



City of Smyrna

2800 King Street
Smyrna, Georgia 30080

Meeting Minutes - Final Committee of the Whole

Thursday, May 14, 2020

6:00 PM

TELECONFERENCED - GoToMeeting

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Roll Call

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

Also Present 1 - Scott Cochran

Staff 17 - Tammi Saddler Jones, Heather Peacon-Corn, Kristin Robinson, Tom Boland, Frank Martin, Russell Martin, Jered Sigmon, Roy Acree, Joe Bennett, Jennifer Bennett, Robert Harvey, Penny Mocer, Kevin Moore, Landon O'Neal, Christy Ullman, Carol Sicard, and Tina Monaghan

1. Call to Order

Mayor Derek Norton called the May 14, Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. New Business

A. Update on the Downtown Master Plan Study – Tom Boland

Economic Development Director Tom Boland reviewed where the study started and what has happened up to this point. POND Company was one of two that submitted a proposal to the RFP and the approval for them to move forward came in August 2019. The proposed plan is what would be presented at this meeting.

Lauren from the POND Company, Andrew, and B.J. Martin were all present at the meeting to offer input and answer any questions.

The purpose of the study was to come up with a plan which would encourage

development, offer improved services, expand amenities and maximize use of city owned properties in the downtown area. This was done with the help of public outreach through surveys and open houses, the assistance of a technical advisory committee, and 19 stakeholder interviews. The results showed that people wanted more walk ability, more retail and shopping, more events, a parking deck, indoor swimming facility, and a gymnastics facility. Each of these elements were discussed in detail by the presenters from POND Company. The end goal behind the plan is to get people to come and stay rather than eat and leave.

Mayor Norton reminded everyone that this is just a plan...a concept and that nothing is carved in stone. Adjustments can be made as needed and things can be added as well as removed. This provides a good foundation for a way to move forward and revitalize the downtown area.

Councilmember Austin Wagner said he would like to see the downtown area turned car free which would greatly improve walk ability.

Councilmember Susan Wilkinson was concerned about the proposed plans for parking and how new development would impact the establishments already in the area. She felt that adding a gymnastics center or an aquatic center would create more traffic and cut through's in residential areas that are already struggling with traffic issues.

Councilmember Travis Lindley felt that the plan provided a great starting point to update the downtown area. There were miles to go before anything could be set in stone but the prospect of what was presented was exciting.

Councilmember Charles "Corkey" Welch said that there were good parts and bad parts to the plan. His biggest concern was the proposed removal of the roundabout which is a major through way in the downtown area. He also felt that the plan was going to be very expensive to implement.

Councilmember Tim Gould talked about the challenges that exist in the area where the Porch Light restaurant currently sits. He would like to get advice on how the city can get the private owners to work with the city to create and keep a more fluid area with better traffic flow.

Mayor Norton concluded the discussion by thanking those present from POND Company for their presentation and reminded everyone that this is just a concept. Details can be worked out once final decisions to move forward are made.

B. Review of the Proposed FY 2021 Budget - Kristin Robinson / Jered Sigmon

Finance Director Kristin Robinson announced that the required Public Hearing for the Fiscal Year 2021 budget will occur at the May 18, 2020 Mayor and Council meeting. The items discussed tonight would be a high level view of the budget and any changes that had been made since the last presentation. The biggest change was that the quote for the city's contribution to the retirement fund had finally been received. This required having to find an additional \$250,000 to cover this expense. The General Fund absorbed the majority of the cost. Most of the funding was taken out of the Public Works budget and some other areas here and there were projects could be moved forward to another year. \$43,000 came out of the contingency line of unallocated funds.

Mayor Norton emphasized that this budget will be very different from year's past

because COVID-19 created a ton of uncertainty that would not normally exist.

Ms. Robinson said that everyone needs to be extremely mindful of spending and that no major spending should occur until at least after November when property taxes come in and we are able to see what revenue there is to work with.

Councilmember Welch is very concerned about the budget. He went through the budget book page by page and feels that the projected revenues are not going to be accurate. The \$13 million shortfall on the Windy Hill project worries him. He feels that all travel and training needs to be cut unless absolutely necessary.

Councilmember Gould asked when we would have a more accurate idea of revenue for the fiscal year. Ms. Robinson explained that property taxes, which is the biggest source of revenue, are not due until November so we should have a better idea of where we stand then.

Mayor Norton stated that it was too early to determine what needs to be removed. There are many things that won't go into effect until January and that is if Mayor and Council approve. He feels that we need to leave things as they are until a later date when more information is available.

Councilmember Gould asked if there was anyway that a quarterly cash flow report could be distributed so that everyone can be up to date on the financial state of the city.

Councilmember Wagner inquired about our reserves in comparison to other cities. Ms. Robinson explained that we are in a good place and meet or exceed all of the requirements for reserves..

