



**CITY OF WALNUT GROVE**  
**January 12, 2023 7:00 PM**  
**1021 PARK STREET MUNICIPAL BUILDING**  
**MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

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**Council Meeting Minutes**

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**ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

Mayor - Mark Moore  
**Council Members -**  
Linda Pilgrim  
Stephanie Moncrief  
Erica Miles

**STAFF PRESENT:**

City Clerk - Dawn Lummus  
City Attorney - Tony Powell  
Assistant Attorney - Jay Crowley  
Public Works - Brian Pilgrim

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Dana Seger, Kim Moore, Eric Taylor, David Johnson  
Amie & Chris Johnson

- I. CALL TO ORDER - Mayor Mark Moore**
- II. INVOCATION – Tony Powell**
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – All Participated**
- IV. ROLL CALL – Mayor Moore stated that everybody is here and announced the resignation of council member Jon Dial for personal reasons.**
- V. AGENDA APPROVAL - Mayor Moore stated that he has some amendments to the agenda. One is an executive session based upon land purchases and personnel. He said, "I'm also going to ask for these two, and we can talk about it and then if we decide not to take action we can so do, but under new business, add item 5. I'd like to add request for proposal of a master plan by planning and zoning that will be item 5. Item 6 will be the potential rezone of Forest Glen subdivision from R1 to R3. That will be item 6 under new business." The Mayor asked for a motion to approve the new agenda. Council member Linda Pilgrim made motion to approve amendments. There was not a second. The Mayor called for discussion. Council member Erica Miles stated that she wanted more discussion on the Forest Glen rezoning and the RFP and council member Stephanie Moncrief agreed. The Mayor removed items 5 & 6 from the amended agenda and only added the executive session. Council member Erica Miles made motion to approve amendment. Council member Linda Pilgrim seconded. Passed unanimously.  
Council member Pilgrim made motion to approve the agenda. Council member Miles seconded. Passed unanimously.**
- VI. CONSENT AGENDA - Council member Stephanie Moncrief made motion to approve. Council member Erica Miles seconded. Passed unanimously.**

**1. Minutes**

A. December 8, 2022, Council Meeting Minutes

**2. Financials**

**3. Invoices over \$5000**

A. Southern Sanitation

B. GMA – Workers Compensation Insurance

**VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Community Involvement Committee – Council member Linda Pilgrim reported they had their first meeting of the new year. The park market season will begin in May and run through October. There will be a movie in the park again as well as the tree lighting in November. They are planning in March to do an employee appreciation lunch.

DDA Report – Council member Erica Miles stated that they were excited about the new master plan. The members are talking about continuing education and maybe a land acquisition project soon.

Education Involvement Committee – Council member Stephanie Moncrief had nothing to add.

**VIII. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION** – Chairman Don Cannon was not in attendance.

**IX. LIBRARY REPORT** - Librarian Dana Seger commented that the one group missing out on the library is the teen population. So, starting in a couple of weeks the library will be holding Teen Lego Pizza nights and forming a team focus group to help with planning. There are some teen volunteers but there is only so much that they are allowed to do. The summer reading program is already being planned. All the programs at the library are 100% paid for by fundraising and grants. Due to all the growth in the county, there was a significant increase in the book budget. The library is serving some of Newton County and Loganville also. They love our library, so they are willing to travel. Also, there will be cleaning company coming in on Sundays to clean the library.

**X. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

David Johnson 876 Forrester Cemetery Rd - Mr. Johnson wanted to make the council aware that they were no longer seeking a special use permit to live on the property in their 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer. They are now seeking a hardship variant to the city ordinance. He plans to submit the paperwork next week to the planning and zoning committee.

Amie Johnson 804 Forrester Cemetery Rd – Ms. Johnson reminded the council that she and her husband Chris are neighbors of Mr. David

Johnson, and they were at the last month's meeting and where she was concerned with the dam on David Johnson's property. Ms. Johnson stated that last week the dam failed. She will be asking at the next planning and zoning meeting for no building permits to be issued for lots two and three, that the Highlands owns. Ms. Johnson handed photos to the council showing their lake and the dam. She also showed pictures of a ravine and sinkhole that were created by the dam, and it continues to get worse. The Mayor stated that her three minutes were up and that all she was doing was rehashing what was said last month. He said, "since you officially made this statement about the dam, then we're going to have to get back with our planning and zoning administrator and freeze all building permits until the lake is inspected by the Environmental Protection Agency, the lakes division. So, we're going to have to stop everything until that gets approved. Unfortunately, Mr. Johnson, that affects how fast we can move on your property as well."

