



**CITY OF WALNUT GROVE**  
**August 11, 2022 7:00 PM**  
**1021 PARK STREET MUNICIPAL BUILDING**  
**MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

Mayor - Mark Moore  
Council Members -  
Linda Pilgrim  
Erica Miles  
Stephanie Moncrief  
Jon Dial  
City Clerk - Keegan Ramsey  
Public Works - Brian Pilgrim  
City Attorney - Tony Powell  
P & Z Chairman - Don Cannon

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**Council Meeting Minutes**

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Public - Dana Seger, Chris McCrary, Pam Schloemer, Todd Heil, Steven Heil, Maxine McClanahan, Michelle Anderson, Kathy Brown, Paul Jones

- I. CALL TO ORDER** - Mayor Mark Moore
- II. INVOCATION** - Tony Powell
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** - All Participated
- IV. AGENDA APPROVAL** - Council member Stephanie Moncrief made motion to approve. Council member Erica Miles seconded. Passed unanimously.
- V. CONSENT AGENDA** - Council member Linda Pilgrim made motion to approve. Council member Jon Dial seconded. Passed unanimously
  1. July 14<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, & 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes
  2. Financials
  3. Invoices over \$5000
- VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS**
  1. Community Involvement Committee – Council member Linda Pilgrim reported the next Park Market on Saturday August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 10 am -4 pm which will be the Back to School Bash with goodies for the kids. September's Market is still in the planning stages. The October Market will be partnering with Faith in Blue with plans to be bigger than last year. Then we'll be moving into our Christmas Tree Lighting.
  2. Parks and Recreation/Public Works – Council member Jon Dial reported we're still waiting on for the lights to come in for the softball/baseball field. There is discussion about it becoming a true Little League park.
  3. DDA Report – Council member Erica Miles reported the website is on hold until the Master Plan is developed. DDA is trying to get marketing for the development of the downtown area.
  4. Education Involvement Committee – Council member Stephanie Moncrief reported she did not reach out to schools this week because of the start of school. The high school is almost ready with their football field, the new turf is down. They have the new building being built which is going to be about a year long endeavor. She will reach out to principals and assistant principals this week and see how they are doing. Mayor Mark Moore gave congratulations to the BB Gun Team, they came in first in the nation. Also, the West Walton 5-6 baseball USSSA team came in first place in the country also.
  - 5.\*\* Library Report - Librarian Dana Seger reported the summer reading program has concluded, they gave away 519 books as prizes and Scoops gave free ice

cream to every child that read 10 books, at least 100 children received ice cream. In August they will be having Lego Nights, family game afternoons and Miss Moore's weekly story time every Tuesday at 11. This month is Apple Scavenger Hunt, so all kids that find apples in the library receive a prize. Next month is the second annual bookmark contest.

**VII. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION** – Chairman Don Cannon reported the commission continues efforts to refine the city's zoning ordinance which is an ongoing process. Joe Walter, our Zoning Administrator, is working on revising our ordinances to include the amendments that have been passed. August 18th, 2022 at 7 PM there will be a public hearing to hear a variance request to reduce setbacks to allow for construction of a building to house a cabinet shop, at the northwest corner of Guthrie Cemetery Road and Industrial Parkway. Mayor Mark Moore commented if the variance is on the M1 zoned area, reply from Chairman Don Cannon was yes.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS** - Mayor Mark Moore wants to celebrate Ms. Donald's 94th birthday today.

**IX. OLD BUSINESS** - None

**X. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Rezone Application & Public Hearing- 11.195 Ac. Parcel NO. WG010026 From A-4 to M-1 - Mayor Mark Moore wanted to discuss the rezoning and the procedures. We are modeling it after the other cities in the county. First the developer is going to come up and make a statement about what he's trying to do. Then any parties that are in favor of the rezoning, then parties that are opposed, and then the developer will come back up and do a rebuttal. Council member Erica Miles stated she helped the developer purchase the land inside the rezoned area and asked to be recused from anything to do with this. City Attorney Tony Powell explained the steps for recusal. Ms. Miles was dismissed from the room.

a. Public Hearing

Planning/Zoning Chairman Don Cannon stated a public hearing was held on July 21st, 2022 where Mr. Chris McCrary presented the case for the developer in respect to the zoning application for 11.195 acres from agricultural to M1. Six individuals spoke against the recommendation. After the required public hearing the members of the Commission found that the access point to the proposed project to be inadequate and as such, ingress and egress to the project would cause irreparable harm to the existing properties and residents in the area. Don Cannon recommended that the application to rezone the subject property be denied, Brenda Ramsey seconded and the recommendation was unanimously approved by the commission.

