



**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
OAK HOUSE
2855 WASHINGTON ST.
AVONDALE ESTATES, GA 30002
AUGUST 31ST, 2023
8:30 A.M.**

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
Shannon Powell, Asst. City Manager
Ellen Powell, Communications Manager
Gina Hill, City Clerk
Stephen Quinn, City Attorney
Brittany Marmol, Finance Director

Guest: Bill Floyd, Facilitator

Item #1 Meeting Called to Order

Item #2 Adoption of Agenda
Mayor Pro Tem Fisher moved to adopt. Commissioner Laratte seconded. All ayes.

Item #3 **Resolution to Continue the Suspension of HOST, Continue the Levy of EHOST, Continue the 1% SPLOST, Approve the City's SPLOST Project List, Call a Referendum Election and Approve the City's Portion of the Ballot Form**

City Manager Bryant explained how the SPLOST agreement between the cities and counties will be set up this year. Each small city will receive an additional \$2 million for projects that will benefit both city and county. The traditional SPLOST amount for the city will be \$4.35 million. He further discussed the process moving forward, wrapping up by the September 8th deadline. The SPLOST item will be on the November ballot. There was discussion about how SPLOST agreements are structured where all cities must be in agreement for it to work. City Attorney Quinn weighed in. Mr. Bryant said the \$4.35 million distribution would be used for roads and stormwater with an option to bond and receive the money up front, paying it off as SPLOST funds are received. Paul Dorroh had a

question and Mr. Bryant responded.

Commissioner Laratte moved to approve. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher seconded. All ayes.

Item #4 **Resolution Authorizing an Intergovernmental Agreement with DeKalb County Relating to the Continuation of a 1% Sales and Use Tax**

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

Item #5 **Strategic Planning for 2024**

Central Business District Zoning Changes

A handout was distributed outlining zoning changes staff feels are needed to accommodate stated goals of the BOMC. A particular concern is potential development on the south side of US 278. Assistant City Manager Powell went over the handout with the group and outlined suggested zoning bonuses for senior housing developers. Ms Powell and City Manager Bryant fielded questions from the BOMC. They discussed how senior developments on the south side of the road would impact properties behind them. The group discussed affordable housing but concluded there was more of a need for senior housing. Mr. Bryant said staff would like to present a formal proposal to the BOMC in a public meeting the following month. The group talked about using incentives to encourage specific types of development in other areas as well. Ms. Powell described some other potential incentives. The group discussed unit size, parking, the economics of development, and zoning code.

Revenue Diversification

City Manager Bryant described an analysis done by staff to estimate commercial property values, which are undervalued by the county thus affecting tax revenue. He provided a handout and reviewed it with the group. He told the group about a Special Service District (SSD), something that can be enacted through local ordinance. The SSD would be a way to ensure commercial property pays a fair share towards projects – like the town green, for example – that benefit everyone. Mr. Bryant explained how it would work to help pay off debt for the town green and create infrastructure to the mill district. It can also incentivize developers to work with the city on future plans. Mr. Bryant and City Attorney Quinn answered questions from members of the BOMC. Mr. Bryant pointed out that an SSD would free up funds for other projects. He concluded by saying an ordinance would be drafted to present to the BOMC.

After lunch, Mr. Bryant recalled the group has discussed a new administrative fee schedule. They looked at what other cities were doing. Staff distributed information providing detail and said adopting a fee schedule would become part of the annual budget process. The group reviewed the document and Assistant City Manager Powell provided more detail. Mr. Bryant announced budget discussions would begin at the second weekend in September. The group talked about permits and various scenarios in which they're required.

The third topic under revenue diversification is the senior tax credit. Mr. Bryant said staff has compiled data on the topic. Three difference scenarios were

calculated with the data to evaluate a tax credit and its impact on the city. One scenario was a 100% exemption for all households that qualify (age-based only) and that would reduce tax revenue by about \$370 thousand per year. Mr. Bryant did not feel that was sustainable. A one mil decrease would equal a loss of about \$38 thousand. The third scenario would be a valuation \$20 thousand decrease of the home and would be a loss of about \$41 thousand. Mr. Bryant argued that this group has benefitted greatly from economic conditions over the decades. The group discussed the various exemptions from the county available to seniors. Commissioner Shortell felt seniors really wanted to be able to stay in their homes or at least in the neighborhood. Therefore, she felt more senior housing would be better. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher felt it would be more impactful if the commercial taxes were more robust. Mayor Elmore wanted to use zoning to encourage more senior housing. Mr. Bryant believed some of the zoning changes they proposed will have that effect. Talk turned to characteristics of good senior housing and accessory dwelling units (ADU), like carriage houses. Commissioner Merriam wanted to know how many ADUs are in the city. There was agreement to put an recap of the senior tax credit discussion on a work session agenda soon.

Annexation

City Manager Bryant said that servicing properties with a city gets less expensive the more properties that are added. Also, an increase in population means more SPLOST funds from the county for capital projects. He listed areas for possible annexation and discussed the voluntary method of annexation that would be required. He cited another city that use consultants to go out into areas being considered about the benefits of annexation. Mr. Bryant asked if the BOMC wishes to pursue annexation, what areas and when. SPLOST funds would only increase when adding residential, noted Mayor Elmore. The group talked about how annexation is about controlling what happens around you as well as giving those people a voice they wouldn't have otherwise. Access to staff, police, and elected officials was also a benefit mentioned. How to talk about the topic of annexation with those in areas being considered was discussed. Avondale Station Apartments was brought up as a good option for a senior community. Mr. Bryant believed the properties on Mountain Drive would be the best place to start because they are new developments and it's a smaller area. City Attorney Quinn noted that annexing apartment complexes is usually easier than single family homes. Pros and cons of various areas were discussed. Mr. Bryant advocated for hiring consultants and said he would seek some out and report back to the BOMC. Mr. Fisher urged that a communications plan be part of this moving forward.

Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) Certified City of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

City Manager Bryant recalled that Commissioner Laratte made him aware of this program. He explained how it worked and what was required. He said there was an upcoming webinar for those interested in participating in the program. Bill Floyd shared that several cities are completing the process at the moment but none are currently fully certified. Commissioner Laratte felt it would put another dimension to the city's efforts to be inclusive. Commissioner Shortell was concerned about the amount of time involved. Mayor Elmore discussed the different levels of certification and shared concerns about the demands on staff. Commissioner Merriam believed the city has made big strides in these areas. She

felt the program was designed for a bigger city. There were comparisons with Main Street and Tree City certifications. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher wondered if the benefits outweighed the work involved. He did think stakeholder conversations would be beneficial but was concerned about the extra work for staff. Mr. Laratte was disappointed and felt a lot of work was put into property and not enough into people. Mr. Elmore countered that everything the BOMC did was for the people. Ms. Shortell added that many of the items on the certification list are already underway. Mr. Fisher remarked about the changes that have occurred since he moved to the city. Mr. Laratte agreed and added the certification is important to him because it shows the city stands behind what is happening organically. Mr. Bryant felt the Bronze Level of certification is doable.

Mr. Bryant brought up one final point. He wanted to make the BOMC aware that a change order was being considered to change the slate path to concrete along Berkeley Road because the slate would continue to wash away. The BOMC was supportive of the change.

Item #6

Adjournment

Commissioner Laratte moved to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher seconded. All ayes.

APPROVED SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2023



Gina Hill, City Clerk