

City of Smyrna

*2800 King Street
Smyrna, Georgia 30080*



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 16, 2018

6:00 PM

City Hall

Committee of the Whole

1. Roll Call

Mayor A. Max Bacon, Derek Norton, Andrea Blustein, Susan Wilkinson, Maryline Blackburn, Charles Welch, Ron Fennel, Tim Gould

Tammi Saddler Jones (City Administrator), Scott Andrews (Asst. City Administrator), Terri Graham (City Clerk), Jeffrey Tucker (Asst. City Attorney), Christy Ullman (Executive Asst. to Mayor & Council), Elsa Thompson (Administrative Services Coordinator), Ashley Youmans (ICMA Management Fellow), Jennifer Bennett (Community Relations Director), Ken Suddreth (Community Development Director), Rusty Martin (Senior Planner), Eric Randall (City Engineer), Frank Martin (Interim Public Works Director), Robert Harvey (Deputy Chief)

Guests – Eric Meyer (Cobb DOT), Craig Owens (Cobb Animal Control), Cobb Animal Control Staff

2. Call to Order

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

3. Transit/ House Bill 930 - Eric Meyer

City Administrator Tammi Saddler Jones introduced Eric Meyer of Cobb County Department of Transportation and advised that he would be speaking about transit and House Bill 930 (HB930). Community Development Director Ken Suddreth spoke briefly about a few ongoing issues with the Georgia Department of Transportation regarding transit as it related to HB930 and advised that Mr. Meyer would be able to provide more insight. Mr. Meyer's PowerPoint presentation contained an overview of the Cobb County Transit System which included bus routes, short term plans and long term goals, and gave stats of community opinions the county's transit system. Mr. Meyer provided a few facts about Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and noted the comparisons between them and Cobb County Transit System, namely their budgets and the fact that Cobb County only had a bus line and no trains. Mayor Bacon inquired about the Atlanta Road route. Councilmember Ron Fennel asked what the mall route would look like. Councilmember Andrea Blustein advised Mr. Meyer that she felt the County needed a bypass and a light rail up to Kennesaw. Councilmember Susan Wilkinson advised that some of the citizens in her Ward stated that they had a huge issue getting to the bus. Councilmember Tim Gould inquired who made up the Board. Mr. Meyer spoke about HB930 and stated that a new funding mechanism was created from this bill. He noted that there were 16 members on the ATL Board from 10 different Districts – Smyrna being in Districts 3, 4 and 8, and noted who would be voting in each district. He advised that the county was cutting 2 bus routes and that route 10 was county's core route. Councilmember Corkey Welch expressed concern over the increasing funds for transit and felt that "taxing the citizens so much" would become an issue at some point. Ms. Wilkinson stated that most young people use car services such as Uber. Mr. Meyer then advised that Cobb County DOT was "in talks" with car services like Uber to possibly partner. Councilmember Maryline Blackburn inquired about transit's FLEX services. City Engineer Eric Randall how bus riders felt about the car services. Mr. Meyer noted that most of the riders have used a car service before and that the County would be testing whether riders would prefer to pay for a bus or rail. After answering a few questions, Council and staff thanked Mr. Meyer for his time.

