



City of Smyrna

2800 King Street
Smyrna, Georgia 30080

Meeting Minutes - Final Committee of the Whole

Thursday, March 11, 2021

6:00 PM

Smyrna Community Center Magnolia Room
200 Village Green Circle SE

MASKS REQUIRED / TEMPERATURE WILL BE CHECKED

Roll Call

Present 8 - Mayor Derek Norton, Councilmember Glenn Pickens, Councilmember Travis Lindley, Councilmember Austin Wagner, Councilmember Charles Welch, Councilmember Susan Wilkinson, Mayor pro tem / Councilmember Tim Gould, and Councilmember Lewis Wheaton

Also Present 1 - Jeffrey Tucker

Staff 9 - Joe Bennett, Penny Mocerri, Heather Peacon-Corn, Chris Addicks, Julie Barwig, Jennifer Bennett, Robert Harvey, Dat Luu, and Joey Staubes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Derek Norton called the March 11, 2021 Meeting of the Committee of the Whole to order at 6:00PM.

2. New Business

Mayor Norton discuss Cobb County's generous offer of 5 million dollars to help offset the Windy Hill Construction Project.

A. [COW21-20](#)

Information Systems - Position Reclassification Discussion, Chris Addicks, I.S. Director

I.T. Director Chris Addicks spoke about the need for a web administrator as opposed to an approved position of data analyst. He is asking for the classification to be changed to be able to hire a web administrator sooner rather than later. The data analyst position will be revisited in the FY2022 budget process.

He understands the Council's want of a refresh of the City website and this position will better accommodate that request.

B. [COW21-18](#)

Economic Development Report - Andrea Worthy, Economic Development Director

Andrea Worthy, Economic Development Coordinator gave a presentation regarding the first six weeks of her tenure as Director and what things she is the state of Economic Development within the City.

Some of the Core Activities discussed are Marketing and Business Recruitment, Business retention and expansion, Workforce Development, Creating networks and partnerships, and Fostering Entrepreneurship.

Economic Development in Smyrna: The Three R's

Retention

- Targeting large employers & key industries; lease renewals
- Support small business with connections to resources

Recruitment

- Support state & metro economic development partners; tenant brokers

Redevelopment

- Promote redevelopment in targeted areas

Business Retention and Expansion

- 80 percent of new jobs and capital investment comes from companies that already exist in the community
- Main goals are to provide assistance with issues that could force a company to fail or close, and to prevent companies from relocating; or to help businesses grow
- A successful BRE program also provides data and intelligence to strategically attract new companies to a community and foster the creation of new businesses.

WHAT KINDS OF HELP DO BUSINESSES NEED?

- Finding land or buildings for future operations.
- Securing financing for new equipment operations.
- Finding or training new workers.
- Help with zoning, permitting, licensing or infrastructure needs.
- Technical assistance for exporting market development and other growth opportunities and challenges.

Some of Smyrna's key employees are Glock, Home Depot, IBM, UCB, Amazon, Kenny's Great Pies, and United.

Recruitment

- Marketing and business attraction is about more than just selling sites or attracting businesses – it 's a means of promoting the community as a viable location for economic activity.
- To attract new businesses, a community must target its marketing and attraction efforts based on what is available to meet the company needs.

ATTRACTING NEW BUSINESS TO A COMMUNITY REQUIRES:

- Knowing the community assets and strengths (infrastructure, living costs, tax rates, etc.)
- Knowing what industries are the best prospects for the community.
- Crafting a marketing message and providing accurate information to potential investors.
- Communicating an effective message that reaches the target audiences (site selection professionals? Mixed use developers? Small businesses?)
- Undertaking strategic improvements that will make Smyrna a more appealing location for investment.

Some of the other groups that work with the City for recruitment opportunities are Cobb Travel and Tourism, Metro Atlanta CHamber, Georgia pOwer, Downtown Development Authority, Other City Departments, Georgia, USA, Select Cobb and Score.

Under the Georgia 2021 Tax Credit Tier, Smyrna is a Tier 4.

Redevelopment

- Work with property owners to understand with short-term and long-term investment strategies and how aligned with community vision
- Assist in marketing opportunities to developers (networking, events, FAM tours)
- Advocate for consistent, predictable review and approval processes
- Identify financial gaps in market and align toolbox (incentives, public investment, etc.)

