

**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

March 22, 2010  
7:30 p.m.

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Ed Rieker, Mayor  
Terry Giager, Commissioner  
Michael Payne, Commissioner  
Gene Lee, Commissioner

**Members Absent:** David Milliron, Mayor Pro Tem

**Staff Present:** Clai Brown, City Manager  
Juliette Sims, City Clerk

*Item No. 1* Meeting called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Ed Rieker.

*Item No. 2* Welcome extended to residents, guests and members of the media  
Mayor Rieker welcomed residents, guests and members of the media.

*Item No. 3* Invocation (Commissioner Giager)

*Item No. 4* Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag led by Boy Scouts of America  
Troop 6

*Item No. 5* Recognition of Special Guests

Mayor Rieker welcomed the following elected officials: Emanuel Ransom, Vice Mayor of the City of Clarkston, Deborah Jackson, Council Member of the City of Lithonia and DeKalb County Commissioner Kathie Gannon, Super District 6.

*Item No. 6* Introduction of City Officials and Employees – Mayor Rieker

Mayor Rieker recognized the following associates that work in the City and thanked them for all the work they do for the City.

Ken Turner, Director of Finance  
Juliette Sims-Owens, City Clerk  
Karen Holmes, Administrative Assistant  
Gary Broden, Chief of Police  
Bryan Armstead, Director of Public Works  
Harold Anderson, Jr., Supervisor Sanitation  
Oscar Griffin, Supervisor, Parks and Recreation  
Caryl Albarran, Code Enforcement Officer  
Bob Wilson, City Attorney  
Stephen Nicholas, City Judge  
Josie Stevens, City Solicitor

*Item No. 7*

**STATE OF THE CITY – 2010**

Mayor Rieker presented the State of the City Address for 2010.

Welcome to the 2010 State of the City Meeting. It is a distinct pleasure and honor for me to be able to spend a few minutes to highlight several items of importance regarding our city to you.

One of the most unique and enduring hallmarks of our city is the willingness of its citizens to render their time and expertise in the service of their city and its residents. The entire board and committee structure that governs this city is provided by citizen volunteers. There are upwards of forty citizen volunteers that donate thousands of hours of service to the city on an annual basis and at no cost to the city.

Many of these volunteers have been contributing to the city for years and I know this board, the city staff and the residents of our city deeply appreciate all of our volunteers who serve with honesty and integrity in their continued commitment and service to the city.

I would especially like to take a minute to personally thank my fellow board members, Mayor pro Tem Milliron, Commissioner Geiger, Commissioner Lee and Commissioner Payne for their dedication, efforts and willingness to work together on behalf of the city and its citizens. This new board has hit the ground running and you can look forward to a year of progress moving the city forward for the benefit of all. Thank you.

I would like to recognize and thank outgoing Mayor Pro Tem Varian and Commissioner Steadman for their excellent service to the city and it's citizens.

Mayor Pro Tem Varian served two terms on the Board and has been a strong, clear voice, greatly appreciated by the community and its citizens. Mayor Pro Tem Varian's many years of public service have helped guide and shape city policy during the last eight years.

Commissioner Steadman served the city and it's residents during the last four years on this board. This is in addition to her many years of experience in the government sector, as a previous City Clerk of Avondale Estates and now on the county level at the tax commissioners' office. Commissioner Steadman's knowledge of the City budget and its inner workings were invaluable at budget time and during the rest of the year.

Please join me in thanking these former board members for their outstanding dedication and service to our city.

There are many boards and committees that are working on behalf of the city and its residents and I would like to highlight some of their accomplishments during the past year.

The Downtown Development Authority, chaired by Jill Joyner Bush has been active in promoting our downtown area and seeking ways to bring new quality businesses and development to Avondale Estates. Despite challenging economic conditions during 2009 twenty-three new businesses located to our city. This

effort was supported by our reinvigorated Avondale Estates Business Association under the leadership of Bonnie Kallenberg, which now includes over forty businesses among its membership and is active in partnering with the city to promote events and support businesses in Avondale Estates.

As part of an on-going effort to revitalize our downtown area, assist the efforts of our governing boards and maximize the potential for high-quality growth, the Board of Mayor and Commissioners created and funded a new position for a City Planner and Community Development Officer. The City Manager expects to fill this new position in July of this year. This will create and foster a proactive approach to our city planning that will send a positive signal to developers, as well as, yield significant future dividends in the quality of development in our city.

The Planning and Zoning Board, chaired by Julie Feely, has done a tremendous job of moving the city forward on a number of important initiatives during the last year. With the help of the Planning and Zoning Board, along with other city boards, and city staff, the Board of Mayor Commissioners is poised to adopt a revised set of zoning laws next month that we believe will improve the quality of development and protect the character of our city. The importance and impact of our local zoning laws cannot be understated. They are the keystone that governs all new construction, assists in regulating our community and is a resource for establishing standards for quality growth and development. A new “business friendly” sign ordinance is included in this next revision of our zoning laws.

The Lake Board, chaired by Sandra Neuse is moving forward to acquire the necessary federal and state permits that are required before renovation work to the shoreline and lake pathways can begin. In the near future the Lake Board will be presenting to the Board of Mayor and Commissioners a detailed plan for shoreline, pathway and other lake improvements to be initiated during 2010. Many of you have noticed that the recent collaboration between city staff and the Lake Board has begun to pay dividends with new improved lake vistas and maintenance at the lake. The BOMC and city staff would like to thank Steve Sanchez for his tireless efforts and dedication to improving Lake Avondale.

The Tree Board, chaired by Stephany Cross recently completed a wonderful community project involving roughly fifty residents who planted over one hundred new trees along our city streets. This was the second of several mass tree plantings that will restore and replace our aging tree canopy and help to insure that our city streets will remain picturesque for the next generation of residents.

I am happy to report that our city finances are on solid ground and we expect that to continue during this fiscal year. In 2009 the city budget was roughly three million dollars with revenue and expenses in balance. Unlike many other cities last year it was not necessary for us to dip into our reserve funds to balance our expenses nor do we expect this to occur this year. This board has continued the tradition of maintaining a conservative fiscal approach to city finances which has allowed the city to operate without any debt except the bonds issued by the DDA years ago for the investment in the Juvenile Justice Building leased by the state.

Our Finance Director, Ken Turner has been instrumental in finding ways for the city to enhance and improve its financial position and has brought a wealth of experience to our finance department.

Juliette Sims-Owens serves as the Avondale Estates City Clerk and has done an excellent job over the last year enhancing the quality and frequency of city communications to our community. All of us appreciate her dedication and hard work attending and recording the numerous, often late-night city meetings.

Like any well-run business, the key to achieving continued successes lies in the foundation of a great leadership team. We as a board and as a city are fortunate to have at the head of our team a gentleman who has brought unbridled enthusiasm, personal integrity and a deep appreciation for this city, its history and its residents. Clai Brown. City Manager Brown has used his considerable work ethic and management skills to oversee and to vastly improve the day-to-day operations of the city. I know this board stands together in thanking City Manger Brown in his continued efforts and contributions to our city and we all looking forward to his continued good works.

We feel safe in our homes and streets because of the dedication and efforts of Chief Broden and the team of police officers who are committed to protect and serve the citizens of our City. Unlike some neighboring communities the City of Avondale Estates experienced a reduction in crime from the prior year. Last year the Public Safety Department continued to work and strengthen its relationship with our successful Neighborhood Watch program, introduced a new Child is Missing Alert program to assist in locating missing persons and continued to strengthen our police force with additional training.

In its continuing process of building a strong relationship with the community the Avondale Estates Police Department announced a new program, "The Avondale Estates Citizens Police Academy." This program is similar to many across the country as part of law enforcement's Community Oriented Policing efforts, to build bridges of understanding and partnerships between the community and the police. This year's class began last week with twenty Avondale Estates citizens starting the eight-week course.

We know that our Public Works team headed by Bryan Armstead, Director of Public Works, is dedicated to providing the best service possible to the city and its citizens often going the extra mile to provide needed services to the city.

At the end of 2008 this board approved a development agreement to allow the Publix grocery store and related commercial buildings to be created in our downtown area. As you all know the conditions that currently exist in the real estate marketplace and our economy are hindering the developers' access to funding for this and many other projects. The delay in this project is in no way related to any constraints placed on the developer by the city or a desire by the developer not to complete this project in our city. It is strictly a matter of finances. This is affecting most commercial development in almost every city in our country.

This board, the Downtown Development Authority and our City Manager are actively seeking ways we can support new development and as part of that effort the city had been closely working with the owners of the Fenner/Dunlop

property, which is partly in the city limits within our Central Business District and partly in unincorporated DeKalb County. With the support of the DeKalb County Office of the CEO, the DeKalb County Planning and Development Department has been working closely with our Planning and Zoning Board to solicit opinions from residents, local businesses and other stakeholders as to the ideal use for this property. This process will continue into 2010 with the desired result of creating ideal zoning for all parties and the property owner requesting that the property be annexed into the city.

Our State Representative Stephanie Stuckey Benfield has been working closely with this Board and the City Manager to assist the city at the state level in expanding the boundaries of our city via the annexation of commercial properties along East College Avenue to Sam's Crossing to meet the proposed new city limits of Decatur. We greatly appreciate her tireless efforts to assist the City of Avondale Estates and for her continued support. Unfortunately we are currently unable to get the required tenth signature to move the bill forward during this year's session. This year because of the diligent efforts of Representative Benfield, city staff and strong support from a citizen's effort lead by Camille Harvey we have made more progress on this issue at the state level than we have in the past. It is expected that this effort will be continued over the course of this year and during the 2011 legislation session.

There is one final important community effort that I would like to touch on.

Like any community the future of this city is in its children. There is no better reflection of this than how we serve our children by offering them the best possible educational opportunities we can afford from the resources available to our community.

Remarkably while other communities are considering closing schools, our local community is in the process of opening a new elementary school in Avondale Estates. A very unique school populated with all the activities and resources that every elementary school should have to provide the best education to our children. Quality teachers, unique learning opportunities, significant resources and lastly a governing body that is local and willing to address the needs of our community's school aged children and their parents.

I am of course speaking of The Museum School of Avondale Estates.

This unique new charter school will yield a tremendous return on our investment of time, treasure and effort. It offers parents in Avondale Estates and surrounding communities another quality choice for their children's education. Having this school in our city will have an immediate positive impact on residential property values and help reverse the trend of young families moving out of our city who are seeking quality educational opportunities for their children.

I know this Board of Mayor and Commissioners unanimously supports and encourages this community based effort and is actively seeking ways to support this important initiative so that we can assist in bringing this dream to reality.

There is nothing more lasting or more important to a community than the creation of a new school for the betterment and the education of its youngest residents. I urge all of us to actively seek ways to support this effort on all levels as it progresses forward. All of us have an opportunity and a responsibility to help in this endeavor.

In conclusion I would like to extend our thanks to the elected officials, special guests, city staff, the media and our citizens for continuing to support this special place with friendly people and picturesque winding streets that we all call home: Avondale Estates. The heart of our city is its people.

*Item No. 8*

### **AWARDS AND SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS – 2010**

City Manager Brown noted to the audience that on the back of their agenda for tonight is the City Mission Statement which was recently rolled out in the City. City Manager Brown stated that the staff is really committed to providing the best service possible.

City Manager Brown recognized the following associates:

SSGT Jason Browen, Public Safety  
 Sgt Lynn Thomas, Public Safety  
 Oscar Griffin, Supervisor, Parks and Recreation  
 Harold Robinson, Jr., Supervisor, Sanitation  
 Caryl Albarran, Code Enforcement Officer – City Manager Brown also noted that Ms. Albarran was awarded this past weekend her Level I Certification for Code Enforcement by the Carl Vinson Institute in Athens, Georgia, Georgia Municipal Association and the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement

City Manager Brown recognized members present tonight of the Avondale Estates Citizens Police Academy.

Chief Broden introduced all the officers of the Avondale Police Department. The following officers received the following special recognitions:

Officers of the Year  
 Corporal Tom Gills, Public Safety  
 Corporal Paul Conroy, Public Safety  
Community Service Award  
 SSGT Jason Browen, Public Safety

### **Best in Business**

Mayor Rieker recognized business owner Spence Rosenfeld of Arboguard as “Best in Business.” Mr. Rosenfeld has been in business in Avondale since 1981.

### **In Memoriam**

Former Mayor John Lawson gave a special tribute In Memoriam to Gerrill Shealy.

Commissioner Payne gave a special tribute In Memoriam of Tom Chaney.

Commissioner Payne gave a special tribute In Memoriam to former Mayor Bob Gross and presented a special recognition award to the family for his service to the City of Avondale Estates.

Mayor Rieker noted that former Commissioner Lyda Steadman is out sick and former Mayor Pro Tem Sandra Varian is in Scotland therefore, their special recognition awards will be presented at a later date. Mayor Rieker thanked both of them for their many years of service.

*Item No. 9*

Announcements (Commissioner Giager):

- a) Easter Egg Hunt, Saturday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at Willis Park.
- b) Art in the Afternoon, Saturday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. visit Bart Webb Studio and Little Tree Studios on Franklin Street in addition to some off-the-beaten path gems in Avondale's business district. Attendance is Free.
- c) Antique Car Parade, Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, Line up is at 1:30 p.m. on South Avondale Road, parade starts at 2:00 p.m.

We regretfully announce the death of:

Nancy B. Wynn, former resident  
Burton Carter, 29 Clarendon Avenue  
Wake Wakefield, 22 Lakeshore Drive

*Item No. 10*

Adjournment – Reception immediately following

There being no further business, it was the consensus of the board to adjourn at 8:22 p.m.