4. Cobb County Animal Control Operations - Craig Owens

Ms. Saddler Jones introduced Craig Owens of Cobb County Animal Control and advised that Mr. Owens' was contacted to come to the meeting for a presentation due to concerns from some of the Councilmembers who were experiencing various issues with animals in their Wards. Mr. Owens started his presentation by introducing Cobb County Public Safety Director Sam Heaton as well as a few his staff members. He noted that their division was now Animal Services not Animal Control. Mr. Owens stated that they were short staffed but are working their way up to having 50 employees. He advised that they can house 200-220 animals in their facility and also, that they have both a full-time and a part-time veterinarian. Mr. Owens stated that they are able to house a variety of animals including farm animals and are responsible for of all cities in incorporated Cobb County. He gave an overview of the types of animals they handle, which included all domestic animals and noted that do not handle foxes, bears or coyotes. He also advised that they would only handle snakes if the snake got inside of someone's home or was in very close proximity to it (on your porch). Mayor Bacon inquired if they handled all of the animal services in Cobb County. Mr. Owens advised that they were responsible for all 6 cities in the county. Councilmember Susan Wilkinson inquired if they broke down the areas they covered into districts. Mr. Owens advised that they broke the areas down into zones and noted that the majority of Smyrna would be covered by Precinct #2 or #3. Ms. Saddler Jones inquired how they handled receiving a call about a loose dog. Mr. Owens advised that when an individual called 911, the call is routed to dispatch then must be transferred to Animal Services and that causes a delay in response time. Mr. Owens noted that if a citation was issued by them, the individual would go to County Court but if the city issued the citation, the individual is to go to City Court. He also noted that there were incidents that they knew nothing about because the matters weren't routed to them or possibly not properly handled. Ms. Wilkinson advised that there was a case where there was no follow up with the animal that was constantly loose so a woman was injured by the animal. Mr. Owens gave a brief summary of the fines and penalties that pet owners face for violations. Ms. Wilkins stated that citizens have advised her that the process was very time consuming. Councilmember Andrea Blustein advised that she had contacted animal control when a woman in her neighborhood was attacked and was advised that it would take approximately 4 hours to get there to get the animal. Ms. Blustein also inquired about coyotes and whether or not it was legal to shoot them. Mr. Owens advised that if someone called 911 (Cobb County Police) about a coyote, they would respond but that the best route would be to call the Department of Natural Resources. Mayor Bacon inquired if it was customary for callers to get a timeframe for when an officer would respond. Mr. Owens advised that they will give callers a timeframe if they call Animal Services directly. Mr. Owens advised that it was important to know that Animal Services' number was turned over to 911 dispatch after 5pm. Ms. Wilkinson inquired if the call would automatically go to 911 dispatch if a person called Animal Services after 5pm. Mr. Owens stated that there was a recording that advised callers to call 911. Ms. Wilkinson inquired if pet owners were required to get their animals spayed or neutered and vaccinated. Mr. Heaton advised that pet owners were required to have a rabies shot and stated that another issue Animal Services faced was callers wanting to remain anonymous, therefore making it difficult for officers to follow up. Ms. Wilkinson advised that feral cats were an issue in her Ward. Mr. Owens advised that they had a Feral Cat Program they which utilizes a the catch and release program – catch the cats, spay or neuter them, then released them and clipped their ears in order to identify that they have already been. Ms. Wilkinson inquired about foxes. Mr. Heaton advised that foxes ate small animals and vegetables, were normally skittish around people and that if they were getting close to a human, they more than

likely were sick. Mr. Owens made note that Animal Services only had one officer to service Cobb County at night, (8pm – 6am), and had 4 or 5 officers during the day. He noted that peak times (based on phone calls) were from 6am – 8pm. He advised that the City had the right to write citations since they had the same ordinances as Animal Services and noted that the City should not investigate any animal cruelty cases. Mr. Owens complimented Smyrna Police and stated that they had a great relationship with them. Mr. Owens invited the Councilmembers to come pick out an animal, free of charge. Council and staff thanked the Animal Services Team for their presentation and time.

5. City Administrator Report

Assistant City Administrator Scott Andrews advised that the carpet in the HR Training Room and the hallway just outside of the room was going to be replaced in the upcoming weekend.

City Administrator Tammi Saddler advised that she would be on leave on Friday, August 17th and that Scott Andrews would be in charge during her absence. She advised that Tim Matthews with Georgia Department of Transportation would be at the August 30th COW meeting. Community Development Director Ken Suddreth advised that Mr. Matthews would be speaking about the many changes with Georgia Highways and the Express Lanes. Mayor Bacon advised that Georgia D.O.T. would be doing a study which included the City of Smyrna about the changes to Interstate 285 and gave a brief summary of how the study would be done.

Ms. Saddler Jones noted that there would be a Hostile Work Environment training at the September 13th COW and also noted the dates of the two 45 minute sessions for Media Training (October 11th and November 1st).