Mr. David Johnson just wanted to clarify that they are not seeking a building permit at this point, only a hardship variance concerning the driveway issue.

## **XI. OLD BUSINESS - None**

## **XII. NEW BUSINESS**

- 1. Appointments - Reappointments for**  
City Clerk – Dawn Lummus, Deputy Clerk – Sonya Cox,  
City Attorney – Tony Powell, and Municipal Court Judge – Samuel M. Barth.  
Council member Linda Pilgrim made motion to approve the reappointments.  
Council member Erica Miles seconded. Passed unanimously.
  
- 2. Mayor Pro-Tem –** Council member Linda Pilgrim made a motion to nominate Erica Miles as mayor pro-tem. The Mayor asked for a second and there were none. Council member Stephanie Moncrief made a motion to nominate herself. Ms. Miles asked for a discussion. She stated that she does not feel comfortable taking the position. City Attorney Tony Powell explained the duties. After the discussion, the mayor stated there was a motion to elect Erica Miles as mayor pro-tem. There was no second, so he asked for another motion. Again, Ms. Moncrief nominated herself. Erica Miles seconded. Ms. Moncrief and Ms. Miles voted in favor. Council member Linda Pilgrim opposed.
  
- 3. Zoning Administrator -** Mayor Moore said, "I have sent out request for bids for zoning administrator and the only company that responded back with price is Bureau Veritas. One of the requirements for zoning administrator is to be at both council meetings and the planning and zoning meetings." He stated starting February 1<sup>st</sup> he would like Bureau Veritas to take over the duties as zoning administrator. City attorney Tony

Powell pointed out that depending on the dollar amount and because it is an ordinance position, he thinks it would require council approval. The mayor reported that Bureau Veritas is zoning administrator for 3 other cities. The cost per hour is \$125, there is a flat fee of \$450 to attend meetings and the hour rate will be charged if they come to a work session. The Mayor asked for a motion to approve Bureau Veritas as the zoning administrator. Council member Linda Pilgrim made the motion. There was no second. The asked if there was any discussion. Council member Moncrief asked about what the ordinance said about the pay and how many hours per week. The Mayor explained that the ordinance doesn't say anything about the pay and that the hours will just depend on the workload. It was also explained that the current zoning administrator is 2 hours, 4 hours round trip. He tries to do it with telecommunications but the networking he uses doesn't work well. Everything that is in the current zoning administrator hands, would switch the new administrator over the next 30 days. The Mayor has reached out to three or four other companies, and they would be happy to do the plan review but not the zoning administrator duties. Council member Stephanie Moncrief said, "I hesitate to, being presented with this tonight, act on it because one, we don't have a contract with information filled in. We've learned there are other companies who are available, and I know you've reached out and done your due diligence, but if we have new information that there are other companies, perhaps we can contact them, and get comparisons. So that we are truly doing what's in the best interest of the community. I understand the position that we're in as a city and that we need somebody, but I think it's important to make sure we cross our t's and dot our l's and find a couple of other people to see what their pricing is and what they offer." The Mayor replied, "the issue is that we need to do this, let's try them out for a 6-month period until we do due diligence on others. We need to make a change. Planning and zoning needs somebody to weed through this current re-zoning application. This is an amendment to the current agreement that hasn't been renewed. We do need to make a change because right now what we've got is not really working as smoothly as I like." Ms. Moncrief asked, "Do we no longer have the help of Joe? Has he said he is not helping anymore?" Mayor Moore said, "No he has not, but the fact is he can't make the meetings." Ms. Moncrief said, "Even on the phone, he can't do what he's been doing at those meeting. I'm just hesitant to just take action on this when this is first being presented and we have new information, and this is an expense and it may not be as much the engineering firm that we're using now, but I still think we need to do our due diligence and find some other companies who can offer this type of work also." Council member Linda Pilgrim commented that she thinks a change is needed. She said, "the city needs somebody that can be here to help, and not wait another month. I believe that we should go with Bureau Veritas as they are already working for the city, then if it does not work at, look elsewhere. One of the issues is we tend to get into analysis paralysis, and we kick things around. We talk and talk and talk and we never see any movement. We never see anything happen. So, I would just like to have somebody on board that