Development Economics 101

- It is usually easier to do nothing, rather than risk the unknown
- In real estate, the difference between now and later has to be significant to justify redevelopment (Rule of 3)

Two examples are as follows: Jonquil was an \$8.5M project in 2010 that is worth \$23.4M today and Belmont was a \$4.2M project in 2010 and worth \$32.0M today. (commercial only)

How to incentivize redevelopment

- Flexibility in development and building requirements
- Reduce risk with consistent and predictable review and approval processes
- Subsidy and partnership
- Align toolbox with market needs

How to disincentivize redevelopment

- Land use, zoning and densities not aligned with market math
- Building and design requirements that add to development costs
- Regulatory environment or public process that fosters uncertainty

Smyrna's Commercial Real Estate:

Industrial has a 6.3% vacancy rate, Office has a 14.1% vacancy rate and Retail has a 2% vacancy rate.

When speaking to developers and state partners in this area, one of the concerns they have with Smyrna is not community Development Staff, but rather the process of approval.

The following are what ED sees as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats:

STRENGTHS

Location. Location. Location.
 Quality of Life
 Access to major employment centers
 Strong population growth
 Diversity
 Customer service
 Local partner collaboration
 Strong sense of community pride

WEAKNESSES

Inconsistency in approval processes negatively impacting reputation
 Lack of regional transit connections impacts traffic and workforce
 Digital presence needs update
 Market Village is primary example of development for 20+ years– need new highlights of success

Lack of econ dev marketing strategy and defined target markets
 Primary growth opportunities related to redeveloping functional assets
 North Smyrna market weaknesses

OPPORTUNITIES

Progressive leadership
 Recent redevelopment showcase market opportunities for successes
 Market trends place high value on placemaking locations
 Continue to engage on regional transportation and transit issues
 Leverage public investment to encourage redevelopment in key areas
 Connect Smyrna brand with new placemaking (ie Riverview) Increase use of digital assets to promote Smyrna
 Continue to help promote the changing story of Smyrna Schools

THREATS

Expectations greater than resources
 Mismatch between community desires and market realities
 Retail market challenged by obsolete property types and proximity to regional retail nodes
 Commercial space and housing becoming less price competitive
 Regional (not local) traffic issues
 Lack of focus: priority prioritization needed

Preliminary Econ Dev Recommendations

Increase and enhance engagement with businesses and developers
 - Supplement in-person meetings and FAM tours with e-newsletters, annual business survey
 - Establish messaging matrix and marketing /PR strategy for economic development targets
 - Encourage redevelopment opportunities in key areas* Align incentives with goals
 - Reduce risk with consistent and predictable review and approval process –from application through Council approval

C. [COW21-22](#)

Town Home Moratorium Discussion - Rusty Martin, Community Development Director

Mayor Norton reviewed the information regarding the resolution for a Townhome Moratorium to be presented at the March 15, Mayor and Council meeting: Community Development Director Rusty Martin discussed the 6 month moratorium to be implemented and remarked that the period allows for the Mayor and Council and staff to have ample time to review, discuss and bring forward design standards for new townhomes.

The moratorium will run from March 15, 2021 through September 15, 2021 unless otherwise voted on by Mayor and Council. Current townhomes in the works will be completed as this is just for new applications.

Additionally the local Board of Realtors will participate in the discussion.

Mayor Norton also announced the separation of the License and Variance Board to be the License Board and all Variance options will move through the Council at Mayor and Council.

3. Review of the March 15, 2021 Mayor and Council Agenda

A. [COW21-23](#)

Review of the March 15, 2021 Mayor and Council Agenda.

Rev. Derek Porter, Smyrna First United Methodist Church (1315 Concord Rd) will provide the invocation and lead all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 4A: V21-006 - Reduce rear setback from 30 feet to 20 feet - Land Lot 526 - 1335 Cliffwood Drive - Jarrett King.

The applicant is requesting to reduce the rear setback from 30 feet to 20 feet to create an addition to an existing single-family home at 1335 Cliffwood Drive. The development standards established by the City for the R-15 zoning district require a rear setback of 30 feet. At the February 24, 2021 License and Variance Board Meeting, the request was deferred to the March 15, 2021 Mayor and Council Meeting.