Ms. Saddler Jones then turned the meeting over to Councilmember Andrea Blustein who requested to speak on lighting for Linear Park. Ms. Blustein provided billing information from Georgia Power she received from Finance about the current costs for lighting. She also provided a map that detailed where the new lighting could be installed in a section should be installed; she advised that she would like to have this presented to Council for a vote. Councilmember Ron Fennel inquired how much the lighting would cost. Ms. Blustein advised that the cost would be \$326,370. She detailed a few crimes that took place in the vicinity of the park that she felt could have been prevented with proper lighting. Councilmember Derek Norton stated that park patrons had the option to walk along the road where there was lighting; Councilmember Corkey Welch agreed. Mr. Norton noted a concern about residents not having any input on the proposed lighting. Ms. Blustein advised that the lights would not be too bright and the posts would not be tall. Mayor Bacon advised that there were several areas in the City that required lighting as well. Councilmember Susan Wilkinson inquired if there was lighting at Concord Linear Park; Ms. Blustein advised that there was. Mayor Bacon questioned why the lighting was not part of the original plans for the park and expressed his concerns about the financial impact to the City. Councilmembers Corkey Welch and Derek Norton expressed their concerns about the necessity for the park. Ms. Blustein reiterated her concerns about the lack of lighting and the public's safety. Councilmembers continued to discuss lighting projects and issues throughout the City.

6. Review of the August 20, 2018 Mayor & Council Agenda

Executive Assistant to the Mayor and Council, Christy Ullman, presented each Councilmember with a handout which detailed Mayor Bacon's Council Committee

Assignments. Councilmember Susan Wilkinson stated her displeasure at being assigned to so few committees. Ms. Wilkinson noted the amount of committees each Councilmember was on and stated that she was not assigned to enough committees.

Item 4A – This item was tabled to the September 17, 2018 Mayor and Council Meeting at the applicant's request. Councilmember Corkey Welch inquired what the builder was trying to do with this project since they were requesting a modification to their already approved site plan. Community Development Director Ken Suddreth advised that the original request was being reworked and advised that staff was not sure if the developer would continue with the rezoning aspect of the project.

Item 4B – Mr. Suddreth advised that the renewal of the Special Land Use Permit for Covenant Christian School was revisited every two years. The school utilizes the modular building while the construction of the permanent school was on-going; he noted that the school was fundraising in order to complete the project.

Item 8C – Assistant City Administrator Scott Andrews advised that the bid was under the initial \$225,000 budget. Councilmember Andrea Blustein advised that she would like this item moved to another part of the agenda so that she could vote on it. Mayor Bacon advised to move items C, D and E to Formal Business.

Item 8D – RFP Award for Roof Replacement. Mayor Bacon inquired why Councilmember Corkey Welch was the sponsor for this item. City Administrator Tammi Saddler Jones advised because the item was under the Public Works umbrella. (Note: Mr. Welch is Chairman for the Public Works Council Committee).

Item 8E – Approval of the purchase of six Ford Explorers; there was no discussion about this item.

Item 8F – Deputy Chief Robert Harvey advised that he and Human Resources Director Kay Bolick discussed revising the "Shift Differential Pay" section of the City's Personnel Policy. He noted that a change to this policy was needed to reflect specialty pay for SWAT duties, as well as update per hour rates for specialty pay of Police Training Officers (previously identified as Field Training Officers). The Police Department proposed an increase from \$1.00/hour to \$2.00/hour when performing this duty. He advised that the new title would be "Shift Differential / Specialty Pay". Ms. Saddler Jones made note that the dollar amount increases were approved/ included in the FY19 Budget however the increases were not updated in the personnel policy and staff was trying to correct that.

