A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Lord, seconded by Councilman Ariemma and approved by all members present.

APPROVED BY ME THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2012.

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk