



**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 28TH, 2023
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PUBLIC HEARING**

MINUTES

Members Present: Jonathan Elmore, Mayor
Lisa Shortell, Commissioner
Lionel Laratte, Commissioner
Dee Merriam, Commissioner

Members Absent: Brian Fisher, Mayor Pro Tem

Staff Present: Patrick Bryant, City Manager
Shannon Powell, Asst. City Manager
Ellen Powell, Communications Manager

Item #1 Meeting Called to Order

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

Item #3 **Commissioner Comments**
Commissioner Shortell praised the public works department for their swift response to a recent storm and quickly clearing debris. She also thanked Gardeners for the Common Good for pulling up poison ivy at Willis Park. City Manager Bryant announced that phase two of the North Woods project is getting underway. He described what residence can expect to see. He also promoted activities coming on July 4th. The USA Today contest to award the best small town beer scene is going on again. Avondale Estates won this contest the two previous years. Mr. Bryant encouraged everyone to vote and explained how. Assistant City Manager Powell gave an update on the US 278 Complete Street project.

Item #4 **Variance Request for 14 Dartmouth Avenue**
The application is to rebuild and expand a nonconforming accessory structure by increasing the height from 12.25 feet to 16.5 feet with a reduced side setback from 12 feet to 1.7 feet in the rear yard of a single-family residence, zoned R-12.

Commissioner Laratte motioned to approve. Commissioner Shortell seconded. All nays.

Commissioner Shortell said she visited the home but she felt the zoning is clear and the application does not meet the criteria for a hardship. She said the

homeowners have other options. Commissioner Merriam explained why she would be voting no. Commissioner Laratte wanted to support the project but could not and be in accordance with the zoning code. He was sympathetic with the homeowners. Mayor Elmore agreed there was no hardship.

Carla and Eddie Fahy, the applicants, voiced their disappointment with the decision.

Item #5

An Ordinance by the City of Avondale Estates to Amend Chapter 21 (Zoning) of the City's Code of Ordinances to Provide for Procedures in Compliance with Certain Amendments to the State Zoning Procedures Law; to Repeal Conflicting Provisions of the Code; and for Other Purposes

The proposed text amendments related to zoning procedure and public notice are necessary to keep the city's zoning ordinance in compliance with changes to the Georgia Zoning Procedures Law by the effective date of July 1, 2023.

Commissioner Shortell moved to adopt. Commissioner Merriam seconded. All eyes.

Ms. Merriam believed this will increase notification to the public for zoning changes and that's why she's supporting it.

Item #6

Ordinance to Set 2023 Millage Rate

The Governing Authority of the City of Avondale Estates has tentatively adopted a 2023 millage rate of 9.8 mills, the same rate as the past five years.

This is the first reading of the ordinance. Mayor Elmore explained the millage rate approval process moving forward. He said that all the commissioners want to lower the millage rate by an undetermined amount. Mr. Elmore would like to decrease it gradually over time and he's considering a decrease of .25 mills. Commissioner Shortell said the millage issue is very complex. She would consider Mr. Elmore's proposal as a maximum decrease. Ms. Shortell provided reasons why development has been slow which continues to put more tax burden on the residents. She added that budget cuts would be discussed during the budget process and an across-the-board budget cut would be considered. A capital plan is mandatory however, she felt. Commissioner Merriam favored a millage decrease that's lower but she would consider .25. Commissioner Laratte supported cutting the millage rate much more – a full mil. He proposed funding that by delaying some capital projects. Discussion continued.

Bill Hover supported some tax relief and felt like the city was on the right track. Phil Feibish supported a lower millage rate and thanked staff for the presentation given before the meeting. He had a question about the Juvenile Justice Building. City Manager Bryant explained the financial agreements the city has with that property owner. Mr. Feibish asked the city for more data. Kathy Kingsbury asked the BOMC to be more transparent. Paul Dorroh asked that the millage rate be lowered to budget expectations. He asked the millage rate be lowered to 9.3. He proposed other budgetary measures. Mr. Dorroh was troubled by the agreement with the new owners of the Juvenile Justice Building to receive tax revenue up front. Dave Deiters, Chair of the Downtown Development Authority, explained how that deal was structured and the reasoning behind it. Lyda Steadman gave

clarified some information about the millage rollback. She maintained that the city has given developers tax relief but not the residents. Ms. Steadman commented that the financial information coming out of city hall is not detailed enough in her opinion. She believed the financial reporting is not complete and requested a lower millage rate. Jan Hover believed the financial reporting is very clear. City Manager Bryant clarified that whatever millage rate is adopted is applied to every single property in the city.

Item #7

Resolution to Hold Special Called Meeting to Set Millage Rate

A special called meeting is set for Thursday, June 29th to vote on the 2023 millage rate immediately after the third public hearing on the matter. A resolution is required for the purpose of scheduling the meeting.

Commissioner Shortell moved to approve. Commissioner Merriam seconded. All ayes.

City Manager Bryant said he would be unable to attend the meeting tomorrow and if members of the BOMC had any questions he'd be happy to answer them ahead of time.

Item #8

Public Comment

Susie Deiters asked if the paint to be used to paint Clarendon Avenue will truly be washable. Mayor Elmore said that it was. He announced details about the painting event this coming weekend. Paul Dorroh requested that capital operational budgets go further into the future than it currently does. Mr. Elmore responded that he would be trepidatious about doing that. Stacey Bearden asked about the process of setting the millage rate. Mr. Elmore explained.

Item #9

Adjournment

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

APPROVED JULY 26TH, 2023



Gina Hill, City Clerk