Item 8G – Community Relations Director Jennifer Bennett presented Councilmembers with a handout with the various 2019 event dates. Councilmember Derek Norton inquired if the food trucks event could be extended into October. Ms. Bennett advised that once the kids went back to school, the event died down. She stated that this event was also very hard on staff. She advised that there were a few nights that she would like to cancel the food trucks event and maybe they could add them on the back end and noted that days after holidays were very poorly attended. Mr. Norton inquired if they could add some dates in October of this year and noted that he's been requesting this for quite some time. Ms. Bennett stated that she did not have any trucks lined up after September 25th which is the last day of the food trucks event for 2018. Councilmember Tim Gould inquired how much was raised for the Education Foundation. Ms. Bennett advised that the Education Foundation received a gift from Georgia Power in the amount of \$2,500 which stemmed from sponsorships and that the trucks do not give any money from their proceeds. Ms. Bennett gave a synopsis of

how the event was run then noted that the event was very expensive to operate and advised how the funds were distributed. Ms. Saddler Jones advised Ms. Bennett that the directive was given for the food trucks event to be extended into October in 2019.

There were no further discussions reference any agenda items.

7. Other Business

Councilmember Corkey Welch advised that he received an email from a citizen about sidewalk replacement and other issues that he planned to discuss with her. He advised that he would be giving Interim Public Works Director Frank Martin the address.

Assistant City Attorney Jeffrey Tucker advised that the acquisition of property, 2632 Atlanta Road, was complete. He also noted that there was a scheduled closing on August 17th for a property on Windy Hill (Shell Station) but the closing was pushed back to Tuesday, August 21st. He advised that another property the City was acquiring would be purchased for the exact number on the appraisal instead of the high number the owner had proposed.

Councilmember Tim Gould thanked Ms. Saddler Jones for touring the different departments with him and introducing him to staff. He commended the Sidewalk Project that was taking place in front of the middle school and advised that he noticed that a lot of old trees were damaging sidewalks along Campbell Road. He stated that he would like to know if the trees could be removed and sidewalk replacement could happen on that road. Mr. Martin advised that Public Works did not bother trees unless absolutely necessary. Mr. Gould advised that he would like to learn more about paving prioritization. Mr. Martin advised that there was a street masterplan that he could familiarize him with.

Councilmember Susan Wilkinson expressed concern about sidewalks on Bank Street; she felt they were not raised sufficiently. Mr. Martin advised that the height had not changed. She noted that citizens contacted her about a City-owned property on Powder Springs Street (off of Rosalind) that required maintenance. She advised that the former councilman for her ward had advised citizens that there was going to be a park in that area. Mr. Martin advised that he would have staff take care of the maintenance and noted that they were limited on what they could do because the area was deemed a wetland. Ms. Wilkinson inquired and requested information about the parcels that were part of the acquisitions on the south side. Ms. Wilkinson reiterated her concerns about the lack of Council Committees she was on; she was only assigned to two committees and noted that Ms. Blustein was only assigned to two committees also. She stated that Mr. Norton and Mr. Welch were on four committees and that she would like to serve on at least three committees.

Councilmember Ron Fennel advised that he received a call about sidewalks in Camp Highland and that the City needed to look into getting better pedestrian access in that area. He stated that he received an estimate from Croy for a pedestrian bridge. He advised that he had a "sidewalk bank idea". Mr. Fennel stated that, "rather than spending the money on a sidewalk that was going nowhere, take the developers money and put it in the bank for issues such as this". He noted that the East/West Connector had no "Welcome to Smyrna" sign and that he spoke to Cobb County about annexing the strip of land all the way up to North Cooper Lake. He advised that he was working on a resolution to formally request the annexation. Ms. Wilkinson noted that there were "several areas in Ward 5 where parcel sidewalks were used" and advised that if the developers did not install them there would not be any for the citizens to utilize. Mr.

Fennel expressed his sentiments on why he felt strongly about the "sidewalk bank idea". Ms. Wilkinson reiterated her concerns. Mr. Fennel and Ms. Wilkinson continued to briefly discuss the issue with no resolve. Mayor Bacon inquired if there was anything else Mr. Fennel needed to discuss. Mr. Fennel advised that he had nothing further.

City Clerk Terri Graham advised that she had chosen someone for the Deputy City Clerk position after having gone through five phone interviews and three in-person interviews. She stated that the candidate lived an hour away in Nelson, Georgia but that the candidate stated that she did not mind the drive. Ms. Graham advised that the candidate was an excellent pick for the position and noted the candidate's accomplishments and qualifications.

8. Adjournment

Mayor A. Max Bacon declared the meeting adjourned at 8:22pm.