Representing the developer is engineer Chris McCrary. He stated an application was submitted to rezone 11.19 acres on parcel WG 010026 and a portion of the church property. We are requesting rezoning to M1 into office warehousing and a piece of the property does touch Hwy 81. Last month we heard a lot of concerns so we are requesting tonight to defer the case for 180 day so we can go back to look at options.

The Mayor asked for anyone in favor of the development to come up. There were none. Then he asked for anyone not in favor to come up.

Resident Pam Slower, 2561 Leon Avenue made a statement many have agreed to yield their time to Todd Heil to represent them.

Resident Todd Heil, 2650 Leon Avenue N showed appreciation for the planning and development for regrouping and trying to do something different. He and other residents were at the first planning and zoning meeting on June 16th, 2022 which was canceled. They have concerns as residents about putting some kind of industrial or something over in that area. He felt like they didn't get enough notice. He knew it was in the paper, but feels letters should have been sent out to the community or via social media. The other concern is safety, with three schools on Hwy 81 and two just off the highway makes morning traffic horrible. Just after the first meeting there was a car that went through a house and you're talking about putting an easement and widening the road. Engineers checked with the church and it was ok, but nobody checked with the residents. When something like this goes in, Mr. Howell believes you should find out what the residents would like and work together. If it was four laned, what are we going to do with the subdivision traffic getting out, Park Street going across and other places where it's already a strain. Then you have issues of the elderly right next to the easement on the left side, and the family in the Brown's home on the other side with physical and emotional disabilities. They have a pool and the shaking of the ground cracks the pool. Who's going to be responsible for fixing all this? A decel lane just 50 foot from the Brown's home, right where the easement would be with no way of getting out safely and the noise. There is only 6 foot on each side of the sidewalk and the buffers, and there's supposed to be 12 foot. Where are you going to get the other property from? There's not enough room for the trucks and different things to go in and out now. We were proposed to get copies of the buffers, we never got them. It was misrepresented in the zoning from the warehouse to manufacturing which will actually depreciate the value of homes. They're supposed to have 48 foot for the two lanes. Larger businesses will most likely be the one to rent the warehouses not small business owners, they will not be able to afford them. How can we guarantee if the warehouses do go in that they're going to stay full? If they don't stay full it attracts criminal actions in these places. You have Walnut Grove Park going in right there at the fire station. If all these people are against it and it was voted down last time, why in the world would you want to vote it in now and go against people that are in this community?

Resident Pam Schloemer, 2651 Leon Avenue did some research on the effect and has a concern that she has heard consistently is the fact that this has been represented verbally in every meeting that has been attended as warehousing. She asked how is this applied for at the zoning meeting, and it's applied for manufacturing. This will cause a decrease in property values. Were you intending to bring warehousing and small business in, then there's nothing that in 5 or 10 years from now they can't put a fertilizer plant behind this if you put it as manufacturing. Commercial is the highest value warehousing is second with manufacturing having the largest hit on depreciating our property values. You've got 11 houses involved on 81. She asks that if we're going to do this, that we take it commercial so that they as the property owners can maintain the value and get out of their houses what it will take to replace them.

Resident Steven Heil, 2650 Leon Avenue commented that it has been talked about wanting to slow the traffic down right there, lower the speed limit and wanted to know why you will have to do that if it's not already dangerous right there.

Resident Maxine McClanhan, 4081 Habersham Circle noted there were no pros

tonight and she hasn't found any. Cons, short and sweet, she feels like it puts a huge building footprint at the wrong location. It doesn't fit good between a downtown area and a park. It will have a impact on green space and a poor visual impact. She thinks it will bring a detriment to future commercial building. It affects the population negatively. It leaves the door open to less desirable manufacturing. The citizens don't want it, so why not approve something more fitting for that location, such as movie theater, bowling alley, carpet golf complex or medical facilities. This would provide more services for the citizens. This is not a project, that if you vote yes, you're going to be putting a feather in your cap. So don't turn around and say to the citizens "that we don't care", because a yes vote is pretty much stating exactly that. She stated we want our voice to have meaning and to make sure it is heard.

