

BOARD OF MAYOR
AND COMMISSIONERS

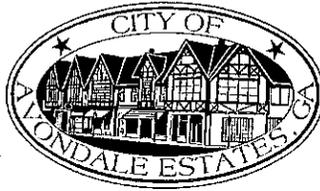
JONATHAN ELMORE
MAYOR

TERRY GIAGER
MAYOR PRO TEM

RANDY BEEBE
COMMISSIONER

BRIAN FISHER
COMMISSIONER

ADELA YELTON
COMMISSIONER



R. CLAI BROWN
CITY MANAGER
GINA HILL
CITY CLERK
ROBERT E. WILSON
CITY ATTORNEY
STEPHEN W. NICHOLAS
CITY JUDGE

**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
STRATEGIC PLANNING WORK SESSION**

Wednesday, March 2nd, 2016

9:00 a.m. to 3 p.m.

MINUTES

Members Present: Jonathan Elmore, Mayor
Terry Giager, Mayor Pro Tem
Randy Beebe, Commissioner
Adela Yelton, Commissioner
Brian Fisher, Commissioner

Staff Present: Clai Brown, City Manager
Gina Hill, City Clerk

Guests: Katherine Moore, Georgia Conservancy
Johanna McCrehan, Georgia Conservancy

Item No. 1 Meeting Called to Order by Mayor Elmore

Item No. 2 Adoption of Agenda
Commissioner Beebe moves to adopt. Commissioner Fisher seconds. All ayes.

Mayor Elmore thanks Katherine Moore and Johanna McCrehan for coming.

Commissioner Yelton introduces and thanks Katherine Moore and Johanna McCrehan, thanks City Manager Brown and Gina Hill for putting session together, and thanks fellow Board members for coming.

Item No. 3 Retreat Purpose and Proceedings for the Day
Katherine Moore, Moderator

Katherine Moore: We are from the Conservancy's sustainable growth program. We are a nonprofit and work with local governments and groups all over the state. We are both planners and urban designers. Our role today is just to facilitate. I applaud you for taking the time to do this. We will do a summary document for you once this is over. The 100th anniversary of Avondale Estates is coming up in a few years. What is something you like about the city that you would like to still be here on that anniversary.

Commissioner Fisher: The events we have: 4th of July, opening day at the pool, Pig-a-palooza, Easter classic car parade, Labor Day Race.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: The people, the community feeling.

Commissioner Beebe: The comradery of the people, officials, city workers. Everyone waves and is friendly. I think that's the heart and soul of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Yelton: I like the walkability and would like to see it expand to connect the residential and business areas.

Mayor Elmore: I want the city to grow but I want new people coming in to be just as integrated into our community as we are.

City Manager Brown: Small government that listens and can remain proactive and reactive to the residents' wants and needs.

City Clerk Hill: I agree with everyone else but I'm also concerned about losing the architectural character of our residential area.

Johanna McCrehan: You really feel like you are someplace different and unique when you drive into Avondale.

Katherine Moore: What prompted you to run for office?

Commissioner Yelton: I care about the community. I grew up in a rough part of Houston so I can really appreciate what Avondale has to offer.

Mayor Elmore: Some friends and Mayor Pro Tem Giager encouraged me to run. And there were things like growth that I wanted to see happen. I don't think people should complain if they're not willing to get involved to help fix the problem.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: When I first started, there were bad deals being made by those in the government. I was hoping as a commissioner I could help fix things.

Commissioner Fisher: I hope to still be in the same house 50 years from now and I just think the city is at a critical turning point. I really wanted to be a part of that so we could look back 50 years from now and be proud of what we accomplished.

Commissioner Beebe: I was on a couple of ad hoc committees and they didn't go the way I had wanted them to. I looked at the leadership at the time and just thought I could do a better job.

Katherine Moore: We don't have to solve problems today but we can discuss them and learn where each of us stands which will help save time in work sessions, etc. After speaking with each of you individually, I've narrowed things down to these big topics: communications, education, downtown redevelopment, infrastructure. You talked about other topics too. If we have time, we can get to some of those. Or you can decide to swap some of the topics out. But we're only going to commit to four topics. To swap one out, everyone needs to agree.

Mayor Elmore: We need to think about how these topics would fit into a strategic plan. Education is a huge topic for me. I think assessing ourselves and how good of a job we're doing is important.