The subject parcel is a 0.44-acre lot located on the northeast of the intersection of Hayes Drive and Cliffwood Drive (see Figure 1). The subject property and all adjacent properties are zoned R-15 and are all occupied with single-family detached homes. The applicant is proposing to build a 1,600 square foot two-story addition functioning as a two car garage and "mother-in-law suite" with a covered walkway leading to the main house. There will be no door openings on the Hayes Drive side of the structure with the exception of the garage door. Per the applicant, the addition is to be used by the applicant's family members only. The addition will have a two-car garage and kitchenette on the first floor; on the second floor will be one bedroom, one bathroom, an office, and a laundry room. There will not be a stove included in the addition, so a variance for a second kitchen is not warranted. The addition will have a combination of hardiplank, board and batten, and/or brick exterior, painted to match the existing home.

The existing home sits catty-corner on the property, pushed to the northern edge of the property with a large front yard. According to Section 402.35, the front yard of the property is deemed the side with the least road frontage, in this case, the Cliffwood Drive side since it is smaller by 38 feet. Due to the orientation of the existing structure on the property and the existing layout of the home, the most logical area to put a garage is in the rear of the property, off of Hayes Drive.

The new garage addition will also be angled to match the existing geometry of the home to continue the home's aesthetic from the road front to attempt to lessen any disturbance to the surrounding neighbors.

Item 4B, C and D - Variance Request - V21-028 - Allow variances for lot size, lot width, front, side, and rear setback for annexation of a non-conforming lot - Land Lot 519 - 0.192 acres - 2474 Adams Dr - Richard Griffin and Ron Dickinson / Approval of Ordinance ORD2021-06 - Annexation request (100% owners)

The annexation of one lot with variances for lot size, lot width, front, side, and rear setback reductions.

The applicant is requesting approval to annex one existing lot of record from Cobb County into

the city and retain the existing R-20 zoning category. The property is currently occupied with one residential structure. The existing structure will be demolished for the construction of a new single-family home. The existing lot is non-conforming with respect to the R-20 zoning district and requires several variances.

Item 4E, F and G - Zoning Request - Z21-003 - Allow rezoning from R-15 and R-20 (Cobb County) to R-8-Conditional for the development of five single-family detached homes at a density of 4.07 units per acre - 1.23 acres - Land Lot 632 - 2783 Mildred Place, 2791, 2801, and 2811 Madison Street - Baebrook LLC. / Approval of Ordinance ORD2021-03 - Annexation request (100% owners)

Baebrook LLC is seeking approval of a rezoning for 2783 Mildred Place & 2791, 2801,

and 2811 Madison Street from R-15 & R-20 (County) to R-8-Conditional for the development of five single-family detached residences at a density of 4.07 units per acre. The applicant is proposing to subdivide the four parcels into five lots to construct five individual single-family detached residences. The proposed lots will be between 6,587 and 8,616 sq. ft. The subdivision has enough gross area to maintain a minimum of 8,000 sq. ft. per lot. However, to meet the minimum lot size the shape and topography of the property would result in several lots with an irregular form. Staff supports the reduction in lot size rather than create several lots with an irregular form. The homes will face Mildred Place and Madison Street and have private driveways with rear entry homes. The applicant proposes to use elements such as brick, stone, and siding for the façade materials for each home.

The zoning proposal shows a stormwater detention facility located at the southern end of the property. The applicant has provided a site plan with the rezoning application for reference. A formal review of stormwater management requirements will be assessed during plan review and permitting. There is no stream located on the subject property. The applicant will be required to add new sidewalk around the development.

Community Development recommends approval of the rezoning from R-15 & R-20 (County) to

R-8-Conditional for the development of five single-family units at a density of 4.07 units per acre with conditions.

4H - The City Council has received complaints regarding the lack of development and architectural standards for town home developments. The moratorium would provide the City the opportunity to evaluate existing design standards for new town home units and to consider amendments to the zoning ordinances regarding town home developments. The request is to establish a 180-day moratorium on the acceptance of rezoning and variance applications for town home developments starting March 15, 2021 and extending through and including September 15, 2021, unless the moratorium is terminated sooner by an act of the City Council.

No formal business items.

Consent Agenda:

Minutes were reviewed and there was no discussion regarding same.

