

**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
JUNE 17TH, 2020
*IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PUBLIC HEARING
VIA ZOOM***

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 Laratte moved to adopt the agenda. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher seconded. All ayes.

Item #3 **Process for Evaluating Police Policies and Procedures**

Mayor Elmore explained the type of government in Avondale Estates (council/manager) and listed some of the duties of the Board of Mayor and Commissioners (BOMC). He added that the BOMC does have oversight of police policy. This is just the beginning of the discussion on this topic and Mr. Elmore asked that those in the public speaking keep their comments to about one minute and be respectful. While he personally thinks the police are doing a great job, Mr. Elmore said it's important to maintain trust and respect between the public and police. Police policy is often reviewed every two years but due to recent events in the U.S. the BOMC thought it a good idea to review those policies now. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher said he knows this is a heavy topic but he's glad it's being broached and he is listening and learning. Commissioner Laratte felt it's important to hear from the public and that includes people who live outside the city but visit. He added it's important to identify what success looks like and changes should go beyond words written in a policy manual. Commissioner Merriam said she is looking forward to the conversations ahead. Commissioner Shortell said the board is open to hearing and listening. City

Manager Bryant said he'd like to reiterate everything members of the BOMC have said. He added that staff is open to any direction given by the board. The city's policies and procedures for the police department are developed to conform to the model guidelines of the Georgia Association of Police Chiefs. The city's policy manual is updated every two years, said Mr. Bryant. For the first time, the city is pursuing accreditation through the Georgia Association of Police Chiefs, something that only one quarter of departments can claim. The plan is to then seek national accreditation. Mr. Bryant also said the board may choose to have the policies reviewed by an outside consultant with expertise beyond law enforcement. Current Avondale police policies ban chokeholds, noted Mr. Bryant. He said he'd be happy to discuss more police topics if the BOMC chooses. Mr. Elmore felt the city should reach out to the county to cover some gaps in police services, such as dealing with homeless people and the mentally ill. Mr. Fisher was supportive of the accreditations and added it might be helpful to know more detail about what they mean. He was also supportive of hiring outside consultants and reaching out to those outside the neighborhood, such as parents of Avondale Elementary students. Mr. Laratte offered that appreciating the police doesn't mean there is no room for improvement. He also asked about police complaints. Mr. Bryant said that each complaint is followed by an internal investigation. When asked about trends and numbers, Mr. Bryant said that's something that could be compiled. Ms. Shortell would also like to know more about what the accreditations mean and she was also supportive of hiring an outside consultant. In response to a question from Mr. Laratte, Mr. Bryant said it was Assistant Police Chief Paul Conroy who followed up on complaints about the police. He gave more detail about that process.

Amy Leventhal asked about sensitivity training and de-escalation techniques as well as the number of Black drivers stopped by the police compared to Caucasian drivers. Mr. Bryant responded that police officers get from 100 to 120 hours of training per year and described the categories the training falls under – either de-escalation, legal updates, and use of force. He added that the ratio of Black versus Caucasian drivers cited is about 80% to 20%. Mr. Bryant has been told that is similar to the racial makeup of this area of the county. Karen Morris thanked the BOMC and staff for being open to new ideas. She encouraged them to consider the 21st Century Policing guidelines. Bobby Wess read a statement on behalf of the Avondale Alliance for Racial Justice. Lisa Cottrell urged the board to consider a police oversight committee made up of citizens. There was discussion among the members of the BOMC about the possibility of a civilian review committee. Another caller asked how training and policies help the police avoid profiling. Mr. Bryant responded that the police are trained in racial sensitivity and use objective tools like radar to measure speed and license plate readers. The next caller asked about diversity among Avondale's city staff. He also requested more data from the police and city leadership. Mr. Bryant said that job openings are posted in public forums and those interviewed and hired are the ones deemed most qualified. He added that over 50% of city staff is African American. While race is noted on individual traffic citations, it has not historically been compiled in one document. Mr. Bryant also said that much of the data provided by the previous administration on a weekly basis was, in his opinion, not a good use of staff time. Michael

