

Pre-Council Meeting - Final
October 15, 2018
6:00 PM

*Present: Mayor Max Bacon Charles "Corkey" Welch Tim Gould
Maryline Blackburn Ron Fennel Derek Norton
Andrea Blustein*

Absent: Susan Wilkinson

Also Present: Tammi Saddler Jones (City Administrator), Scott Cochran (City Attorney), Terri Graham (City Clerk), Scott Andrews (Assistant City Administrator), Ken Suddreth (Director of Community Development), Rusty Martin (Senior Planner), Roy Acree (Fire Chief), Kay Bolick (Director of Human Resources), Christy Ullman (Executive Assistant to the Mayor & Council), and Tina M. Monaghan (Deputy City Clerk)

Mayor Max Bacon called the Pre-Council Meeting to Order at 6:00 PM.

Discussion: Due Diligence and Feasibility Study Proposals – Derek Norton

Councilmember Derek Norton spoke about how he had sent Mayor and Council a quote and information in regards to the proposals for their review. The study is being offered at a steep discount because of all of the work that the company has already done for the City. The key element with this is timing because in order for it to make the March ballot referendum, the studies would need to be complete by Thanksgiving to give Council the time that they need to figure out the next step. The vote to add it to the ballot would have to be the first or second meeting in January.

Mayor Bacon felt that if the Council wanted to move forward with the property then studies should absolutely be done. He wanted to know where the money would come from and expressed concerns for elements such as a hydrology study missing from the survey proposal.

Mr. Norton envisioned the property to become a complex offering a cultural arts center as well as other things such as a hotel.

Councilmember Andrea Blustein was concerned that the property would become some sort of gambling facility in light of recent topics in the legislature.

Councilmember Maryline Blackburn assumed the feasibility study was to cover a cultural arts center in Smyrna as a whole rather than a specific location. She stated that it was her understanding that Mr. Welch, Ms. Blustein, and Ms. Wilkinson were also under the impression that this study was for the City as a whole. Another point that Ms. Blackburn wanted to make was that she felt the proposed location went against the plan to keep the current City Center as

the destination area. She felt that they could use that amount of money to build something on one of the City owned properties by the Community Center.

Ms. Blustein mentioned using the green house property on Atlanta Road that the City recently acquired.

Mr. Norton stated that building something from the ground up would be a lot more expensive than working with an existing structure.

The Mayor asked what the total cost of the two proposed items would be. Mr. Norton stated that the total for both the due diligence and the feasibility study came to \$72,500.00.

Mayor Bacon did not feel comfortable with spending that much money on the project at this time.

Councilmember Tim Gould asked about civil engineering and why it was not included in the proposal.

The Mayor said that he wished the City would have been able to obtain the property a long time ago.

Mr. Norton stated that whether or not the Council decided to move forward with this, he just wanted to present a cost effective way to give people what they have stated that they wanted in previous studies that the City has done.

Councilmember Corkey Welch said that if purchasing the property was going to be a consideration, then the studies needed to be done but if there is not enough desire to move forward, then there is no point in spending that type of money. He mentioned that there are pros and cons to the location of the building.

Mr. Gould agreed with the Mayor and Mr. Welch, but did feel it was a unique opportunity with some risk involved, but worthwhile.

Ms. Blustein mentioned lights for the park in her ward and was not interested in spending money on the project.

Councilmember Ron Fennel felt the money was not there for this project. He is proud of the city's AAA bond rating and wants to protect it. He was not sure that this site and this opportunity were the way to go.

Mr. Norton thanked Mr. Fennel for taking the time to discuss the project with him over the phone as well as other council members.

Ms. Blustein felt that people are not using the Spring Road Linear Park because they are concerned about the stabbing that occurred and the perpetrator still hasn't been caught.

Mr. Norton said that the Cultural Arts Center and lights for the park are two separate issues and should be viewed that way.

Ms. Blustein felt that there seems to be a refusal to acknowledge the need for lights in the park.