Katherine Moore: That might be part of communications. We can take almost an hour for each of these four big topics. They are pretty broad and you can decide what you want to be a part of each particular topic.

Commissioner Beebe: I think marketing and branding the city are pretty important topics I'd like to cover. I think they may be higher priority than education and infrastructure. That's just my opinion. I know education is important, but it's more long term. I feel like we can get more accomplished on other topics. You could put marketing/branding and under another larger topic.

Mayor Elmore: Randy makes a good point.

City Manager Brown: Could marketing be under downtown redevelopment?

Commissioner Beebe: I think marketing could be independent of downtown redevelopment though. Adding it to that topic could make it too big too.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: I think we should get rid of communications. I think we do a good job of communicating.

Commissioner Yelton: I disagree. I think the city communicates great. Communications amongst each other could be better defined. I also think it can be linked to assessing ourselves and our accomplishments.

Commissioner Fisher: I like the list as it is. I think some topics will take longer than others. Education may not take as long because some legislative things have to happen before we can act. I think annexation is important because we seem to keep acting on it last minute. You can't talk about some topics without talking about others. They bleed together.

Communication

Katherine Moore: Let's keep this list and add city branding to the bottom and just be efficient so we can get to it. Let's start with communications. There is internal and external. What are some of the layers?

Mayor Elmore: Well, there's email, text, phone call, face-to-face.

Commissioner Fisher: It also depends on who you talk to – each other, city staff, constituents.

Commissioner Yelton: When I call Clai, I hesitate to ask questions because I imagine all of us calling at the same time asking the same questions.

Katherine Moore: There are also a lot of committees and other boards you work with and need to communicate with.

Commissioner Fisher: I wonder about our ability to make decisions without having to wait for the next work session or meeting.

Mayor Elmore: The Board can't do that.

Commissioner Beebe: I think we struggle with public comment at our work sessions. I think we need more guidelines to follow. A good rule of thumb may be if you agree with what someone else has said, you don't have to rephrase it in your own voice. You don't need to say it again.

Katherine Moore: So you need some clarity just about organization. Has someone else already called Clai about a certain topic, for example? And then legal clarify about how you can community. And then best practices.

Commissioner Fisher: I worry about open records and open meetings issues becoming something that makes us ineffective because we're so afraid of breaking the rules. There has to be a way to obey the rules and still get things done in a timely fashion.

Katherine Moore: Consistency sets expectations.

Mayor Elmore: I'd like to hear from Gina and Clai what they think about external communications. I think anything positive that happens should be highly publicized. We need to make a big deal out of all the baby steps the city is taking.

City Clerk Hill: Do you mean communication with the residents or Atlanta at large?

Mayor Elmore: Atlanta at large. I want us in the Atlanta Business Chronicle every month.

Katherine Moore: Right. Ask yourself who is your audience.

Commissioner Yelton: Even something like the open records training is something positive that can be promoted.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: I constantly have people ask me how a city as small as ours gets into the Atlanta Journal Constitution and other press so often. I think city staff does a great job.

City Manager Brown: Maybe we can get some clarification from the Board as to what you'd like to see but we have the website, we have e-news with almost 1,500 subscribers. We're on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. There's lots of dialogue on Facebook between users and city staff. And with such things as the

LCI grant, we send out press releases. We also get feedback from people that they get too many emails.

City Clerk Hill: I think part of it is the type of news we're putting out there too. If we can link events here to other trendy places outside of the city (such as the owner of Rising Son being a chef at Homegrown and South City Partners also being the developer of Inman Quarter), I think it will make Avondale sound more intriguing and appealing to people in other parts of Atlanta. I think stories like the LCI grant are important to residents but they're otherwise kind of dry.

Katherine Moore: I think the "who" we're trying to reach and with "what" is important. For example, different age groups will be interested in different topics.

Commissioner Fisher: I think our emails are too long. I also feel that we need to target who we sit down with individually to talk up our city. For example, I had breakfast with Bob Preston, the architect on the South City Partners development, and he didn't even know about Avondale.

Commissioner Yelton: There's the who, what and how. Some of it may be one on one relationship management on behalf of individual board members, for example.

Katherine Moore: Do you have a clear understanding of whether or not questions always go to Clai? Or could they go to someone else?

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: They always have to go to Clai.

