



Meeting Minutes - Final Committee of the Whole

Thursday, December 14, 2017

6:00 PM

City Hall

1. Roll Call

Council: Mayor Max Bacon, Derek Norton (Mayor Pro Tem), Andrea Blustein, Doug Stoner, Ron Fennel, Charles Welch, Susan Wilkinson

Staff: Tammi Saddler Jones (City Administrator), Scott Andrews (Assistant City Administrator), Scott Cochran (City Attorney), Christy Ullman (Executive Assistant to Mayor and Council), Terri Graham (City Clerk), Maxwell Ruppensburg (Special Projects Coordinator), Ashley Youmans (Management Fellow), Richard Garland (Parks and Recreation Director), Ken Suddreth (Community Development Director), Rusty Martin (Planner II), Scott Stokes (Public Works Director), Major Frank Durrance (Police Department)

Guests: Maryline Blackburn Ward 3 Council elect, Larry Terry (Croy Engineering), Don Hicks (Croy Engineering), Garvis Sams (Sams, Larkin, Huff & Balli, LLP)

2. Call to Order

Mayor Max Bacon called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

3. City Administrator Report

City Administrator Tammi Saddler Jones began the report by discussing that each department head has signed up to give a presentation, introduce their staff, and give important updates during one Committee of the Whole meetings during 2018. Mayor Max Bacon mentioned that department heads used to give updates at the City Council meetings, but that took too long. He thought this way would be more efficient and allow the Council to meet staff from each department. Mayor Bacon also mentioned the idea to move Committee of the Whole meetings to different locations, such as Public Works or the Police Department, to which Ms. Saddler Jones said that she wanted to implement a rotation starting in 2018. Ms. Saddler Jones also updated everyone on the days she will be out of office, which will be December 27, 2017 through January 3, 2018 and the Assistant City Administrator will be in charge.

Assistant City Administrator Scott Andrews discussed that using Brockington & Assoc. to redesign the Smyrna Museum might be more expensive than anticipated and getting the representative from the agency to have an in-person meeting would cost several thousand dollars for travel expenses. Mayor Bacon explained that he thought the company was in Atlanta but they are actually located elsewhere, and that he believed the city should look at a closer agency. Mr. Andrews said he spoke with Councilmember Charles Welch to see if it was a good idea to have an online meeting instead. Mr. Andrews explained that either way, the city is still committed to paying the agency \$15,000 of the original \$20,000 agreement. Councilmember Susan Wilkinson said she thought the agreement was for \$17,000 and Mr. Andrews said it was \$23,000

for the museum plan. Ms. Wilkinson asked if the plan was finished yet and Mr. Andrews responded no. He continued to explain that of the 12,000 items that have been digitally recorded, roughly 80% of the items will need to be returned to the original owners. Mr. Welch expressed that he did not think it was a good idea to invest a quarter of a million dollars into the museum and said he thought it would make sense to take two to three years to make improvements over time. Mayor Bacon said the city was very supportive of the Smyrna Museum and building the new facility, but the city needs to take control of what goes into the museum. Mr. Andrews mentioned that the city would not have the proposed redesign plan for the museum until January 2018 and that the city can look at other agencies if needed. Mayor Bacon mentioned there is a possibility to get volunteers to help and may not need an agency to do the redesign work.

Ms. Saddler Jones announced that there is a need for special call meetings for topics that need longer discussion than is allotted during a Committee of the Whole meeting. Mayor Bacon stated that these meetings could be set during the day at a convenient time and can be used to discuss issues in Public Works, the museum, and others. He said that the Council does not need to add lengthy topics to Thursday night meetings, especially meetings with heavy agendas.

Special Projects Coordinator Maxwell Ruppensburg announced that the Smyrna Vision website has been launched and will be used to share stories, photos, and events related to vision plan efforts and other city business that falls under vision goals.

Ms. Saddler Jones showed pictures from the Shop with a Hero event on December 8, 2017 in which staff from the Police and Fire departments shopped with local elementary school students. She explained that this event served 78 local children who were given \$200 each through donations made to the Smyrna Public Safety Foundation to pick out Christmas gifts.

Ms. Saddler Jones showed pictures from the Reed House Grand Opening on December 11, 2017 and Mayor Bacon mentioned that the event had a great turnout. Mayor Bacon believed that the Reed House will be a great rental location for the city. Councilmember Ron Fennel asked if there are ways of promoting the Reed House for rentals and Parks and Recreation Director Richard Garland answered that it will be promoted on the website, social media, and that he will invite event planners to see the facility. Councilmember Charles Welch asked if there was a plan to pave the parking lot behind the house, and Mr. Garland said that it would have to stay unpaved. Larry Terry from Croy Engineering said that parking bumpers will be installed.

