



**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
MARCH 25TH, 2020
5:30 P.M.
*MEETING HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE***

MINUTES

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

Staff Present: Patrick Bryant, City Manager
Paul Hanebuth, Finance Director
Stephen Quinn, City Attorney
Rebecca Long, Communications Manager
Gina Hill, City Clerk

Item #1 Meeting Called to Order

Item #2 Adoption of Agenda
Commissioner Laratte moves to adopt. Commissioner Shortell seconds. All ayes.

Item #3 **Resolution for Further Actions in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic**
Commissioner Shortell motions to approve. Commissioner Laratte seconds. All ayes.

City Manager Bryant reminded the others that the city has enacted some changes and restrictions due to the coronavirus via resolution. He said the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) has also circulated a resolution template that is more broad, including shelter-in-place language. The GMA has encouraged cities to pass this resolution. Along with the city attorney, Mr. Bryant has mimicked Decatur's resolution with some tweaks specific to Avondale. Mayor Elmore stated it's difficult to balance concern for citizens with concern for businesses. However, he was in favor of this resolution because the GMA recommends that all cities pass such a resolution, many other cities in DeKalb County have done so and he felt they should present a united front. Mr. Elmore described the current state of coronavirus cases in Georgia and other states. While he knows tightening restrictions could hurt business he felt passing this resolution was the right thing to do. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher asked City Attorney Quinn what is different about this new resolution compared to ones passed previously. Mr. Quinn said this one presents tighter restrictions on gatherings. Residents would be asked to stay home unless carrying out

essential activities. Restricting the movement of residents was not part of the previous resolutions, he added. While the list of essential businesses is pretty broad, non-essential businesses would be required to close. Mr. Quinn gave some examples and Mr. Fisher posed some scenarios. There was discussion about how these restrictions would be enforced. Mr. Quinn offered that the goal is largely to provide guidance to residents and there was a certain reliance on self-policing. Mr. Bryant said police would respond if someone was being egregious. Mr. Fisher was hesitant to take more action especially if there is no way to enforce it. Mr. Elmore stated that this resolution would not be voted on at this point. Commissioner Merriam felt previous measures are having a positive impact. She posed various scenarios for different businesses in the city to learn more about what they would be allowed and not allowed to do. Examples included breweries and construction sites. The group also talked about maintenance and contractors coming to individual homes. Mr. Quinn responded and said he had not had time to research all the nuances. Ms. Merriam is concerned about shutting businesses down when they have no contact with the public. Commissioner Laratte supported further restrictions considering the severity of the situation. He added similar resolutions have passed elsewhere and he doesn't see any language in this resolution that's out of line. Mr. Laratte felt signaling the gravity of this situation is more important than worrying about enforcement. Commissioner Shortell liked the idea of signaling gravity with this resolution and she thinks it will tie up any loose ends from the previous actions. She added her thoughts on the role of the city in the situation on a regional level. Ms. Shortell requested clarification about some of the dates on the resolution and when the restrictions would be revisited. Mr. Bryant said the restrictions could be revisited at any time and the dates are somewhat immaterial. Ms. Merriam was still concerned about asking businesses to close when they have no contact with the public. Mr. Elmore confirmed with Mr. Quinn that businesses could still conduct minimum basic operations such as inventory. Mr. Laratte also shared Ms. Merriam's concern but felt there may be no way to cover every contingency. Ms. Shortell agreed and added the goal is to limit exposure without getting too caught up in details. Mr. Elmore cautioned against appearing to favor some businesses over others, to be consistent with other cities and also defend against potential lawsuits. Mr. Fisher noted that steps have already been taken. Mr. Quinn agreed with Mr. Elmore and advised against being too specific with guidelines and restrictions. He added that he feels everything in this resolution is within the BOMC's power. In his experience, it's often the cities trying to be helpful that end up getting hurt by a lawsuit. Mr. Fisher asked Mr. Quinn for more clarification about this resolution and how it impacts businesses. Mr. Quinn responded and Ms. Shortell read part of the resolution. Mr. Fisher felt it's impractical to change the rules so often or when other communities take action. There was agreement to meet the following day to vote on this resolution.

Item #4

Resolution to Approve Tax Abatement Structure Requested by Potential Buyer of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Building
Commissioner Laratte makes a motion to approve. Commissioner Merriam seconds. All ayes.

City Manager Bryant announced this item is also just for discussion purposes. He introduced Dave Deiters, Chair of the DDA. Mr. Deiters explained that the buyer for the DJJ building has requested a tax abatement since there is work to be done on the parking lot. After much negotiation, he said they came up with a unique structure for the tax abatement which he described. In short, the purchaser would pay the city \$550 thousand up front in lieu of taxes for 15 years. Mr. Bryant and all members of the BOMC are supportive of the arrangement. There was discussion about when this resolution of support would undergo a vote. Commissioner Merriam requested an e-blast be sent out to alert residents about any schedule changes. City Attorney Quinn said supporting this action with a resolution would be a good idea. Mr. Deiters outlined the process moving forward.

Item #5 Public Comment

Joe Anziano does not support the coronavirus resolution. He would like to support local businesses as much as possible.

Item #6 Adjournment

Commissioner Laratte moves to adjourn. Commissioner Shortell seconds. All ayes.

APPROVED THIS 22nd DAY OF JUNE 2020



Jonathan Elmore, Mayor

ATTEST:



Gina Hill, City Clerk