Mayor Elmore: I didn't realize that city staff did all they do to communicate. But for us, it's all about the quorum. We talk to each other because we have to. Otherwise we wouldn't get anything done. But we need clarification on "reply all" on emails. We usually text or email one on one or I will send an email to Clai asking him to survey the rest of the Board. We always have to go to Clai first, per the charter. We could also use clarification on communication with other government entities, such as the board of education or county board of commissioners.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: I think that's already spelled out in the charter. The mayor is the spokesperson for the city. You know how we feel based on work sessions and meetings.

Commissioner Fisher: I usually don't know what others are thinking until we get in the meetings. It hasn't happened yet, but I hope it's ok we can talk one on one to get each other's point of view. I'm opposed to letting open records rules make us incompetent. It seems sensible for us to talk to developers, for example, who want to build here about what they plan to do.

Mayor Elmore: I think if it's two at a time that's fine. I hate to have lots of special called meetings but I won't hesitate if there's something that needs to be decided.

City Manager Brown: You can have special called meetings or work sessions any time of day you want to.

Commissioner Fisher: The time between normal scheduled meetings can mean it takes a really long time to get things done.

Commissioner Yelton: Are some updates (such as the status of stormwater) in your city manager reports sent out on Fridays?

City Manager Brown: It wouldn't be on there every single week.

Commissioner Yelton: Can I propose that if it's a big issue, we get an update once a week? Even if there is no update.

Mayor Elmore: We can stipulate that in the work sessions.

City Clerk Hill: I think people would appreciate for consistent updates on big issues like the status of the park, stormwater progress, etc.

Commissioner Beebe: I'm not sure I want updates like that. I barely read everything I get as it is. Unless it's something critical that we're going to get questions about, I trust city staff's judgement. The information is there if people want it. They can come to meetings.

Katherine Moore: Maybe you could research what the charter says about communicating with other bodies.

Commissioner Yelton: I know we said Jonathan is the spokesperson but is that something he can delegate to the rest of us based on our strengths and existing relationships?

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: I think it's two different things. One is being the spokesperson about the city's stance and direction. The other is relationships of individual commissioners. You can call any committee and get involved with them. You're not restricted in that.

Katherine Moore: So maybe it's more the feedback loop. For example, you would want to know if Adela has a relationship with the board of education. So Jonathan may be the spokesperson but there can be relationship establishment and maintenance that the commissioners can handle.

Commissioner Beebe: I don't think we have a problem with external communications. I think the problem is internal and on a very basic level. Clarifying that we can reply all on emails actually helps a lot. You would respond to an email and have no idea what others were saying.

Katherine Moore: After the open records training, you will have a better idea about what you can do legally then you can decide how to put that into practice. You can also research ways to evaluate your performance. All businesses do that. You can do that individually and keep it to yourself. It can be simple questions. The Georgia Municipal Association might be a good resource. Another suggestion is just to clarify content, frequency and format of the city manager's report. Maybe it's just fine as it is.

Commissioner Fisher: I wouldn't be for anything that created more work for city staff. Maybe we could just give verbal updates in work sessions.

Katherine Moore: Some of those updates can go in the city manager's report and just be at the top. If there's no update, it can say there's no update.

Mayor Elmore: The Board should try to look for information before going to Clai. It's probably there. If any of you want me to communicate or you want to communicate to someone and need Board direction or authority, by all means. I think we need to do more divide and conquer. We just need to discuss it first and make sure you're speaking as one. I would like to know what other cities are doing. As far as reply all goes, we just need to make sure there is no decision making. Period.

City Manager Brown: If I get a question that I think others are wondering about too, I will send it along with my answer to the rest of the Board.

Mayor Elmore: Something like a Mayor's Academy or some other one-on-one orientation for Board members would be helpful, I think. There is training through UGA but it can be months after being sworn in before that can happen sometimes. The city attorney does meet with you, however, and that is helpful. But there's a lot of practical information a new Board member needs.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: It's possible to get bad information from former officials.

Commissioner Beebe: The charter is our job description. It goes into a lot of detail.

Katherine Moore: Maybe it's worth pulling that out and making it its own PDF for easy reference. Now you need to decide if this is a short term priority (up to 12 months) or longer term (12-24 months)?

Mayor Elmore: I say 12 months because it's easy to do.

