



**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
MARCH 10TH, 2021
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING REGULAR MEETING
VIA ZOOM**

AGENDA

Members Present: Jonathan Elmore, Mayor
Brian Fisher, Mayor Pro Tem
Lisa Shortell, Commissioner
Lionel Laratte, Commissioner
Dee Merriam, Commissioner

Staff Present: Patrick Bryant, City Manager
Paul Hanebuth, Asst. City Manager
Shannon Powell, Asst. City Manager
Rebecca Long, Communications Manager
Ken Morris, Permitting Coordinator
Gina Hill, City Clerk
Stephen Quinn, City Attorney

Item #1 Meeting Called to Order

Item #2 Adoption of Agenda
Commissioner Laratte moved to adopt. Commissioner Shortell seconded. All ayes.

Item #3 **Stormwater Priority Plan and Fees**
The recently-completed Stormwater Priority Plan (also called the Stormwater Master Plan) included estimated costs for short-term capital and operating needs, as well as outlining longer-term needs. The BOMC will discuss the optimal time frame for completing short- and long-term projects and the fee level necessary to fund the outlined needs within that time frame. This fee will also need to be set by resolution and forwarded to DeKalb County.

City Manager Bryant explained that this is an ongoing topic of discussion as the Stormwater Priority Plan is completed. He referred to a staff memo that included a funding strategy for stormwater projects and maintenance with various funding levels for comparison. Mr. Bryant said capital needs would need to be funded as well as maintenance, something the current level of fees cannot achieve. The fee amount he recommended was \$180 per household per year. Decatur's base fee is now \$285, he pointed out, so he feels that recommendation is in line with other cities. Commissioner Merriam liked the idea of giving incentives in the form of reduced fees for those that mitigate

stormwater on their property. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher was supportive of the change. He was interested in hearing from residents. Commissioner Shortell agreed and pointed out the problems with impervious surface and how Decatur handles that issue. Commissioner Laratte wanted it to be clear to residents what they would be getting for this money.

Item #4

Historic Preservation Ordinance Updates

The re-assessment of three tiers of home designations is complete. Staff will explain the new two-tier classifications.

City Manager Bryant gave some background on this item. Assistant City Manager Powell offered to take questions. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher had a question about eight specific homes and Permitting Coordinator Morris responded and gave more explanation about the new system. Commissioner Shortell said that residents wanting more information about their house should contact Mr. Morris. Ms. Powell said they are trying to get the information in an easy-to-read format for posting.

Item #5

Zoning Code Rewrite

This is a continuing conversation about the rewrite to offer updates and field questions from the BOMC. A limit number of specific items will be discussed, including:

1. Architectural Review Board (ARB)/Planning & Zoning Board (PZB)
2. DCIs & PUDs
3. Height Plane

Mayor Elmore explained how the group was approaching discussions about the zoning code rewrite in smaller topics each meeting.

- 1) City Manager Bryant said that staff was recommending the removal of the ARB from the zoning process and relying on the PZB instead. He asked the BOMC for guidance on how they'd like to proceed. Commissioner Merriam believed the ARB should remain. If they are removed, she felt the PZB should be expanded to include members with architectural expertise. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher is comfortable with staff's recommendation. He listed the reasons why. He added that he's fine having specific expertise on the PZB but he is reluctant to expand it from five members to seven. Commissioner Shortell agreed and added that consultants suggested this same change, not just staff. She supported adding seats to the PZB. Mr. Fisher asked what would happen to those two extra seats if there was not qualified applicants. Commissioner Laratte is against eliminating the ARB but he did think that expanding the PZB was a reasonable compromise. Mr. Elmore supported staff's recommendation and said that was due to the zoning rewrite. He did not want to expand the PZB but was interested in changing the name. Mr. Elmore asked staff to make recommendations about how or if the PZB should be expanded and that would be discussed at the next work session. Mr. Bryant agreed.
- 2) Mr. Bryant explained PUDs as a request from a property owner to redesignate zoning on an individual basis. It's reserved for cases that can't be anticipated and don't fit within the zoning code. The BOMC has ultimate