Resident Michell Anderson, 2641 Leon Avenue stated that already on 81 the traffic is horrible and the trucks going down the road rattle the windows. If another development goes in behind there it is going to make it worse. It's way too much right behind her house.

Resident Kathy Brown, 915 Highway 81, moved here because of the quite small town feel. This would be right behind her house and it would not have that feel. She would have an industrial park right behind her and that is not what she wanted when she moved here.

Resident Pam Schloemer forgot to ask why does the entrance have to come off 81. Why can't it come off the turn around?

Mayor Mark Moore asked the developer to come back up and do a rebuttal.

Engineer Chris McCrary stated they are willing to accept a condition to limit uses to only add office warehouse use, small businesses that need a little bit of storage and office space to run the business up front. So do a condition to limit the use and never be manufacturing on this parcel, until somebody in the future comes back and ask for changing conditions or a completely new rezoning case. As far as the entrance goes, that's something we're trying to reconsider, but we've got to look at all options that are available out there. We would like to request and defer it so we can go back and see what the options are and try to address the concerns and come back. We're willing to do conditions so we're not getting into anything beyond a typical 8 to 5 business, no manufacturing, nothing that's going to be out there that's going to create any kind of pollution, smoke or excessive noise.

Mayor Mark Moore asked about a simple option to look at C2 versus manufacturer (M1).

Engineer Chris McCrary stated he was willing to talk to his client.

Council member Linda Pilgrim made motion for deferral for the 180 days for the rezoning application for parcel number WG 010026 from A4 to M1. Council member Jon Dial seconded. Council member Stephanie Moncrief wanted to make sure that after the 180 days the application goes back to Planning and Zoning and that there is a public hearing again. Mayor Mark Moore stated that he will get the advertisement out there when it goes back to Planning and Zoning once the plans are in place so you can see what's changed. The question was asked by the public, if applies to the property itself or the person applying. City Attorney Tony Powell replied with it attaches to the property. Public question was asked about what the codes are. Mayor Mark Moore explained there is C1, C2 and then manufacturer (M1)

Commercial is like PapaJohn's, an auto body shop and so forth. A lot of the properties on 138 are C2 and certain things are allowed under our ordinances, which can be found online, it has a list of what companies are allowed in the C1, what's allowed in the C2 and in M1. Public question was asked if the properties directly involved could at least be mailed a copy that this is beginning again and when the meeting is taking place. Mayor Mark Moore asked residents to contact City Hall and give their name, address and email so they will be informed. City Attorney Tony Powell understands that the developer will be talking to residences and conduct some consensus gathering. There can be some conditions in place to take care of certain things and to restrict the property to specific things, but they have to be applied with words at the zoning meeting, then the council has to attach it to zoning. Mayor reminded there is a motion and a second. No more discussion. Motion for a 180 day deferral passed unanimously.

Council member Erica Miles was brought back into the council room.

2. Sign Ordinance - Mayor Mark Moore stated the sign ordinance has to be revitalized to make it a bit harder for billboards to come into the city and he deferred this to Mr. Powell. City Attorney Tony Powell explained an application came into the city that was a defective application that pointed out some deficiencies in the sign ordinance. Two things we're trying to do is 1) make sure you don't have things in the city you don't want and 2) trying to cost effectively engineer an effective sign ordinance. Mayor Mark Moore stated the moratorium is in place and the city needs to follow the attorney's recommendations because of First Amendment rights. The sign ordinance will be moved over to old business on the next council meeting.