The Board agrees on 12 months.

Education

Mayor Elmore: The logic behind creating the ad hoc committee was we wanted to see it would work before we created a permanent committee. They were created, given pretty specific marching orders, and check in with us every three months. I think that's been the right thing to do.

Commissioner Yelton: They each are assigned a relationship with a particular school to own. So they're starting to think about relationship management. Maybe a Board member should have a relationship with a school too.

Katherine Moore: Maybe they need to start making recommendations.

Commissioner Yelton: I'd like to hear recommendations at 6 months and 12 months.

Mayor Elmore: I think that's doable.

Commissioner Fisher: Maybe they could come to us in April. I think their purpose and sense of direction has been a continuous question so maybe more guidance from us would be helpful.

Katherine Moore: Is there a need to discuss traffic, safety or infrastructure in regards to schools?

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: We get complaints about traffic around Willis Park because Museum School parents drop off and pick up their kids there. Whether right or wrong, we should look at it.

Mayor Elmore: We should clarify the ordinances regarding parking, dropping off around the park.

Commissioner Yelton: I think that's reasonable. There are other policies that you familiarize parents with.

Commissioner Fisher: I'm there at least once a week and I don't think I've ever seen a child there that wasn't a member of the community. You have to be careful with ordinances about parking because that would also impact the pool.

Mayor Elmore: I'm really talking about clarifying. I think what happens is that people sit in their cars and idle (usually when it's cold) to wait for their kids.

Katherine Moore: Are there other ways the city could impact access to the school?

Commissioner Fisher: There is a stretch between Sussex and Forrest where there are no sidewalks. That's a safety hazard. Clai was looking at getting sidewalks there.

City Manager Brown: We have a bid for \$13,000. We'd have to partner with the county. Then there are some right of way issues.

Commissioner Beebe: What happened with the discussion about opening the dead end at Exeter back up?

Mayor Elmore: I thought about that. Just opening it up to foot or bike traffic.

City Manager Brown: I think the concern is that people would be coming and going into the neighborhood.

Commissioner Yelton: I don't think we disagree vehemently on anything in regards to education. But I worry about the people we represent. There are so many opinions. Is it enough to say we agree as a board and move forward? I think I answered my own question.

Commissioner Beebe: That's our job.

Katherine Moore: Schools are emotional but they're also infrastructure. They do become beloved. They're really important though because of property values

and branding your city. You have to decide how you will support them legally and/or financially. So the action items are to identify and define relationships. Take ownership and maintain those. You'll ask the ad hoc committee for recommendations around May. And then proactive measures around the school properties that the county owns. Clarify with The Museum School rules around traffic and parking. Consider access improvements for the schools to distribute car and foot traffic.

Mayor Elmore: It would be great if cities could have their own school system or partner with other cities. It could happen next year or never. Identify relationships and assign them to people. That's for the ad hoc committee and even on the Board level. There's a new county school board superintendent. He's got a lot of energy and gravitas. I like what we've heard from him. There were some things that concerned us but he's new. Michael Thurman did some good things getting the system back in shape financially. Avondale Elementary has a new principal. So there are things to build on.

Katherine Moore: Is this a short-term or long-term issue?

Commissioner Fisher: The action items are less than 12 months. But I think realistically, 12-24 months.

Item No. 5

Lunch Break

Item No. 6

Continued Discussion of Strategic Priorities

Downtown Redevelopment

Katherine Moore: When I say downtown redevelopment, what comes to mind?

Commissioner Beebe: I feel like our experience so far with Euramex hasn't been the model for development. To be honest, I didn't really have the experience to deal with it properly. How things are happening with South City Partners is the way I think it should be done. We've gotten a reputation among developers of being a hard city to deal with. We're still struggling with Euramex but I think Mayor Elmore is making some headway. South City Partners came to us with what they wanted to build, the variances they needed. Then they readily presented to the public. I'm sure that's tough for developers.

Katherine Moore: Maybe there should be a process for redevelopment review?

Mayor Elmore: I think the two developers are just very different when it comes to their approach.

Commissioner Yelton: One thing South City did was look at our master plan and then highlight the ways their project fit the plan.

Commissioner Fisher: I think we really need to work on an intragovernmental agreement with the DDA and figure out how to divvy up the proceeds from the Juvenile Justice building when those bonds are paid off. That will determine how many money we can use for infrastructure on the residential and commercial sides. That's something we can address as soon as they have a full board.

Mayor Elmore: I see the three branches of our city being the Board, City Hall, and the DDA. We can divide and conquer then. Then everyone will know what their responsibility is. When a developer is first engaged – whether they come to us or vice versa – I'd like the Board and DDA to be involved from the beginning. I'd like that to be in an ordinance.

Commissioner Yelton: I think the public would appreciate that. I think that happens now but it's informal.

Mayor Elmore: Maybe a flow chart on the website or something would be an idea.

Katherine Moore: So maybe for developers, it's about finding what they need online, having a reputation for being easy to work with. So all this information might be out there but is it in the right place and accessible to the right people?

Commissioner Fisher: I think South City will be a good model for how things should go. With Euramex, it's so important to get things right. We need to start thinking about whether we want to wait for them or start acting alone on the acreage we do own. We could do a green and that could be a catalyst for development around it. I'm more concerned about missing this cycle. We're at the top of the cycle now and it will be over soon. If we wait too long, we'll be here having this same conversation seven years from now. Are we prepared, as a Board, to act on our own?

Mayor Elmore: Yes.

Commissioner Yelton: I agree. We need to be proactive instead of reactive.

Commissioner Fisher: I think that means that we continue to still work with them. We want them to be a partner. But, if not, we're moving forward, and this is the plan we're doing. We can do it with the community in an open forum. It may take a little longer. And if we have to use other tools, like imminent domain, are we willing to do so?

Mayor Elmore: The next step is to take concept C and better define the mix of uses we'd like to see. What are the things we'd like to do on the four acres we own. We need to talk money with Euramex and we need a timeline to make some decisions.

Commissioner Fisher: The important part about that is it helps us decide what we can do with money from the DJJ building.

Commissioner Yelton: I'd like to hear from Clai. What is your understanding of the next steps?

City Manager Brown: The way I remember it, Euramex put the ball in the city's court by saying show us what you want. Then there was the presentation with the schematic drawings. I didn't know that option C was the one chosen.

Mayor Elmore: That's just for discussion. No decision has been made.

Commissioner Yelton: Who is in charge of taking that next step?

Mayor Elmore: Through Clai, I asked the Board and DDA which option they preferred and it was C for all but one I believe. It's just for discussion but I'd like to pull them into a detailed discussion. I'd love to find a way to make it happen. And all at once.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: We have failed twice at doing a one developer project. We should take our four acres, RFP it, and have other developers come in. I'm tired of talking to one developer because we never get what we want.

Mayor Elmore: We really need to nail down the grid. That's the single unifying concept. Then they can fill stuff in, sell some space to others to fill in, etc. I think if we can agree on the grid then we will get somewhere.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: Why don't we just tell them that we're doing the grid?

Mayor Elmore: We don't need them to agree per se. But if we get them to buy into it and we help them figure out a way for all of us to get what we want, then we all win. I think we have a good chance of achieving that goal. They've already said they're not going to sell that property.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: I think you're going to be waiting a long time.

Mayor Elmore: There's also all the property between here and Sam's Crossing. We need to decide about sidewalks, on street parking. Build it and they will come kind of stuff.

Commissioner Yelton: Are we limited in terms of what we can do as a city without a partner or developer?

Commissioner Fisher: Yes, because of limited resources. That doesn't mean we shouldn't move forward. It would be a big step if they just built their apartments because that would increase density and help support businesses, etc. They may want to wait for us to build a green, improve infrastructure, etc. We take on more risk that way.

Mayor Elmore: The DDA is in rebuilding mode. They're working hard and we're putting a lot on them. They're putting together a short-term plan for what they'd like to do in the next 3-6 months in terms of marketing, events, amount of money to ask for. The idea is to get a formal funding agreement in place. Hopefully they'll have that to present at the March work session. We really haven't started the long term agreement. It will involve attorneys, public hearings, etc.

Commissioner Fisher: That agreement is important because the DJJ money is currently set up to all go to them. I'm not sure how others feel, but I feel that some of that money should come back to the city in the form of infrastructure. We have to figure out who controls what.

Commissioner Yelton: We want the DDA to do all this stuff but the agreement (IGA) is how we show them what they need to do and how we will support them.