discretion, he added. A DCI is a development large enough in size to be of community interest and requires meetings for public input beyond a regular permit. Assistant City Manager Powell added that a lot of information is required from a PUD applicant so it is not something developers take lightly. Ms. Shortell said PUDs could be seen as a crutch but she explained why they are not something to be feared. Mr. Elmore agreed. Ms. Merriam asked for clarification about the size threshold for a PUD and well as the uses required. Mr. Bryant said that staff recommends that the PUD size threshold be two acres. Ms. Powell responded to the question about uses. She also explained the process and how the city can get the best possible projects. Ms. Merriam wanted to see a concept presentation for the public early on in cases of DCIs. Mr. Fisher was comfortable with both the PUDs and DCIs. Ms. Shortell asked about the size for DCIs and Ms. Powell said that it would be two acres. She also asked staff's opinion about Ms. Merriam's suggestion of a presentation requirement. Mr. Bryant felt an extra layer of public process is unnecessary since the developer can build by right anyway as long as they check certain boxes. Ms. Shortell said she's comfortable with where they are on PUDs and DCIs. Mr. Laratte shared that he's also comfortable with this. He had a legal question about land aggregation. Mr. Bryant said it only applied to one piece of property of two acres or more. Mr. Elmore is also supportive of staff recommendations.

- 3) Since staff has received some commissioner questions about height plane, Mr. Bryant felt it was important to discuss it in public as a group. Ms. Powell and Rebecca Keifer, a consultant who worked on the zoning rewrite, explained what went into the current suggestion for height plane. Ms. Keifer presented slides to illustrate as she explained transitional height planes and how they are designed to help buildings not feel big or overwhelming. Ms. Merriam had questions about the 75-foot setback from the property line in which a building is limited to three stories. Ms. Merriam felt adjusting the height plane could increase the amount of sunlight between buildings. Mr. Fisher asked about height plane in relation to the height of the Tudor Village. More discussion followed between members of the BOMC. Ms. Shortell and Mr. Laratte ask questions of Ms. Merriam and she explains why she feels the recommended 45-foot break point should be lower. Mr. Elmore asked if four stories could be done in 45 feet and was told no. He said a certain diagram may illustrate height plane in a more understandable way. Mr. Elmore added that he would like to have once consistent rule and also felt that buildings were different than walls when it comes to the perception of height. The consensus was to follow staff's recommendation for height plane. There was a brief discussion about the next steps.

Item #6

Update on Police Accreditation & Review

City staff will give an update about where these processes stand and next steps.

City Manager Bryant said they were still awaiting the audit for accreditation from the Georgia Police Chiefs Association. He explained a mock audit had already been completed and the covid pandemic has slowed the process. He expected the process to be complete by the second quarter of this year. Commissioner Merriam appreciated the update and felt it was important to keep

the public updated. Commissioner Shortell would like to know about any changes due to accreditation when that point is reached. Commissioner Laratte would like to find a way to speed the process. Mr. Bryant responded that city staff has done their part of the process and decisions now are in the hands of the Georgia Police Chiefs Association.

Item #7

Strategic Planning Retreat Recap

The retreat was open to the public and held via Zoom on February 25th and 26th.

Commissioner Shortell read her synopsis notes from the retreat. She summarized discussions around topics like tax revenue, the relationship between the DDA and BOMC, branding, the Welcoming Committee, the impact of the pandemic, annexation, process/committees, BOMC/staff expectations, and communication. Other members of the BOMC shared their impressions of the retreat.

Item #8

Public Comment

Klaus Van den Berg spoke in support of keeping the ARB intact.

Item #9

Adjournment

Commissioner Merriam moved to adjourn. Commissioner Shortell seconded. All ayes.

MINUTES APPROVED 4.28.2021



GINA HILL, CITY CLERK