It was made clear that no new positions are being hired other than the Assistant City Administrator which was already advertised and in the hiring process before COVID-19 hit.

Councilmember Welch would like a three or four year forecast to help with future decision making.

C. Campbell HS Parking Options (Ingress/Egress) - Education Committee

The Education Committee chaired by Councilmember Tim Gould along with Councilmember Susan Wilkinson and Councilmember Lewis Wheaton have met twice to discuss the Campbell High School parking situation.

There were recent changes to the originally approved plans regarding the construction at Campbell High School. It would add 16 to 18 more parking spots but would eliminate the proposed pocket park. The entrance would be on Ward Street which is already heavily overflowed with traffic. The goal would be to move the entrance to Belmont to relieve traffic congestion on the smaller streets as well as add ingress and egress to get into the parking lot.

The pocket park was part of a joint use agreement between the school district and the city that was never formally approved. Therefore the city had no ownership in the park or the land where the park was proposed to go.

Councilmember Wilkinson wondered if the park or any of the improvements involving

the proposed pocket park could be paid for with CDBG funds.

Councilmember Gould explained that the committee came up with three different proposals which are ready to present to the school board. The entrance in all three of the proposals would be on Belmont. There will be a letter drafted with the assistance of the City Attorney regarding the three proposals.

3. Review of the May 18, 2020 Mayor and Council Agenda

There was no further conversation on the Public Hearing for the FY 2021 Budget which was discussed in great detail earlier on in the meeting.

Approval of the 2022 SPLOST project list allows the City to move forward with the process. An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) will come from Cobb County regarding this SPLOST cycle once they are sent the final approved project list.

Councilmember Wilkinson expressed concern over the funding designated for improvements on South Cobb Drive. She felt that combining it with downtown improvement projects could lead to lack of funding going to an area that has been neglected for quite some time.

Mayor Norton stated that he is committed to improving the South Cobb Drive area and that combining the two areas on the project list allows for better flexibility down the road.

Councilmember Wagner noted that the projects included on the list will attract voters to approve SPLOST which is a much needed source of revenue for capital improvements around the city.

City Attorney Scott Cochran explained that item 6C on the agenda is the agreement with Cobb County regarding SPLOST and how the funding will be allocated. It is the same agreement that has been approved in years past only the projects are different.

4. Other Business (as needed)

Mayor Norton opened the meeting for Councilmembers and staff to speak.

Councilmember Wilkinson would like to see funding set aside for a traffic study in the area affected by the construction and changes at Campbell High School.

Councilmember Wheaton asked about the placement of ballot boxes and wants to see one placed in Smyrna if they continue to be offered as a part of the next election. He was confused as to why the city was overlooked in the initial decision making process for placement of the boxes.

Councilmember Pickens wants to look into possible funding sources to ensure walk ability and pedestrian safety throughout the city.

Councilmember Gould expressed his excitement about the upcoming return to in person meetings and hopes that everything goes smoothly.

Councilmember Wagner suggested having a list of locations ready to send to the Board of Elections in case ballot boxes are used at any future elections. He would also like to see some more locations for early voting. He asked about how meetings are publicized online. People are unable to drive to City Hall to view meeting notices and how they are posted on the website is not as user friendly as he would like to see. He concluded by asking that all meeting notices are sent to Council in case they wish to participate. This includes meetings that Council are not normally required to attend.

Councilmember Lindley spoke about a situation regarding someone in his Ward expressing concern over the school food distribution. There are many holes in who is being served and there is hope that the program could be extended through the summer to help those out during these difficult times. The idea is to reach out to other organizations to see if they can help fill the voids and make sure that all children are fed. He mentioned that the Mayor and himself would be visiting restaurants in Market Village to speak about dealing with crowd control. Mr. Lindley took a moment to thank City Administrator Tammi Saddler Jones, City Engineer Kevin Moore, and Police Chief Bennett for their hard work on traffic calming efforts throughout the City. To conclude, he reminded everyone to be on the lookout for the Ethics Code of Conduct which will be discussed at the next COW meeting.

Councilmember Wagner pointed out that the schools are diligently trying to help those in need of food. He recommended getting the word out telling people to contact their individual schools if any special arrangements need to be made.

Councilmember Wilkinson reminded everyone that the County Commissioner is up for re-election. She also took a few minutes to speak about her concerns with the SPLOST project list as it pertains to combining downtown improvements and South Cobb Drive improvements. She feels that they should be listed as separate projects.

Police Chief Joe Bennett announced that the DUI task force had been up and running for two weeks and twenty arrests had already been made. The program is serving to make the community a safer place.

5. Adjournment

Mayor Norton adjourned the May 14, 2020 Committee of the Whole meeting at 8:56 PM.