Mayor Elmore: Within the next six months we need to have that nailed down.

City Manager Brown: That would be between the city attorney and the DDA attorney. Matt and myself would manage the process. The IGA will set up how much money they get and what the expectations are, what the city expects to get back in return. The way I understand, all the DJJ money will go to them once the bond is paid off in the absence of an IGA.

Mayor Elmore: Seven appointed people cannot own a \$16 million building. It belongs to the entire city.

Commissioner Fisher: But legally, unless the city attorney tells us differently, they own that and proceeds go to them without some sort of agreement.

Mayor Elmore: That will be put into the agreement. It's all about strategic planning. We need to lay out our goals, a timeline, who is responsible, how it's funded. That's going to be the thing that ties everything together.

Commissioner Yelton: Do we come to that agreement in an open forum with the DDA? Or does most of it happen between the lawyers.

Mayor Elmore: Nothing has been done so far. I would like to get the Georgia Municipal Association involved and see if there is a model we could follow.

Commissioner Fisher: The sooner we can start a dialogue with the DDA about this, the better.

Mayor Elmore: We've started that with our joint meetings.

Commissioner Yelton: Are these things usually negotiated by a third party? The reason I ask is because our DDA is so new. We don't even know if the same members will be on it in 2 years.

Mayor Elmore: I think they will be.

Commissioner Fisher: Their lawyer will be advising them to do what's in their best interest. And keeping as much of that money as possible is what's in their best interest.

Commissioner Beebe: They need to keep in mind that the city has always been on the hook for the money if the Department of Juvenile Justice left the building.

Katherine Moore: Perhaps you could reach out to other cities and DDAs to get feedback.

Commissioner Fisher: I've reached out to Lawrenceville, spoken to Sewanee. No one has our situation. In Decatur, there's a tax that goes directly to the DDA. But the commissioners decide what that should be. They could take it away. They could potentially control a lot of money. We need to start talking about this.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: The DDA was created just because of that building. The City could not get bonds but they could. So the Board created them because we had to. So I think any decision we make would be fine. We could even say we would fund them until the DJJ bond is paid off and then they have to pay us back.

Mayor Elmore: We need to get a model IGA just to see what's typically in there.

Commissioner Fisher: There has to be a middle ground. If we have an idea of what downtown option we're going to do and who we will partner with and what we think we'd need for infrastructure, land acquisition, what revenue stream it would take to get the bonds to do it, then we could say X amount should cover that, Y should come from the juvenile justice building. Z could come from the city. I would be more an ordinance that would say that money can't be used for the general fund. It has to be used for infrastructure.

Commissioner Beebe: Once the building is paid off, we could disband the DDA.

Mayor Elmore: Can we move into infrastructure? For example, I would like to start putting paving a certain amount of roads into the budget each year.

Katherine Moore: Have you had a conversation about goals with the DDA?

Mayor Elmore: We need to have that conversation and then it becomes easier to discuss how to pay for it.

City Manager Brown: Let's wait to hear back from the attorney as to where the DJJ money will go once the bond is paid off. Will it go to the City or the DDA.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: Most of the DDA members live here too. They're not going to make everyone pay more taxes for infrastructure while they control all the DJJ money.

Commissioner Yelton: Human behavior can be unpredictable even in the best circumstances when money is involved.

Katherine Moore: Is this a short-term or long-term goal to start tackling some of this stuff?

All agree it's short term.

Infrastructure

Katherine Moore: When I saw infrastructure, what comes to mind?

Commissioner Beebe: Stormwater. And there's roads and everything else too.

Commissioner Yelton: Stormwater is at the top of my mind. We have talked about it in a special meeting and I know some items are being worked on. By the way, I noticed there was some money from the general fund that went to sanitation. Isn't it supposed to be self funding?

City Manager Brown: We do that at the beginning of the year until their money from taxes comes in. Then the sanitation department pays that money back to the City.

Katherine Moore: Are you hearing about any stormwater issues in the business district?

City Manager Brown: There is one behind Little Tree Art Studio. Could be an undersized or clogged pipe.

Commissioner Fisher: There is a big drop in elevation between 278 and the railroad track. That could be an issue as that is redeveloped. Clai, what are the top infrastructure items that need attention?

City Manager Brown: In no particular order, roads will be ongoing. Number two would be erosion in the north woods and south woods. Three would be the public works building. It was built in 1980 and it's just a tin shell. Our associates are working in poor conditions.

