

MINUTES OF MAYOR AND COUNCIL, CITY OF WATKINSVILLE
November 17, 2021 @ 6:30 PM

NOTE OF RECORD: These summarize the action at the council meeting. For full discussion at this meeting, a full video recording is available online at www.cityofwatkinsville.com.

PRESENT: Brodrick, Massey, Tucker, Campbell, Garrett, Thomas, Reitman, Dickerson, Brock, and Klein. Brodrick opened the in person public and fully accessible RingCentral video meeting of November 17, 2021, at 6:38 PM. Several citizens attended, and 3 citizens attended virtually via RingCentral per detailed instructions posted on the City Website and at the meeting location, City Hall.

ABSENT: Mark Campbell, City Engineer.

CALL TO ORDER: At 6:38 PM, Brodrick called meeting to order.

QUORUM CHECK: At 6:38 PM, Brodrick acknowledged a quorum was present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: At 6:39 PM, Fire Chief, Bruce Thaxton, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. October 20, 2021

At 6:41 PM, Tucker moved to approve the October 20, 2021, minutes with the change requested by Brodrick adding the word “claim” in public comments when Bob Smith stated Brodrick did not recuse himself. Massey second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

At 6:43 PM, Thomas moved to approve agenda as amended adding Police Committee Proposal under new business (Item #19) and removing Item #10 (appointment of Laura Mitchell Spurlock to the Oconee County Board of Health for a six-year term). Garrett second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

ADMINISTRATION

Public Input Process: At 6:44 PM, Brodrick asked Reitman to present public input process. Reitman summarized the rules at City Code Section 2-26 “Rules of procedure and rules of order of business”, including Comments shall be only directly relating to agenda items, Public speakers are limited to four minutes per person, Refrain from debate, argument, personal attacks or irrelevant discussion.

2. Announce winners of “Fall in Love with Watkinsville” contest: At 6:45 PM, Brodrick announced Heather Duncan as 1st place winner and Carol Ivie as 2nd place winner. Thomas thanked all for their participation. He is going to try to continue community engagement activities. Tucker expressed appreciation to Girasoles and Chops & Hops for donating gift certificates. Brodrick thanked citizens, council, and businesses for their participation.

3. Employee Recognition: Lee Black and Tobie Cartledge, GDOT LAP Certification: At 6:46 PM, Brodrick recognized Lee Black and Tobie Cartledge for completing the Georgia Department of Transportation Local Administered Project certification program. He also recognized Tobie Cartledge for also completing the Certified Stormwater Inspector course through National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES).

4. Fiscal Year 2021 Audit Report and Approve Budget Amendments: At 6:48 PM, Clay Pilgrim with Rushton & Company presented the annual audit report. He noted there were no material weaknesses and no non-compliance. There was improvement over last year’s audit. The one deficiency relates to the production of the financial report, common for governments of this size.

Dickerson presented the budget amendments. At 7:05 PM, Campbell moved to approve the budget amendments as presented. Garrett second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

5. Financial Reports – General, Fund Reserve, SPLOST I, and SPLOST II Funds: At 7:06 PM, Dickerson provided the General Fund, SPLOST I, and SPLOST II financial reports for October 2021, and presented the American Rescue Plan Act Fund Report.

6. Economic Development Reports – Business Licenses, Building Permits: At 7:16 PM, Dickerson provided the Economic Development reports.

7. **Police Department Report:** At 7:18 PM, Brock provided monthly report. Mack Parks submitted his resignation so he could devote all of his time to his growing landscaping/tree cutting business. His last day will be Tuesday, November 23. The AAA grant was approved and \$3,000 of the \$3,500 requested was awarded to purchase the “Impaired Goggles.”

CONSENT AGENDA

8. **Approve Jail Agreement with Oconee County Sheriff’s Office**
9. **Beer/Wine & Distilled Spirits Licenses – Blind Pig Tavern – Clint Swords – 22 N Main Street, Building A**
- ~~10. **Appointment of Laura Mitchell Spurlock to the Oconee County Board of Health for a six year term.**~~

At 7:22 PM, Tucker moved to approve the consent agenda items except item #10, which was removed with agenda approval. Thomas second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:23 PM, Reitman referenced the rules and regulations (City Code Section 2-26 “Rules of procedure and rules of order of business”).

11. **New City Charter:** Reitman noted the summary of the proposed key changes to the existing Charter. The new version, the summary of the proposed key changes, and existing Charter were available to the public. Tonight is the first reading and next month is the second reading. Then, the Charter must be submitted to the General Assembly for approval. No public comments. Brodrick noted Bob Smith had attended the work session on the Charter held just prior to this meeting and offered input. At 7:27 PM, Reitman closed the public hearing.

APPEARANCES

At 7:27 PM, Reitman noted 10-minute time limit for appearance, per guideline of State Zoning Procedures law.