Ms. Saddler Jones spoke to Councilmember Susan Wilkinson who was not present at the meeting, but had called and offered her thoughts on the issue earlier in the day. Ms. Wilkinson is not in support of the project. She wants a feasibility study done but for the city as a whole rather than for this particular property.

Mr. Gould inquired as to whether or not this study had already been done as part of the parks and recreation study. The answer given was that the study already done was more of a generic process to find what people wanted overall rather than a specific item such as a performing arts center.

Mr. Norton explained that the church had come to him and he thought that the property might be an opportunity to give people what they had been asking for.

Mr. Fennel commented that an arts center of this kind had been an idea from some time ago but the land was not there to follow through.

Mayor Bacon expressed the need to move on and wished that this would have been included in the original Perez study so that additional money would not have had to be spent.

Mr. Fennel felt that the property will be purchased and developed in some way, sometime soon and that the tax revenue from it will benefit the City.

Mr. Norton thanked everyone for their time and attention to the idea.

City Administrator Report

City Administrator Tammi Saddler Jones asked Fire Chief Roy Acree to provide an update regarding Fire Station 2.

Fire Chief Acree stated that they should be moving into the building the first week of November and operating out of the building shortly after.

Mayor Bacon inquired about the delay caused by a power pole. Chief Acree stated that it caused a month delay on the project.

Ms. Saddler Jones asked the Council to consider posting the City Engineer position and to change it back to a department head position with a grade 30 pay scale. Eric Randall resigned in September and since then Assistant City Engineer Kevin Moore has been serving as interim City Engineer.

Mr. Fennel asked if Mr. Moore was interested in the position permanently.

Ms. Saddler Jones said it is her understanding that he is interested, but that the position has to be posted regardless.

The Mayor wanted to make sure there was good support behind raising the pay scale for the position. Assistant City Administrator Scott Andrews responded by letting everyone know that the research done indicated the need for a pay raise for the position.

Mr. Welch stated that engineering and public works should really be split into two separate departments, but that is not his decision to make, it is the job of the City Administrator.

Mayor Bacon wanted to see an organizational chart as well as an updated job description for the position so everyone will be clear on the changes.

Human Resources Director Kay Bolick had looked around and feels that grade 30 is appropriate for the position.

Ms. Saddler Jones also mentioned the possibility of adding two positions to that department and will present more information as it becomes available.

Mr. Fennel agreed with Mr. Welch that the organization chart as well as the job description needed to be prepared and made available.

Mr. Andrews provided updates on permitting, code issue and documentation process for the City. He was previously asked by Mayor and Council to look into the process and evaluate. He explained that Community Development is using Munis and making notes so that progress can be easily followed. Mr. Andrews informed that incomplete applications is the main cause for permits taking longer than some applicants felt it should.

The Mayor explained that this had started with a complaint about six months ago and he asked Ms. Saddler Jones and Mr. Andrews to look into what the City could do better especially when it came to plan approval.

City Administrator Saddler Jones let Council know that the City has applied for Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) 2019 Live, Work, Play Award. Winners will be announced in January at Mayor's Day. She also acknowledged the fact that two Parks and Recreation department employees received recognition and will receive their awards at an event later this week. To close out her report, she noted that she will be out of the office on October 19th and 22nd on annual leave.

Review of the Agenda for the October 15, 2018 Council Meeting

Mayor Bacon inquired about tabling items 4A through 4G.

City Attorney Scott Cochran explained that the property is involved in active litigation and he recommended tabling until the next meeting when more information was available. He stated that it can all be tabled in one motion rather than tabling each item separately.

Mayor Bacon stated that each item is normally read individually so that it can officially be entered into the record but if this was not necessary then it could be done differently. He asked how tabling the items should work.

Ms. Blackburn asked for additional clarification on how to handle the motion since she was the sponsor.

Fire Chief Acree summarized the agenda item related to the purchase of a replacement fire rescue vehicle for station 4.

Ms. Saddler Jones reviewed the employee insurance provider item under the consent agenda to make sure everyone was clear on what changes were being made.

Mayor Bacon adjourned the Pre-Council Meeting at 6:50 PM.