Mayor Elmore: I would like to go look at it.

City Manager Brown: We need about \$1.8 million to get our roads caught up within the next 8 to 10 years.

Mayor Elmore: How long should a residential street last?

City Manager Brown: Ten to 15 years. Some will last 20 years.

Commissioner Beebe: Are there any grants for city roads?

City Manager Brown: Yes, we will get \$22,000. We've been putting aside HOST money the past few years to start paving some roads.

Commissioner Yelton: Clai, what do you need from us as far as prioritizing infrastructure needs? Are you doing that yourself?

City Manager Brown: The Board would have to make those decisions.

Mayor Elmore: I would like to keep a list of things we know will have to be done.

Commissioner Yelton: Maybe a schedule with priorities and cash flow.

City Manager Brown: Unless there's a failure in a system, you could just keep building up your reserve. Some cities don't even have a reserve.

Commissioner Fisher: It's cheap to borrow money right now so maybe we should spend all our reserve in case there is something catastrophic.

City Manager Brown: I would spend the money we have first. It's better to be debt free. We still owe \$450,000 on the four acres the City bought.

Commissioner Yelton: Is being debt free your personal philosophy?

City Manager Brown: That's always been the philosophy of the City.

Mayor Elmore: Maybe we should have a policy for how much we keep in reserve and how much we spend on infrastructure each year.

City Manager Brown: Just think about the lake and park. We're paying cash for all the work done on those. Otherwise we'd still be paying on them. We did finance the four acres purchased. The City put \$200,000 down.

Commissioner Fisher: I don't know how easy it is for governments to get money when they need it. Generally, it's easier to get when you don't need it.

City Manager Brown: Just the fees alone wouldn't make it worth it.

Katherine Moore: This is a good point to think about best practices. What's your comfort level for risk?

Mayor Elmore: If we could put this in the budget in advance each year, it could help us set the millage rate.

Katherine Moore: There are consultants that can come in and look at your infrastructure and help you prioritize. You don't have to take their recommendations.

Commissioner Fisher: There are no sidewalks in Majestic Acres and the lighting isn't great on the streets at night. Is that something people are asking to be changed?

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: With the annexation of Avonwood the deal was each individual homeowner would pay for their own sidewalk.

Commissioner Fisher: I just wondered if those were things that should be on our infrastructure to-do list.

City Manager Brown: I haven't gotten calls about that. That's something the public should decide.

Mayor Elmore: Parks are also infrastructure and I think that should include the town green we've been talking about. And I think if the area becomes as dense as we think it might, we could use two town greens.

Commissioner Yelton: We need to prioritize needs above wants.

Mayor Elmore: How much income does one point increase in millage rate mean?

City Manager Brown: About \$175,000.

Commissioner Fisher: Well, Clai has still been able to set aside \$500,000 so that's good. The City has been able to create reserves even though the budget is only \$3 million a year.

City Manager Brown: The budget starts in August and we start looking at property and millage rates in mid May. The millage rate has to be adopted by July 1st.

Commissioner Fisher: We should probably go to the public and tell them some of the infrastructure needs we have, what it could cost and the impact it could have on the millage rate, sooner rather than later. That way, when it's time to set the millage rate we can start creating reserves.

Commissioner Yelton: We have an agreement that we want a plan for future investment.

Katherine Moore: So this will be a short term item.

City Branding & Identity

Commissioner Beebe: We already have a brand. Small town, in town.

Commissioner Yelton: When was the last time we worked with a professional on city branding?

Commissioner Beebe: I think it was about ten years ago that the DDA at that time came up with small town, in town.

Mayor Pro Tem Giager: I have mixed feelings. Everyone I talk to knows about Avondale Estates. They've all heard of us. They just don't know where we are. I like what we've done already.

Commissioner Yelton: I feel the opposite. When we went to training in Athens, no one had heard of us.

Commissioner Fisher: People who have been in Atlanta a while have heard of Avondale. But they only talk about the Avondale of the 50s and 60s.

Mayor Elmore: I think of branding as more of the graphic element. I think people do know who we are. You can still push your image. I love small town, in town. It really captures it. I wish we had a more contemporary font.

Commissioner Beebe: How about "historically cool"?