Item 8D - Community Development requests authorization to enter into a contract with OpenGov for an all in-one citizen service platform for permitting, licensing, plan review and inspections.

This system will assist with the management of the permitting process from application submittals to plan reviews to inspections and will facilitate the migration of permitting from a paper-based process to an online digital process. Residents and customers will be able to submit permit applications, track plan review get inspection results from the comfort of their home or offices. The requested system will provide efficiencies for both customers and staff.

The City requested proposals for the CIP project in September 2020 for an online permitting system for use by Community Development, the Fire Marshal's Office, Public Works and City Engineering (RFP-21-009). The city received 17 responses to RFP-21-009 and short listed the six best vendors for interviews and cost proposals. All the proposals came in over the budgeted \$217,000 for the CIP project and were rejected.

OpenGov reached out to the city for an opportunity to present their product. They currently hold a State of Georgia contract for software (99999-SPD-0000060-003)

through SHI. The review committee reviewed the software and is recommending approval to enter entering into a contract with OpenGov for its services. The software meets the needs of the city, as well as within budget for the CIP project. The review committee consists of the purchasing manager, Community Development Director, Chief Building Official, Public Works Director, City Engineer, IT Director, GIS Coordinator, Chief Fire Marshal & Deputy Fire Marshal. The Purchasing Agent's Recommendation and OpenGov pricing documents are attached.

4. Other Business (as needed)

Councilmember Susan Wilkinson asked to return to Item 4E and review the site plan again.

Mayor Norton asked the Short Term Rental Committee where they were regarding same. He mentioned a \$5.00 nightly fee on AIR B&B's to be payable to the municipalities. It has recently passed the house per Councilmember Austin Wagner. Mayor Norton suggested we hire a researcher to find all the Air B&B's in our area.

Councilmember Travis Lindley asked if the legislation would require the companies to divulge the information to the city. Mr. Wagner responded he did not think so.

April 1, 2021, City Administrator Joe Bennett would like to bring forward a recommendation for Police Chief position. Everyone is expected to be in attendance.

Discussion of the April 5, 2021 Council Meeting was regarding a quorum due to it being Spring Break and the possible absence of four of the Council members.

Mayor Norton reviewed the Red Speed Camera item moving through the Legislature. He spoke about other jurisdictions that would be participating and speaking about the need for this protection device.

City Administrator Joe Bennett reviewed the current status of our contract with Schneider. Projects have been identified, however, we are still unsure of how we will proceed given the recent information reviewed at a previous meeting. We will be passing along the street lights cost to the residents and businesses at a rate of \$2 per resident and \$5 per commercial. We are one of the few City's that doesn't pass this expense on to the community.

Mayor Norton remarked that he and Mr. Bennett had met with Mayor Ernst of Brookhaven regarding the "Missing Middle" which is more affordable middle income housing for areas. Rusty Martin has been involved in the conversation as well and offered areas of interest.

Councilmember Corkey Welch had no report this evening.

Councilmember Glenn Pickens had no report this evening.

Councilmember Travis Lindley spoke about Traffic Calming Committee and the list they will bring forward to the April 15 COW for review.

Broke things down into 4 tiers:

Tier 1 - High Ticket / SPLOST dollar projects

Tier 2 - Main / but smaller projects executed on Church Street

Tier 3 - Smaller more economical projects

Tier 4 - Addressed in some way already with traffic calming measure

Councilmember Wilkinson asked a question but she is inaudible.

Councilmember Austin Wagner spoke about the additional CARES Act monies to be distributed to the city's and his hope for some of the use to be monies given to citizens to help pay for things like rental assistance, groceries, utilities, etc.

Councilmember Lewis Wheaton spoke about Oakdale Road.

Councilmember Wilkinson spoke about an upcoming meeting with Georgia Power.

Assistant City Administrator Penny Mocerri spoke about the Racial Trustbuilding initiative.

City Clerk Heather Corn spoke about Court Services and the positive Virtual Court Sessions being held. Other City's such as Acworth and Marietta have observed and asked for information as to how we are running Court through GoToMeeting.

5. Executive Session (as needed)

6. Adjournment

Mayor Derek Norton adjourned the March 11, 2021 meeting of the Mayor and Council at 7:35PM.