

Comments on Council Workshop - April 27, 2023

By Maxine McClanahan (just my take and my thoughts)

Once again the Mayor refused council changes to the agenda, except for the one requested by the attorney. He cited the ordinances as well as the fact he had to be out of there for a 1:00 meeting and hoped to get lunch in between. The two items requested were ongoing issues that, I believe, council expected to be there, the Emerald Cove paving and the Budget discussion. I know I expected them to come up again based on previous meetings.

As for the budget, the Mayor made it clear that he is making changes to what has already been presented to council and that they will get it at the same time it is presented at the Public Hearing. Sorry, folks, but I really think we have the cart before the horse again. The Mayor knows what he wants in the budget. He is not sharing this with council for discussion prior to a public hearing. It seems to me that council should review the "mayors" budget, have discussion about what they may feel needs changing and THEN present that revision to the public as the "Proposed Budget". At what point do WE THE PUBLIC get to see what is REALLY being proposed? Even council are in the dark at this point. How can they be expected to have questions at the next meeting without prior review?

A representative from NEGRC was present to present their modifications to the Walnut Grove Comprehensive Plan. (Downtown development ideas). As I attended online I could not see what was presented, but have requested a copy of the documents. It did sound as though they are now proposing even less green space and more buildings. When asked about parking for the additional people and retail venues, he stated that it could be underground and that there would be both angle and parallel parking with maybe some more in the middle of the block. He was still promoting the 3 to 5 story buildings. I hate that the people making the plans do not seem to be listening to "WE DON'T WANT TO HAVE LARGE BUILDINGS AND THOUSANDS MORE PEOPLE HERE."

There was discussion regarding how to proceed with the sewer system. There was some presentation and comments by Joe Walter, the zoning administrator and Chris Thomas who identified himself as a subcontractor who currently works for the city with the current sewage system. The discussion involved mostly MBBR (moving bed biofilm reactor) systems. Mr. Thomas promoted a company

by the name of Evoqua. There was a representative there from another company by the name of Aquatech, (Mr. Bartlett). Mr Barlett was a bit put off as he felt the dollar amount quoted regarding his system may not have been accurate. He wanted to compare apples to apples type of thing and yet no one had the breakdown of numbers. Bottom line numbers offered by Mr. Walter was that both companies would be at the same approximate price (over 2 million for both). In listening, it did sound like the Aquatech system might have more advantages, but it was hard to discern. Hoping to dig in a find out more. The only question I had was never even brought up. Do these PROPOSED new systems generate an odor? It sounds like they might. I am beginning to think we need to stop ANY sewer expansion... sell what we have available and move back to septic systems ... and if that means “no growth”, then “Oh well.” If that means people that have invested in property here hoping to make money have to shift, then so be it.

There was discussion on the Forest Glen area as to whether or not to change to an R-3 or keep it an R-2. The discussion included what happens with septic systems, square footage of homes, manufactured homes versus stick built or both, etc. Personally I like the idea of sticking with only stick built for replacement and lowering the square footage requirement to help accommodate lower priced homes.

Mayor still wants to implement an employee raise even before going through budget process. He says out employees are underpaid. Why the sudden hurry to put this in place? They are already looking at giving several thousand dollars toward employee benefits, including retirement that is “retroactive” for some the way I read it.

Downtown Development will need some members renewed and at least one replacement.