Commissioner Yelton: Has the City patented small town, in town?

City Manager Brown: It has not been patented.

Katherine Moore: Is branding something we want the DDA to think about right away?

Commissioner Fisher: For them, isn't it more the execution of events to support the branding?

Mayor Elmore: They go hand in hand.

Commissioner Yelton: Is this something Keri and Debbie could work on? Documenting our use of the phrase. I think the DDA has way too much on their plate already.

Commissioner Beebe: I kind of like the car tag idea.

Mayor Elmore: We could do other things too. Tshirts. You can copyright it or trademark it if you want. But I don't think it's necessary legally. Once you start using it, it's yours.

City Manager Brown: We did a survey when we did the website and the feedback was, at the time, that people were happy with our logo.

Commissioner Fisher: We have a lot of graphics and marketing people in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Yelton: I just think if we love the slogan, we should document our use of it.

Katherine Moore: Is city branding a 12-month item or a 12- to 24-month priority?

All agree on it's a 12-month item.

Item No. 7

Summary, Prioritization and Next Steps

Katherine Moore: We started off this morning talking about communications. Action items include:

- Clarify the direction of the charter where communications is concerned, especially with other bodies.
- Delegate communication duties with other Board members besides the Mayor specific to these relationships.
- Capture details of and ask questions at the upcoming open records/open meetings training. Decide how to execute what we've learned.
- Clarify the job duties of Board members and City Manager. This could allow for self evaluation.
- Look at the content, format and frequency of City Manager Reports.
- Research similar sized cities' communication protocol.
- Board job descriptions could be good for future members and city staff.

Next was education. Takeaways include:

- Identify the relationships needed and assign some relationship maintenance at the Board level.
- Get recommendations from the education ad hoc committee in May.
- Consider proactive measures around some Dekalb school properties.
- Clarify with The Museum School some ordinances and rules regarding traffic and parking. Also look at any investments the City could take regarding access to the school.

Some action items regarding downtown redevelopment include:

- Formulate more details about the street grid that's proposed.

- Decide what to do with city-owned land, including budget thoughts and timelines.
- Have discussions with Euramex about next steps.
- Act on recommendations in the master plan.
- Move forward on discussions about a written agreement with the DDA.
- Research model intragovernmental agreements with other DDAs.

On infrastructure:

- Take a site visit to the public works building.
- Work with the DDA to address any stormwater issues downtown.
- City staff can work on a list of necessary annual investments in infrastructure.
- Research best practices for when there is money set aside. What is your tolerance for risk?

For the short discussion of City branding:

- Look for local talent that can advise on a visual element and marketing outreach.

Katherine Moore: Do you want to keep the same 12-month time frame on these items?

Commissioner Yelton: I think city branding could be longer term since there are so many other things on our plate.

Commissioner Beebe: Branding might be something we hand off to the DDA.

Katherine Moore: You're not going to solve all these problems quickly. But now that the conversation has been started, the hope is that when these are discussed in future work sessions you can be more efficient.

Commissioner Yelton: I want to acknowledge all the day-to-day stuff city staff is doing every day.

Commissioner Fisher: I think once the DDA has a full board, their efforts should be focused on the IGA. That has to be done before they can do anything else.

Katherine Moore: We will go back and write up a report summarizing this session.

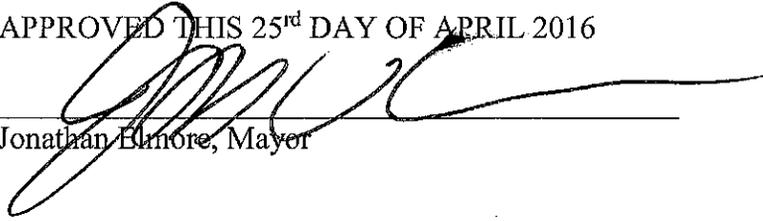
Mayor Elmore: I appreciate everyone coming today. I think we covered some good topics.

Item No. 8

Adjournment

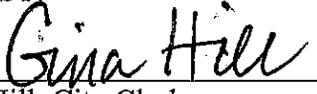
Commissioner Beebe moves to adjourn. Commissioner Fisher seconds. All ayes.

APPROVED THIS 25th DAY OF APRIL 2016



Jonathan Blumore, Mayor

ATTEST:



Gina Hill, City Clerk