

**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT
MARCH 16TH, 2022
8:30 a.m.
PARKER'S ON PONCE
DECATUR**

MINUTES

Members Present: Jonathan Elmore, Mayor
Brian Fisher, Mayor Pro Tem
Lisa Shortell, Commissioner
Lionel Laratte, Commissioner
Dee Merriam, Commissioner

Staff Present: Patrick Bryant, City Manager
Paul Hanebuth, Asst. City Manager
Shannon Powell, Asst. City Manager
Ellen Powell, Communications Manager
Gina Hill, City Clerk
Stephen Quinn, Attorney

Guest: Bill Floyd, Facilitator

Item #1 Meeting Called to Order

Item #2 Adoption of Agenda
Commissioner Laratte moved to adopt. Commissioner Merriam seconded. All ayes.

Item #3 **Capital Financial Outlook**

City staff gave members of the BOMC a packet of detailed financial information. City Manager Bryant explained what is shown in the paperwork. Assistant City Manager and Finance Director Hanebuth took over and went into more detail. The group talked about SPLOST and Cares Act funds, as well as stormwater funds and the tax allocation district (TAD), for example. Mr. Hanebuth concluded that it's possible the city could potentially take on up to \$6 million in capital projects. Mr. Hanebuth fielded questions from the BOMC. The group discussed the city's Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) as well as millage rates. Mr. Bryant felt that it made sense to max out borrowing from the current BAN but not other debt should be taken on until downtown tax revenue increases. It was expressed that borrowing money is currently cheaper than dealing with cost increases due to inflation in the future. Each commissioner offered their opinion about raising taxes and there isn't support for doing so. The group

mentioned capital investment in the residential area compared to that in the downtown. It was revealed that city staff is working at capacity. Talk returned to taxes, the millage rate and tax abatements.

Item #4 **Development Strategies for the South Side of US 278**

Mayor Elmore started by pointing out the areas the BOMC has not focused on for development – the south side of US 278, North Clarendon and Covington Highway. Mr. Floyd provided information on the Avondale Patillo Methodist Church property. That church is closing and giving the property to the Decatur parish. It was also mentioned that the First Baptist Church and the American Legion were struggling with membership numbers. The group also discussed the Avondale Station apartments that are in the middle of the central business district but not in the city limits. Attorney Quinn advised the group on methods of annexation. There was a consensus for the city manager to reach out to the owner of the apartments. Mr. Elmore suggested hiring a consultant to help create a vision for these areas. Ms. Powell said that even outsourcing requires managing and thus staff resources. The discussion about staff resources continued. Mr. Floyd emphasized that development outside the city will indeed impact what happens inside the city limits. Commissioner Shortell said that she's starting to think about staff as capital.

Item #5 **Advisory Committees**

Mayor Elmore wanted a committee to only exist if there's a need and for there to be clear guidelines. Mr. Floyd suggested hiring an outside source to consult on the structure of the city's various boards. City Manager Bryant said that all of the committees required at least some staff support. He explained other issues with the boards and agreed there should be clear guidelines for how committees operated. Mr. Bryant suggested cutting out some boards. Talk surrounded committees that covered trees, greenspace and the lake. The benefits of ad hoc committees were discussed. Commissioner Merriam spoke about the benefits of having an outlet for residents to become involved in city government. Mr. Floyd urged the group to choose action items. City Attorney Quinn shared Clarkston's structure – they have committees that are dormant until the commission asks them to weigh in on a specific item. Mr. Bryant was in support of that model. Mr. Quinn gave more detail about Clarkston's structure. Other BOMC members were not in favor. The topic was discussed of having a BOMC member involved with each board or committee. The group talked about how involved city staff needs to be in the activities of the various committees. It was also mentioned how little communication there is between the BOMC and these other committees. Next steps and a rough structure were agreed upon and Mr. Bryant will be the driver for moving things forward.

Item #6 **Future Stormwater Plans**

Mr. Floyd gave a brief introduction to stormwater issues. The City Manager Bryant described the history and current stormwater situation on Hess Drive that is affecting residents that live on that road. Members of the group recounted visits to the area and what they saw. There was discussion about

whether this specific infrastructure was the property owner's responsibility or part of the public good and therefore the city's responsibility. They also talked about whether or not the area was in a flood plane and also about flood insurance. Talk turned to DeKalb County and their role in the stormwater issues.

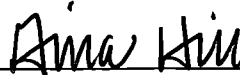
In conclusion, Mr. Floyd commented the BOMC on the work they've accomplished. Mr. Bryant talked about what will be covered in the September retreat.

Item #7

Adjournment

Commissioner Laratte moved to adjourn. Commissioner Merriam seconded. All ayes.

APPROVED APRIL 13TH, 2022



Gina Hill, City Clerk