Gargiulo praised the city's police department. Mr. Laratte wanted to clarify that this is not about "rooting out bad police" but about evolving and improving policing. Mr. Elmore agreed and added that the BOMC has 100% confidence in the police. Ms. Shortell wanted to point out that proposed changes to policing also address officer wellness and safety. Lisa Cottrell spoke again and thanked the BOMC and staff for this discussion. The next caller asked if police reports were open to the public. Mr. Bryant said that is governed by state law and police reports are available through an open records request with certain information redacted. City Attorney Stephen Quinn added that some records are unavailable until investigations are completed and cases are closed. Connie Bryans thanked everyone for their openness. She also asked about the proposed welcoming committee. Ms. Merriam said she and Mr. Laratte had been working on that but were slowed by the pandemic. Mr. Laratte added that he encourages everyone to talk about race and he is always available for questions. Mr. Elmore concludes that he's in favor of having a third party look at their policies and procedures. Mr. Bryant said more information needs to be gathered so there won't be action on this item at the next regular meeting. The accreditation process was initiated months ago so it will not require a vote at the next meeting either.

Item #4

Approval of Rising Son Patio Sales

Assistant City Manager Paul Hanebuth said that Rising Son already has an alcohol license but they want to extend the area in front of their restaurant. Because of the urgency, it has been approved administratively but needs to be approved by the BOMC. Mr. Hanebuth recommends having an expiration date of the end of the year on the expanded area, if approved. Members of the BOMC voiced their support. Commissioner Laratte asked for some clarification about the location of the tables. Commissioner Merriam asked if tables would extend to be in front of other businesses. Assistant City Manager Shannon Powell said that they would. She also asked about ADA accessibility but was assured that a four-foot walkway would be maintained. Commissioner Shortell also asked questions about the location of tables. This will be voted on at the next regular meeting.

Item #5

Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into a Contract with Courtware

Assistant City Manager Paul Hanebuth explained that they were adding a module to a current contract. The addition would raise the cost of the contract above the threshold for the city manager and now requires BOMC approval. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher asked about the total cost and Mr. Hanebuth said it would probably be \$1,700 per month. Commissioner Laratte asked about the module being added. Mr. Hanebuth said he can get more information from the police chief. Members of the BOMC were supportive. This will be voted on at the next regular meeting.

Item #6

Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into a Contract with Stantec for Complete Streets Construction Drawings

City staff proposes to contract with Stantec Engineering for a fee not to exceed \$474,366 to complete the engineering design including final construction plans, contract document and technical specifications, a survey, utility coordination, permitting, and bidding for US278 complete street project.

City Manager Bryant gave background on the events leading to this point. The budget for this had previously been approved. Members of the BOMC were supportive and thanked city staff for their work on this project. This will be voted on at the next regular meeting.

Item #7 **Approval of Town Green Design**

City staff proposes the Board of Mayor and Commissioners (BOMC) adopt the town green as presented in the May BOMC meeting.

City Manager Bryant said this is a big step forward on the town green project. This has already been contracted so all that's required is a verbal approval from the BOMC. Next will be the production of construction documents. Members of the BOMC were supportive. A vote to verbally approve this step so that Site Solutions may move forward with construction documents is all that's required at the next regular meeting.

Item #8 **Declaration of Taking 1,775 Sq. Ft. of Property Located at 143 Maple Street for Transportation Purposes**

City Manager Bryant gave background on this item. Staff had the property appraised but that amount was refused by the property owner. City Attorney Stephen Quinn provided more detail. Commissioner Shortell clarified that there is not currently a building on the property in question.

(At a subsequent meeting where these minutes were approved, Commissioner Merriam requested these minutes be amended to point out that this condemnation is for a purpose that's part of the city's Downtown Master Plan)

Item #9 Public Comment

Michael Gargiulo is the property owner mentioned in item #8. He claimed the matter was between two private property owners and the city should not be involved. He pointed out that ownership of the property in question was public knowledge at the time that Trammel Crow's development plans were approved.


Item #10 Adjournment

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

APPROVED THIS 20th DAY OF JULY 2020


Jonathan Eimore, Mayor

ATTEST:


Gina Hill, City Clerk