3. Millage Rate Rollback to 5.197 - Mayor Mark Moore stated there is a public hearing on this and if anyone would like to make a statement about the rollback, what it does, it keeps your current cost exactly the same. It does not add any more taxes. Maxine McClanahan asked if the tax stays the same but the property assessment goes up it changes? Per City Attorney Tony Powell the rollback is intended from a rate structure to keep your taxes exactly where they are. In other words, you had a higher mileage rate and you're rolling it back so that you don't have any increase in tax at all. Including the fact that your assessments may have gone up, it's rolling that assessment back, it is keeping taxes exactly where it is without any increase. Council member Erica Miles made the motion to approve the mileage rollback to 5.197. Council member Linda Pilgrim seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Moratorium on Downtown Center Extension - Mayor Mark Moore opened the floor to any comments. Paul Jones wanted to introduce the plans they have been working with since last year. He just received these at 5:30 this afternoon. They are the revised edition for the downtown center. Everything on the front side at the road, if we do it in phases, that's phase one and pretty much it's going to stay the same. Everything towards the back, towards the creek, we could say that's phase two. There's different ways to handle that water, but we have guidelines and restrictions and the EPA because that is part of Cornish Creek water reservoir. He basically wants to use that as an update without the amphitheater. Mayor Mark Moore explained the moratorium on the downtown overlay and the Town Center which is the

square block of Walnut Grove Parkway, 138 and 81. This information is on the City website. The moratorium ran out on the 1st of August. So the council needs to consider if we want to reimpose it for the next 6 months, limit it to the square block or just not approve it at all. We have a very limited sewer supply. The sewer plan expansion is going to be about 18 months, so we're not going to get an approval permit from the state until December. Then we have to send it out for bid and construction, so we are looking at conceivably a year from January before we have extra sewer. Council member Stephanie Moncrief made a motion to put a moratorium on all development, what we have in place right now, extend that for another six months. Mayor Mark Moore asked for clarification if that is for inside the Town Center or the downtown overlay. Council member Stephanie Moncrief replied the downtown overlay. Council member Erica Miles asked how the moratorium work, does it prohibit them from making future plans and bringing them to council? Mayor Mark Moore replied yes. City Attorney Tony Powell added that you can't take it to your planning director to start construction. What you're really stopping is the process of actual development. The purpose of a downtown moratorium is you're trying to plan the area, so you're just freezing that from building permits and applications. Mayor Mark Moore wanted to clarify anything could happen in an area that's not already zoned as a C1, C2, commercial, et cetera. If it's agriculture it still has to go to planning and zoning and the zoning administrator before any action can take place and it can still be denied regardless of whether or not we have a moratorium. The moratorium does affect a business that already has a C1, C2 zoning to come in there and add their business to it. It affects what has to be rezoned. City Attorney Tony Powell explained having a moratorium in place you're ratcheting up your controls. You also control that growth by having accessibility to sewer. It's probably stronger than the zoning is in terms of whether something is built or not because they have to have sewer. Council member Erica Miles seconded the motion. Motion passed 3 to 1, council member Linda Pilgrim voting no.

## **XI. REPORTS**

1. Public Works Report- Public Works Director Brian Pilgrim reported regular monthly maintenance was done. There was some storm damage to the silk fence on Park Street and Walton EMC had to cut 2 tress off the power lines, once of which controlled the power to our sewer plant lift station. He also presented a letter from Georgia Department of Natural Resources. GA DNR does an inspection every 5 years and the City passed everything on the checklist and we exceeded the demands for the park.
2. Clerk's Report - Keegan Ramsey read the balances of the city bank accounts.
3. Mayor Report - Mayor Mark Moore added that the sewer is going to cost \$1.8 with a 50,000 gallon capacity. We are still waiting for the permits to come through to build this expansion with an estimated time of December of this year. I am happy to report that phase three, with a direct discharge into Cornish Creek, we do have our waste load allocation, so that's the first process for phase three. The deep patching in Emerald Cove is complete and John Allman assures us that it will be paved while it is still warm enough. He has spoken with Georgia DOT about the speed limit on anything other than 81 or 138 inside the city limits be reduced to 35. He's also meeting DOT with the property owners on the roundabout. It has been approved and they are slated to start construction in the summer of 2024. We are looking into converting one of the tennis courts into pickleball. Also Walton County is working on a revised plan for the 220 acre park around Corn Dogs. The master plan is delayed and he's trying to get a concept plan. Once we get a concept plan of what that Town

Center looks like we'll invite everyone out and look at it. If you like it, then we will move forward with an engineering concept.

- XII. TOWN HALL DISCUSSION** - Someone commented that we are doing an awesome job with the Little League.
- XIII. COUNCIL COMMENTS** - All council members were glad for the turn out of citizens and for the comments.
- XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION** - None
- XV. A D J O U R N** - Council member Stephanie Moncrief made motion to adjourn. Council member Jon Dial seconded. Passed unanimously.