Lastly, Ms. Saddler Jones mentioned the Christmas at Brawner Coat Drive event on December 15, 2017. She also announced that the hands-free cell phones devices have arrived to the Police Department.

4. Proposed Merit Pay Increases

City Administrator Tammi Saddler Jones brought up the discussion of merit pay increases and said the topic was brought up in the previous two years during this time also. Ms. Saddler Jones explained that the Finance Department has budgeted \$280,000 in contingency for employee merit increases and said if approved, there will be a budget transfer to move the funds to the appropriate line item. She explained there were two options, either set the increase at a range of 1.5-3.5% for a maximum of \$268,000 or at a range of 1-3% for a maximum of \$220,000. Mayor Max Bacon wanted to be clear if the adopted budget included merit increases. Ms. Saddler Jones

stated that all the Council would be doing now is to adopt the \$268,000 total amount, which would only be given if every staff member received top scores on their performance evaluations. Mayor Bacon asked why this needs to be voted on if the budget was already adopted, and Ms. Saddler Jones stated that because it was in contingency, the Council just needs to approve the budget transfer. Ms. Saddler Jones asked which percentage option would the Council prefer, and the consensus was the 1.5-3.5% range of increases.

5. Wolfe Center Pool Lifeguards - Richard Garland

Parks and Recreation Director Richard Garland announced that their full-time lifeguard at the Aline Wolfe Adult Recreation Center has left employment with the city and believes that changing the position to two part-time lifeguards would be easier to schedule shifts, save on benefits, and give the recreation center manager more flexibility. Mr. Garland proposed that the city have one head lifeguard and two part-time lifeguards. Mayor Max Bacon expressed concern about the city's ability to hire part-time lifeguards. Councilmember Susan Wilkinson asked for clarification on whether the city recently changed the part-time position to full-time not too long ago, and City Administrator Tammi Saddler Jones answered yes. Mayor Bacon explained that he just wanted to ensure the positions could easily be filled.

Discussion shifted to the topic of handicap children and children with disabilities at the Aline Wolfe therapy pool. Councilmember Andrea Blustein explained that lifeguards have given reasons not to let handicap children in the pool. She said that she and Councilmember Susan Wilkinson came up with the idea to reserve the last hour the pool is open just for handicapped children to swim. Mayor Bacon asked how many children were in need of the designated hour, and Ms. Wilkinson answered that a constituent has asked for it and that she believes there are other families who could benefit. Ms. Blustein asked if there were city employees available to test out a designated time for handicap children to swim. Mr. Garland explained that the Parks and Recreation Department does not have a therapeutic specialist on staff and would prefer to have the proper equipment and staffing in place for such a program. Mayor Bacon stated that he would not want to hire a specialist if there was not a need in the community. Ms. Wilkinson noted that handicap children are able to swim currently with a doctor's note and with a parent present, but is requesting a time separate from other attendees of the pool. Assistant City Administrator Scott Andrews explained that there will be a public engagement meeting for citizens to discuss the needs of the disabled population on January 23, 2018 with representatives from Cobb County available to facilitate and help gauge the need. Councilmember Doug Stoner asked if there would be any liability issues and City Attorney Scott Cochran stated that paperwork could be drafted to prevent liability issues from arising. Mayor Bacon noted that he is not against the idea as long as there is a displayed need for designated hours. Councilmember Ron Fennel asked if handicap children are currently being denied access to the therapy pool, and Ms. Wilkinson said that they are not. Mr. Stoner suggested waiting to see the results of the meeting on January 23 to determine what the needs are, including if there is a need for specialized staff.

6. Review of the December 18, 2017 Mayor and Council Agenda

Under the Mayoral Report was the approval of the results of the December 5, 2017 Special Election results and the swearing in of Maryline Blackburn as the Councilmember for Ward 3 for the remainder of the term. Also under this section was a proclamation in recognition of Ms. Betty Hammond for 77 years of service at Mount Zion First Baptist Church.

Under Land Issues/Zonings/Annexations, item A was a zoning request to rezone from R-15 to RAD-Conditional for the development of four single-family residences on Spring Street. Community Development Director Ken Suddreth stated that this request was seen by the Planning and Zoning Commission years ago but was denied. Garvis Sams, attorney representing the developer of this property, stated that he has been meeting with councilmembers to make them aware of the circumstances and that the client would prefer to be heard. Mayor Max Bacon suggested tabling this item until the second meeting of January to give new Councilmember Maryline Blackburn time to review the item.

