



**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
APRIL 22ND, 2020
5:30 P.M.
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

MINUTES

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
Gina Hill, City Clerk
Stephen Quinn, City Attorney

Item #1 Meeting Called to Order

Item #2 Adoption of Agenda
Commissioner Shortell moved to adopt. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher seconds. All ayes.

Item #3 **General Commercial (GC) Zoning Text Amendment**
This amendment would exempt property zoned GC from parking lot landscape requirements. The impending sale of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Building and their request for additional parking is the impetus for this change. The code is currently a combination of DeKalb County codes with urban overlay standards from Avondale Estates, and has never been applied to existing GC parcels. The zoning code re-write will address problematic elements of the code, and staff supports this amendment until the new code can be implemented later this year.

City Manager Bryant explained this proposed text amendment to the current zoning code. It would remove some parking regulations for properties within this zoning designation, of which there are only four in the city. Those regulations include number of parking spaces and tree canopy requirements. This amendment is being requested because there is not a variance process in place. The city leases 115 spaces from Marta but they no longer want to commit to a long-term lease. Mr. Bryant gave more background about the Department of Juvenile Justice (the building tenant) and Forum Management

(the management company and potential purchaser of the property). He also described conflict between parking requirements with the city's comprehensive plan. Commissioner Shortell felt this amendment was the proper channel for solving these issues. She added that the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has spent countless hours trying to solve these parking problems and she felt the benefit outweighs the loss of any trees. Commissioner Merriam thanked those involved in this proposal. She also had questions about preserving some rules surrounding tree islands. Mr. Bryant explained why he thought this was the best approach. Commissioner Laratte said given the circumstances, he thought this was the best solution. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher thanked Mr. Bryant for the explanation. He was in support of the measure. Mayor Elmore also thanked those involved.

Resident Amy Leventhal spoke in favor of protecting the tree canopy and greenspace. She questioned if leadership is considering the long-term effects. Mr. Bryant responded that removal of more trees was not the intention of this change and he doesn't think it will have that type of impact. Mr. Fisher explained how this amendment is so specific that it affects very few properties. Ms. Merriam offered that large trees will not be lost at the location in question. Mr. Elmore said he felt these solutions struck a good balance. Jan Hover asked if Forum Management would take care of stormwater at this property. Mr. Bryant listed the measures Forum is taking and said the city would bear no responsibility. She was also concerned other property owners may make similar requests. Mr. Elmore said there are only four properties within this zoning designation. Mr. Bryant offered more details about those properties. Joe Anziano spoke about what issues the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) encountered while considering this issue.

Item #4

Renovations at the Public Works Building & City Hall

A discussion about proposed renovations to resolve safety, storage, and environmental issues at the public works building and optimize security and office space at City Hall.

City Manager Bryant listed some work that has been done on the public works building and projects to be done. He added that some projects brought to his attention turned out not to be needed after closer inspection. All told, the work will total about \$8 thousand, he said. Mr. Bryant then explained renovations planned for the first floor of city hall. Phase two will address the 2nd floor of city hall. The goal is to complete the first floor while city hall is closed to the public due to coronavirus. That portion will not exceed \$49 thousand. The total for public works and city hall would be slightly over the \$50 thousand already allocated for the public works building alone. Commissioner Shortell asked if an architect was employed for the first-floor renovations. Assistant City Manager Hanebuth responded that contractors did sketches only and described what changes were being made. Ms. Shortell also asked if staff predicted more office space would be needed after this work. Mr. Bryant felt more office space would not be needed. Commissioner Merriam asked about the bid process. Mr. Hanebuth explained how state bidding works which is how these projects will be contracted out. Commissioner Laratte was under the impression the public works building needed \$50 thousand in work and wondered what had changed.

Mr. Bryant said he was misled about some of the work that needed to be done there. Mr. Laratte requested a list of discrepancies and added that he had seen the issues himself. Mayor Elmore said that in his opinion, he thought \$50 thousand was on the high side. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher clarified that the issue with females having to go through the men's restrooms to get to theirs turned out to not be an issue after all. He added that the group is in the process of looking for a permanent relocation of public works so anything done there is a temporary solution. Mr. Fisher asked about office space for any new staff positions already approved. Mr. Bryant said new staffers would be accommodated and also said new carpet is part of the renovation. Mr. Fisher wanted to know if these changes included new audio/visual equipment for meetings in person and virtually. That is not included, according to Mr. Bryant. Mr. Fisher encouraged staff to make those upgrades when possible. Mayor Elmore asked Mr. Bryant if it was possible to put together a document outlining the discrepancies that Mr. Laratte requested. Mr. Bryant responded that would be difficult but essentially he was under the impression that the electrical system would need to be replaced as well as restrooms remodeled. Those both turned out to not be needed thus saving a substantial amount of money. Mr. Laratte felt the property needed way more than even \$50 thousand in repairs and he would visit the location tomorrow to look at it again. Mr. Bryant reminded the group that a firm is actively searching for a new location for the public works department and it doesn't make sense to spend too much money on the current building. Mr. Elmore supports staff's proposal. Ms. Shortell was also supportive and suggested Mr. Laratte and Mr. Bryant meet one on one. Ms. Merriam agreed as did Mr. Fisher. Mr. Laratte said he was open to meeting staff at the public works building. There was discussion about what parts of the project were subject to a vote from the Board of Mayor and Commissioners (BOMC).

Amy Leventhal requested new furniture be purchased for the public works staff. She felt the state of the public works building is a moral issue that needs to be fixed. Mr. Bryant offered that the city hall quote is higher because capacity is being increased. He added that only two public works employees spend their days there at the building and they have their own offices. Jan Hover wanted to ensure that funds were spent in the most optimal way considering the current coronavirus crisis. Mr. Elmore said the BOMC must trust the city manager to tell them where money needs to be allocated and these projects have been needed for a long time. Mr. Bryant elaborated that the city is currently not incurring much additional expenses due to covid-19. Also, since tax revenue mostly comes from property taxes, that will remain unchanged for the time being.

Item #5

New Planning & Zoning Board (PZB) Appointee

A seat has been vacant on this board for several months. At their April 20th meeting, the PZB plans to recommend a new member for approval by the Board of Mayor and Commissioners (BOMC).

PZB Chair Joe Anziano explained that this position had been vacant since former member Dee Merriam was elected to the BOMC and had to leave the PZB. He recommended Dan Marcec to fill the role. Commissioner Shortell was supportive and asked if new PZB members have to go through training. Mr.

Anziano confirmed that they do. Commissioner Merriam thanked the PZB for all their work. Commissioner Laratte commented that Mr. Marcec seems like a good addition to the PZB. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher and Mayor Elmore were both in support and looked forward to working with Mr. Marcec. This will require a vote at the next regular meeting.

Item #6

Resolution in Support of the Coronavirus Community Relief Act

This federal legislation, also known as HR 6467, would give smaller cities access to emergency federal funding, which is restricted to cities with populations greater than 500,000 under current legislation.

City Manager Bryant said this legislation is not moving forward. He added that he requests that the BOMC endorse a general stance on this issue instead of advocating for any particular piece of legislation. He added that it would not require a vote and staff would potentially write letters on the BOMC's behalf. All BOMC members voiced support. Mr. Bryant also promoted the census and said it's important for getting access to federal funds in the future.

Item #7

Public Comment: None

Item #8

Adjournment

Commissioner Shortell moved to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher seconded. All ayes.

APPROVED THIS 22nd DAY OF JUNE 2020



Jonathan Elmore, Mayor

ATTEST:



Gina Hill, City Clerk