



**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
MARCH 24TH, 2021
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING REGULAR MEETING
VIA ZOOM**

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
Rebecca Long, Communications Manager
Gina Hill, City Clerk
Stephen Quinn, City Attorney

Item #1 Meeting Called to Order

Item #2 Adoption of Agenda

- Mayor Elmore motions to move item #6 up to item #3. Commissioner Shortell seconds. All ayes
- Commissioner Laratte moves to adopt the agenda as amended. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher seconded. All ayes.

Item #3 **Stormwater Priority Plan and Fees**

The recently-completed Stormwater Priority Plan (also called the Stormwater Master Plan) included estimated costs for short-term capital and operating needs, as well as outlining longer-term needs. The BOMC will discuss the optimal time frame for completing short- and long-term projects and the fee level necessary to fund the outlined needs within that time frame. This fee will also need to be set by resolution and forwarded to DeKalb County.

City Manager Bryant said this has been discussed in the past several meetings. He added that the county needs to have information from the city by April 15th. Mr. Bryant proposed raising the stormwater fee because the current amount is not enough to maintain infrastructure, not including capital work. He then gave several fee options and the pros and cons of each. Staff recommendation is a fee of \$180 per house per year. Mayor Elmore said that Mayor Pro Tem Fisher (who had since left the meeting) was in favor of staff's recommendation. Mr. Elmore was also in favor. Commissioner Merriam wondered if there was a

compromise that was less expensive. Commissioner Shortell requested feedback from residents. She felt the stormwater issues would only worsen over time. She supported staff recommendation. Commissioner Laratte said this is a tough decision but may be unavoidable. Mr. Bryant told the group this needed to be voted on at the next meeting. Assistant City Manager Hanebuth added that stormwater fees have not risen since 2004 when the city took it over from the county.

Item #4

Extent of Stormwater Service Policy

Discussion of adopting a more nuanced policy for addressing stormwater needs in places where public infrastructure meets private infrastructure. This change would likely increase maintenance costs but reduce liability for the City.

This policy was recommended by consultants Brown and Caldwell, said City Manager Bryant. He described what such a policy would mean although staff is not making a specific recommendation, he did think these discussions should begin. An extent of stormwater policy defines what stormwater infrastructure the city would be responsible for on private property. Assistant City Manager Hanebuth gave more detail and City Attorney Quinn described the current ordinance. He suggested looking at the cost of various policies. Mayor Elmore said that he did not know where to start evaluating this issue. Commissioner Merriam said there were residents who specialized in this area. Discussion continued and Mr. Quinn pointed out a sample policy that was sent as part of the agenda packet. Commissioner Shortell said that once again this goes back to residents down stream being unfairly burdened by impervious surface built upstream. The consensus was for city staff to provide more guidance to the BOMC on this issue before any decisions are made.

Item #5

Zoning Code Rewrite

This is a continuing conversation about the rewrite to offer updates and field questions from the BOMC. The BOMC will be discussing recommended changes to the code offered by staff since the last draft update.

City Manager Bryant started by saying after recent discussions at previous work sessions and with other public input, staff has amended the zoning code. He felt it is near its final stage for sending to the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) for their review. Mayor Elmore recapped the last discussion about the Architectural Review Board (ARB) and whether it should remain intact. They then share their opinions about what they would like to see happen to the ARB, including if it should be merged with the PZB and whether or not the PZB should be expanded to include those with architectural expertise.

Commissioners Shortell, Merriam and Laratte supported adding two seats to the PZB for those with expertise. Mr. Elmore and Mayor Pro Tem Fisher were fine to leave the board at five members. The group discussed Ms. Shortell's proposed language.

Talk turned to building height. There was discussion about variety of building height versus the desire to not have any building taller than the Tudor Village. Assistant City Manager Powell said there is no exact height for the Tudor Village and she felt a little more flexibility could produce better buildings. She added

another alternative is to allow builders to request a variance. Commissioner Merriam supports no variances for height but said maybe height restrictions could be based on distance from the Tudor Village. The group agreed that they didn't want anything adjacent to the Tudor Village to be taller.

Mayor Elmore started a conversation about height plane. He provided an illustration that he felt gave a different perspective to height plane. In his opinion, 45 feet is acceptable. Mr. Elmore also spoke about the impact of height on sunlight. Consultant Rebecca Keefer spoke about their work on this topic. Other BOMC members felt the diagrams were helpful.

The consensus of the zoning discussion is to eliminate the ARB and change the name of the PZB to the PZAB. Mr. Bryant said once these changes are made the zoning code will go to the PZAB for review. Ms. Merriam disagreed. She felt the public needed time to see the changes and provide feedback. She also had technical questions that she wanted answered. She was told that the public would still have many opportunities to comment.

Item #6

Public Works Equipment Purchase

Staff recommends purchasing knuckle boom truck for moving piles of limbs or other large items to increase the efficiency of yard waste collection.

City Manager Bryant explained staff's strategy for capital investment in public works equipment. He gave rationale behind staff's recommendation to buy this piece of equipment. Assistant Manager Hanebuth described the truck they're recommending. He also spoke to the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) lease program staff is recommending for the purchase. Members of the board were supportive. Mr. Bryant complimented Public Works Director Jackson for making this suggestion.

Item #7

Tree Inventory Proposals

Per a recommendation in Landscape Maintenance Plan that Davey Resource Group just completed for the city, staff has received two proposals to conduct an inventory of Avondale's trees.

Assistant City Manager Hanebuth explained the advantages behind having the inventory done and how the idea came about. He added the information an inventory would provide and asked if the BOMC wants staff to move forward. Commissioner Shortell supported the proposal and also offered suggestions and asked for more information to be included in the inventory. Commissioner Merriam would like to hear details about any other recommendations to come out of the Landscape Maintenance Plan the city just had completed. She'd also like to leverage the city's volunteers and any tree-related information they may have gathered. A presentation about the inventory, she felt, would also be helpful for residents. The mayor said this item will be voted on at the next regular meeting.

Item #8

Public Comment

Steven Sanchez commented that part of the reason taller buildings in Decatur don't feel imposing is because of the trees planted along the sidewalk. He added that a certain amount of space is needed to plant such trees. Mr. Sanchez also praised the decision to have an annual budget for tree maintenance. Erika Brown asked if businesses in the downtown are required to provide any stormwater calculations. Assistant City Manager Hanebuth explained the requirements. Ms. Brown asked if there was a way to impose an impact fee on developers. She commended there be one.

Item #9

Adjournment

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

MINUTES APPROVED 4.28.2021



GINA HILL, CITY CLERK