12. **111 S. Barnett Shoals Road and 1351 Norton/Tax Parcels #C 04 005W and C 04 005 (Wire Park, LLC – Duke Gibbs) – Smith Planning Group, Phase 3: Cottages Residential/Subdivision – Urban Forest Protection Plan**

At 7:28 PM, Thomas provided Urban Forest Board report, noting the plan exceeded the requirements. The Urban Forest Board added the condition that if trees were to die, they must be replanted, and is required in perpetuity. The committee recommended approval of the Urban Forest Protection Plan as presented.

Tucker moved to approve the Urban Forest Protection Plan for 111 S. Barnett Shoals Rd, Phase 3: Cottages Residential/Subdivision as presented. Garrett second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

13. **166 VFW Drive – Condo Subdivision (DuSouth) Concept Discussion:**

At 7:31 PM, Alicia Appling, 1261 Summit Drive, representing the owner. She summarized desired changes to the property, to change the apartments into condominiums. DuSouth is working with city staff. Dickerson shared that staff discussed and recommends that the developer go through the development agreement process if the Council decides they like the project. She added, there are no sewer requirements because the development is already connected to sewer.

Thomas asked the price range for the condominiums. Mr. Watts with DuSouth noted low \$300,000.

Staff will move forward and work with the developer toward drafting a development agreement.

OLD BUSINESS

14. **Waters Walk (Durham and Water Streets) Senior Living complex – Beverly J. Searles Foundation – Update:**

At 7:46 PM, Dickerson provided an update noting the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Low-Income Housing Tax Credits for this project had been approved, so the project will progress. The developers will work toward presenting a preliminary plat to Council by January.

15. **New City Charter**

At 7:49 PM, Tucker moved to approve the first reading of the New City Charter, with corrections as discussed. Thomas second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

16. FIRST READING: ORDINANCE Amendments to Alcoholic Beverages - Breweries

At 7:50 PM, Campbell provided the report of changes recommended to allow breweries. He added this will bring tax dollars and tourism to the city. A brewery does not compete with existing restaurants like a brewpub does. The feedback has been mostly positive, he added.

Reitman stated the ordinance does provide protective language. Thomas noted there are no happy hour discounts or BOGO offers. Reitman confirmed the current ordinance does not allow these.

Brodrick added that 1) it should be clear that breweries shall be allowed to have food from other establishments and 2) there should be proposed some sort of age restriction for those being allowed to enter the brewery (i.e., if someone is under 21, they must be accompanied by a parent or guardian). Campbell and Thomas agreed with Brodrick. Reitman will insert appropriate language into the ordinance to address the age limitation.

Massey stated there are enough restaurants serving alcohol and does not feel the city needs breweries.

At 8:02 PM, Campbell moved to approve the first reading of the ordinance amendment to allow breweries. Garrett second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 4 to 1. Massey opposed.

17. Approve and appropriate \$34,829.75 from SPLOST III: Public Safety Facilities & Equipment fund for Holmatro Brand Batter-Operated Extrication Equipment (Jaws of Life)

Oconee County Fire Chief, Bruce Thaxton presented a report.

At 8:09 PM, Tucker moved to approve \$34,829.75 to be allocated from SPLOST III to purchase the Holmatro Brand Battery-Operated Extrication Equipment requested. Campbell second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

18. Staff report on Pavement Management Program:

At 8:10 PM, Dickerson provided an update on the Pavement Management Program. She stated the full report should be ready to present at next month's meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

19. Police Committee Proposal

At 8:15 PM, Thomas discussed how policing is in a difficult time. The pool of certified officers is down from previous years which requires the city to find ways to attract new hires and retain existing employees.

Chief Brock met with Police Committee and recommended the city offer signing bonuses to new hires and current employees of \$7,500 to \$10,000 per person over a three-year period with a contract.

Brodrick suggested that if all agree on the general time frame and amount, then Council could authorize Manager Dickerson, Chief, and Major Tetterton to work out the details.

Tucker stated her support of the police force and pointed out it was determined years ago that the citizens wanted a police force.

Major Tetterton shared that the department is seeking to possibly send new hires to the police academy under contract according to Georgia State Code. Included in a two-year contract with this new hire would be the ability for the city to recoup training expenses spent to send the officer through the academy if they leave within specified times.

Dickerson recommended approving the use of money from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) fund to pay for this proposal, as it is an eligible expense. She provided Council with a Resolution which recommended a

\$10,000 signing bonus be paid out over a 36-month period. Chief Brock noted a three-year span for the bonus is more ideal and realistic than 5 years and will make the city more competitive in the market.

Dickerson added the city is obligated to appropriate the ARP funds by December 31, 2023 and spend the funds by December 31, 2026. Brodrick called for consensus on either the 3 or 5-year contract. The Council's consensus was for a 3-year contract.