can be here at our meetings that can explain things to us because we don't know everything, and they are already doing code enforcement for us and our building inspections for us. I don't see a problem with them taking on our zoning administration." Ms. Moncrief stated she's not against bringing on someone who has an engineering degree. She commented this is just the first time it's been presented to us. The Mayor commented that is false as they have been talking about replacing Precision Planning and the duties for six months. He has done his due diligence looking for the best people for this position. Ms. Moncrief replied by stating this is the first time they have heard about Bureau Veritas and she does not agree with analysis paralysis. The Mayor called for a motion to approve Bureau Veritas as the zoning administrator. Linda Pilgrim approved the motion as stated. There was no second, motion died.

4. **Special Election** – The City Clerk Dawn Lummus explained the next special election would be held on June 20 and qualifying runs two months prior to that. Then the same party would have to qualify in August if they chose to run in the November election. She explained that Walton County handles the City's election. The cost for a special election would run about \$10,000. There was discussion about appointing someone or if the City is required to hold a special election. Per the charter, if it is within 6 months of the end of their term, someone can be appointed. If it is more than 6 months a special is held if it is convenient. The City Attorney suggested changing the charter to 18 months. The Mayor asked for a motion to table this item and move it to the February council meeting. Council member Erica Miles made the motion. Council member Linda Pilgrim seconded. Passed unanimously.

### **XIII. REPORTS**

1. **Public Works Report** - Public Works Director Brian Pilgrim reported all the Christmas decorations are down and have been put away. He was able to purchase new decorations for the Christmas tree at 50% off for next year. During bad weather days the guys have built bird houses for the park and city hall to replace the old ones. They also busted up the concrete at the roundabout in order to plant a Japanese maple tree there and the roundabout on Walnut Grove Parkway. Everything else is just maintenance and keeping trash picked up.
2. **Clerk's Report** - City Clerk Dawn Lummus stated that Municipal Court Clerk Sonya Cox reported there were 3 tickets from the Georgia State Patrol and 9 from Walton County. There was no court held in December due to the holidays, so the January calendar is larger than normal. She explained what is needed to become a Tree City and an Ethics City.

**3. Mayor's Report** - Mayor Mark Moore reported that Falcon Design is doing specifications for the Emerald Cove paving issue. Once that's done it will go out for bid. He hopes to have a spec sheet for what it is going to take to reface the front of the public works building and hope to get the bid out this month. The city has the Town Center final concept from Northeast Georgia Regional and hopes to present it next month to the public. The sewer plant is still in the permit process. With the help of North Georgia Regional Commission, the property annexations have been sent to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Georgia Annexations Department.

**XIV. TOWN HALL** – Amie Johnson commented that it was news to her that the planning and zoning along with the council signed off on these items. The mayor explained that all permits go to the zoning administrator for approval, If needed it goes to planning and zoning for their review, an ad for public hearing is run if it is needed, then if planning and zoning approves it then it goes to council. City Attorney Tony Powell explained filing a variance request. The Mayor cautioned about approving a variance because once you do one, then everybody gets the same variance. Ms. Johnson goes back to the subdivision of the property again. The Mayor explained that the property was zoned agricultural and the city did not know the intent of what the property owner was going to do with the property. He explained there are ordinances in place if they wanted to build on the lots. There was a discussion with the Highlands, and they said they have a plan for it.

**XV. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council member Erica Miles thanked everyone for coming out tonight.

Council member Linda Pilgrim had no comment.

Council member Stephanie Moncrief had no comment.

**XVI. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**1. Land Acquisition**

**2. Personnel/Legal Issues**

Council member Linda Pilgrim made motion to go into executive session. Council member Erica Miles seconded. Passed Unanimously.

**XVII. ADJOURN** – Council member Stephanie Moncrief made motion to adjourn.  
Council member Erica Miles seconded. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dawn Lummus,  
City Clerk

Approved,

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Mark Moore,  
Mayor