Item B was a special land use permit request for the installation of a Verizon Wireless cell tower. Mr. Suddreth explained that the request is not a lattice tower but rather a single 130 foot pole. He explained that staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission have recommended approval. He stated that both parties are in agreement, but the neighborhood has concerns about potential redevelopment in the area. Mayor Bacon expressed the concern about why the company cannot develop on an existing tower. City Attorney Scott Cochran explained that the city would have to do a survey to prove that they can place their network on an existing tower. Mr. Cochran further explained that Verizon Wireless has an engineer report stating they cannot place their network on an existing tower, which is the only evidence presented; the city would need to counter the company's evidence. Councilmember Charles Welch asked if the cell tower would be placed by a private company or by Verizon Wireless, and Mr. Suddreth answered that it is Verizon Wireless, not a cell tower company. Mr. Cochran suggested the city adopt an ordinance to cover this issue and Mayor Bacon agreed. Mayor Bacon asked Councilmember Maryline Blackburn if she would like to table this item, and she answered that she will table it until January 16, 2018.

Item C was a zoning request to rezone from R-20 to RAD-Conditional for the development of five single-family residences on Dixie Avenue. Mr. Suddreth explained that the developer would like to change the arrangement from three lots to five lots and is requesting an annexation into the city. He further explained that staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission have recommended approval. Mayor Bacon stated that since this property is outside the city limits, there will need to be a public hearing on the rezoning, a vote to annex the property, and a vote to approve the rezoning of the property.

Under Formal Business were the reappointments of board and commission members for items A, B, C, and D.

Item E under Formal Business was the approval to amend the City of Smyrna's Code of Ordinances Chapter 14 "Animals" to prohibit the tethering of an animal. Special Projects Coordinator Maxwell Ruppensburg explained that the city is amending this section of the ordinance in accordance with a request from Cobb County's to match their animal ordinance. Councilmember Ron Fennel asked if other cities in the county were also adopting this change and Mr. Ruppensburg was not sure. City Attorney Scott Cochran explained that the city has contracted with Cobb County for animal control, and part of the contract is to adopt the county's code of ordinance amendments. Mr. Cochran explained that once the city adopts the amended ordinance, violators can be seen at the city court instead of the magistrate court.

Item F was the authorization of the Local Maintenance Improvement Grant application distributed by the Georgia Department of Transportation. Public Works Director Scott Stokes explained that this annual grant helps fund the pavement of roadways and is

supplemented with a 30% match from SPLOST funds. Mayor Bacon asked if this was in the budget, and Mr. Stokes replied yes and that the city applies every year.

Mr. Ruppensburg explained items G and H which were the approval of the Purchase Card Policy manual and the Fuel Card Policy manual. Mr. Ruppensburg said that the Purchase Card Policy had updates made by the city's Budget Officer. Mayor Bacon asked which employees are issued cards and Mr. Ruppensburg answered that he could get the list from the Finance Department. Mayor Bacon expressed concerns about giving out credit cards to employees. Mr. Ruppensburg also explained that the Fuel Card Policy had been informal in the past, so the proposed policy manual formalizes what is accepted and prohibited and it mimics the Purchase Card Policy. Councilmember Charles Welch asked if the fuel cards are assigned to a vehicle or an individual. Mr. Stokes said he was under the impression that cards were issued to individuals. Councilmember Susan Wilkinson asked Mr. Stokes if Public Works is still doing the biofuel program, and Mr. Stokes answered yes, it is used for vehicles with diesel tanks when available.

Item I was a fee schedule change for Parks and Recreation Department rentals. Parks and Recreation Director Richard said the proposal includes separate single field and complex rental prices. He said the price for single fields will be \$60 for the first two hours, then \$20 each additional hour or \$165 for the full day. For complex fields, Riverline Soccer Complex, Jonquil Soccer Complex, and Brinkley Baseball Complex will be \$500 a day, Brinkley will be \$450 a day, Chuck Camp Baseball Complex will be \$450 a day, and Tolleson Complex will be \$300 a day. Mayor Bacon asked how this differs from the current rates. Mr. Garland stated that currently, all fields are \$20 an hour for residents and \$30 for non-residents during the day and \$30 an hour for residents and \$40 an hour for non-residents at night. Councilmember Ron Fennel asked if the department will be charging organized groups the new fees. Mr. Garland answered yes, but they are not for recreational leagues, just for individuals. Mr. Garland also explained that if a recreational league wanted to host a tournament, the fees would apply. He said that currently recreational leagues are not paying anything. Mayor Bacon asked when the effective dates of the new fee schedule would begin and Mr. Garland answered February 1 or March 1, 2018. Councilmember Doug Stoner suggested moving the effective date to January 1, 2018. Mayor Bacon stated that January 1 will be fine if people are given enough notice. Mr. Garland explained that the fee schedule includes the addition of the Reed House rental fees that includes separate fee schedules for first floor only versus entire house rentals as well as a refundable damage deposit of \$250 for all events.