Thomas moved to adopt a \$10,000 bonus over a three-year period for current and future employees of the police department. Tucker second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Philip Stancel, 121 VFW Drive, addressed council regarding his opinion of speed limits being too low and asked for consideration to be given to VFW Drive traffic. Mr. Stancel provided statistical information from copies of the monthly reports Chief Brock provides each month.

Tucker noted she would be interested in a comparison of July 2019 to October 2019 to current year numbers (non-Covid numbers). She added as a resident of Barnett Shoals, who has to cross the road to go to her mailbox, she supported the lower speed as people were going about 50 mph probably in large part because the road is so wide.

Carolyn Maultsby, Taylor's Drive, agreed with Mr. Stancel that 25 mph is too low. When people are driving 30 mph, they are still breaking the law.

Michael Prochaska - has observed people riding his bumper or illegally passing as he drives the speed limit.

MAYOR'S REPORT

At 8:38 PM, Brodrick provided updates as follows: Transportation/Mobility –MACORTS approved moving forward with a scoping study of Watkinsville Bypass to see if there is a possible route. Economic Development – Tucker and Campbell are working on a downtown master plan. Parks/Greenspace –Massey and Tucker are working on renovation efforts at Harris Shoals Park. He thanked all for their efforts.

If weather holds, Harden Hill Road will be paved in early December. Thanked Watkinsville Police Department, Oconee County Emergency Management, Athens/Clarke Hazmat group for their assistance in cleaning up the spill on Main Street earlier in the week.

COUNCIL REPORTS

At 8:40 PM, Council reports:

20. Chuck Garrett - Post 1: Looking forward to serving. The construction on Experiment Station Road is going to be a 2 ½ year project according to the GDOT Superintendent. Expect delays as they are working to keep power on and traffic moving along with being shorthanded.

Brodrick added that city will look into Phase 3 of this road widening project and work with Oconee County to look into that process.

21. Connie Massey – Post 2: No report.

22. Brett Thomas – Post 3: Thanked Chief Brock for speaking at three events on Veteran's Day. He recommended all attend next year. He thanked Chief personally for filling in for him. He did a great job. He appreciates all support given to the veterans.

23. Christine Tucker – Post 4: Brief meeting with Bob Smith, Planner and Lawrence Stueck regarding repurposing the old playground space at Harris Shoals Park (HSP). Wonderful committee. With reshifting in staff, there is an employee dedicated to the parks. Seeing improvement. Appreciate all work from Dickerson and Cartledge and employees of Public Works and Parks Department.

Dickerson added she met with Planner Smith, Tucker and Massey about the Harris Shoals Park Master Plan and identified a number of tasks the city could move forward with and do now, such as removing the building at the park entrance. Dickerson noted that staff can do some tasks over the next few months while there is no grass to cut. Oconee County Little League is being kept in the loop about plans, too. Illegal dumping of wood chips by contractors has been occurring at Harris Shoals Park. Staff will be pulling a chain across that entrance and locking it to restrict access. Dickerson also shared that there is a young man, Bennett Atchley, who has proposed to build 4 benches (2 @ Watkinsville Woods and 2 @ Rocket Field) as his Eagle Scout project. Atchley is still waiting for approval from the Northeast Georgia Boy Scouts.

24. Jeff Campbell – Post 5: Tucker and Campbell met with Greensboro Development Authority Director to obtain ideas for improvement downtown.

Recognized State Cross Country winner Aaron Brodrick, placed 6th in Nationals. Very proud of Aaron.

Thomas congratulated Dickerson's son for building his own car at Athens Tech and placing in the Top 10 of all Young Guns competing at SEMA show in Vegas. He did a full restoration-modernization of a 1967 Ford Mustang Fastback Shelby GT350.

Brodrick - hopefully we will have an opportunity to bring in our kids for recognition athletically and academically.

Dickerson - the Christmas Parade will be held Sunday, December 5th at 4:30 PM (lineup at 3:30 PM) followed by the tree lighting at 6 PM. She added Oconee State Bank and Oconee County Tourism bought commercial grade ornaments and stars to decorate the tree. She also stated that staff needs t-shirt sizes for all who plan to participate in the parade.

Brodrick reminded everyone of the Tinsel Town event sponsored by the Oconee County Chamber of Commerce to be held at DGD Farms on Friday. Brodrick asked all to follow the City's Facebook page as Angela Farr does an excellent job posting our events and Chamber events and reminded everyone to shop with merchants downtown.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:53 PM, Tucker moved to leave regular session and enter Executive Session for discussion of threatened and pending litigation. Thomas second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

At 9:49 PM, Tucker moved to leave executive session and return to regular session. Campbell second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

ADJOURN

At 9:50 PM, Tucker moved to adjourn. Campbell second. Opportunity for discussion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

JULIE A. KLEIN, CMC