Under the Consent Agenda was the renewal for 2018 Worker's Compensation Insurance Coverage. City Administrator Tammi Saddler Jones explained that the city is required to carry this type of coverage for employees and that the city is facing a premium reduction of \$40,000 this year compared to last year.

Also under the Consent Agenda was the approval to award Ashford Gardeners the Request for Proposal bid for Concord Road Linear Park Landscape Improvements Phase II. Public Works Director Scott Stokes explained that this is a continuation of the work currently being done along the linear park. Councilmember Charles Welch asked if Phase I of the project was low maintenance and Mr. Stokes answered yes. Mr. Stokes said the hardscape will be completed by the end of January.

There was also an approval to award Integrated Land Design, LLC the Request for Proposal bid for Jonquil Park Site Work using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Mr. Garland explained that there was a surface drainage problem at

Jonquil Park from the parking lot downhill through the playground and in the middle field. He said the plan is to install subsurface drainage and catch-basins to catch water before it runs into the field and the project will be funded through CDBG funds allocated by the Cobb County CDBG office.

7. Other Business

City Administrator Tammi Saddler Jones said there are about 15 employees who are topped out for their merit pay and explained that in the past, the Council has authorized a \$500 bonus check to those employees. She asked the Council if they would want to do the same this year. Mayor Max Bacon stated he would prefer to wait until the results of the salary survey are final in case some employees are not actually topped out.

Mayor Bacon said he will have an update at the next Committee of the Whole meeting about Wade's restaurant employees parking across the street from the restaurant. He said he has received complaints from homeowners that customers are parking along the streets in the neighborhood adjacent to the restaurant and suggested that the neighborhood will eventually need "no parking" signs.

Councilmember Andrea Blustein expressed concern that if the city is going to hire a new Deputy City Clerk, it cannot be expected for them to deal with sensitive information at a desk that is accessible to the public and susceptible to distractions. Mayor Bacon stated that he never heard a complaint from the previous Deputy City Clerk, to which City Clerk Terri Graham informed him that the person previously employed in that position had actually complained about the noise, especially on court days. Councilmember Ron Fennel mentioned that the City Administrator has the ability to make office changes to maximize the city's capacity. Assistant City Administrator Scott Andrews said the quote to enclose the Deputy City Clerk desk was \$20,000 total including electrical work. Mayor Bacon mentioned that there needs to be an evaluation of all the offices on the Administration hallway instead of building a wall.

Councilmember Doug Stoner asked Tammi Saddler Jones if Administration was going to evaluate the offices and she answered that the department would like to do that. Councilmember Ron Fennel said that councilmembers are here part-time and should have a designated place to work, but councilmembers also need to ensure that full-time employees have the full capability to complete their work. Councilmember Andrea Blustein expressed that she does not believe interns and student workers should be working on the Administration hallway. Mayor Bacon said that disregarding students, he wanted to know where the Deputy City Clerk would be placed, and Ms. Blustein answered that the employee should be at the same desk but it should be enclosed. Mayor Bacon expressed that if there is a confidentiality issue then the employee needs to be moved inside the hallway. Councilmember Charles Welch suggested having all councilmembers in one office and Councilmember Derek Norton agreed. Councilmember Susan Wilkinson expressed that she prefers having her office space to conduct business. Mayor Bacon told the City Administrator and staff to evaluate their office needs and come back to Council with a recommendation.

Councilmember Susan Wilkinson mentioned that she will be attending Mayor's Day in January and National League of Cities in March. She also said that while attending the previous National League of Cities conference that she learned of a municipal garbage system to take the place of dumpsters to help prevent illegal dumping.

Councilmember Derek Norton passed out print-outs of a press release on hands-free legislation in Georgia. He stated that a poll showed 66% of respondents in favor of hands-free legislation and that the support comes from both Democrats and

Republicans.

8. Adjournment

Mayor Max Bacon declared the meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.