

## RECAP of COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING 3/30/2023

BY: Maxine McClanahan

I really gave thought as to what I wanted to share about the meeting today. I tried to just write up a synopsis and that did not seem to tell the story so I opted to just write it more like I would “tell it” if talking to someone.

First of all, the meeting did not start until 10:30 a.m. It was marked sometime around 6 pm the day before the meeting that there would be a 15 minute delay. I was told that Mayor and some of council were inside but the door was locked until about 10:30 a.m. Until that door was unlocked, Mayor and council were in violation of the Open Meetings Act. It is my understanding the Mayor was the only one there with the key. It was a 4 HOUR meeting.

**Agenda approval** – It did not go well. Based on the entire conversation this is what I got out of it. Both Councilwoman Miles and Councilwoman Moncrief had sent in items for the agenda which were not included. (Our ordinances (3-204-6.) state “ All items timely submitted by city officials and staff to be on the agenda shall be placed on the agenda, and no one shall prohibit such a timely request from appearing on the agenda ”). When there was an attempt to request a modification to the agenda the Mayor got snippety and refused to allow discussion until there was a motion (contrary to what he has done in the past). He then flexed his muscles quite a bit expressing that from now on the council were to follow Roberts Rules. He even suggested they should Read Roberts Rules. I guess though that later in the meeting he forgot that part as he did not follow them himself. After a motion was made and seconded, the request was made to amend the agenda to include the items that had been submitted before Friday. The Mayor then went on a rampage about how he was doing “good government” and we were going to follow the rules and the Charter says we need 3 council votes to modify an agenda. Councilwoman Moncrief asked him to cite the law for her to reference and he could not, nor could he or the attorney find it. They spent about 15 minutes trying to find that “law”. MUCH more discussion ensued and ultimately they moved on. They did ultimately modify the agenda as all 3 members of council agreed to the modification. For the record, I have read through both the Charter and the Ordinances and I find NOTHING that agreed with what the Mayor was saying, so he will have to cite me the law as well.

**Emerald Cove Paving** - There was a long discussion about what should be done to correct the problems with the paving job. Ultimately there will be another RFP (Request for a Price (or Bid)) put out to look at repaving the entire neighborhood (the correct way). The Mayor is pushing to have the “fix” for the paving be one that residents and at least part of council feel could potentially create many more serious and expensive problems in the future versus doing the right fix NOW. Some will ask why not go back on the company that did the paving if it were not done right. That is a much longer discussion but I will say, I place responsibility on the Mayor as much as anyone dropping the ball. When the paving was first discussed there was quite a long discussion with council which included making sure that the road edges were properly “feathered” or “mitered” or whatever was needed in order to not have the high edges or other issues. I was at that meeting so I remember well hearing that discussion. If I understand correctly the engineers actually put out the RFP, but the information was provided by the Mayor. All of council did not have the opportunity to give their input to the engineers. That means that the language needed in the RFP to provide protection to the city in this situation was not there. There was also no one representing the city to “supervise” the project, therefore the mitering did not get done leaving residents with very high road edges creating a hazard to both vehicles and pedestrians. Emerald Cove residents... it will take longer now, but perhaps it will get done the CORRECT way now. I am in agreement that even though it will be very costly now, it needs to be done RIGHT.

**Personnel benefits** – The Mayor requests to put an IRA in place for Employees and says they will be vested after 1 year. I will add it here though it was discussed during budget, but the Mayor also wants a 6% raise for all employees.

**Public Works Building Bid** . The bid to put the new front on the public works building (that 10 X 60 deck included) will likely go back out as none of the bids addressed the entire project. It sounded as though all 3 were pretty sloppily done. The lowest was by St. Ives. I heard the number \$59,000 but don't know if that was his bid or someone else's. I wish they would change the scope. Why not have two porch “stoops”, one for each door and save a dollar or two.

Regarding becoming a Tree City, Councilwoman Moncrief had done some research and found that we had been certified up until 2019 which was different than the Mayor had mentioned in an earlier meeting. I have since found

documentation that shows that the city was still a Tree City good in 2020.... So it seems to me that once again, the Mayor dropped the ball and did not renew in 2021 and evidently he did not remember doing this in 2020.

4. Arbor Day Proclamation

Mayor Mark Moore noted we were a little late with the proclamation reading this year.  
Mayor Mark Moore read the proclamation.  
Councilmember Linda Pilgrim approved. Councilmember Stephanie Moncrief seconded.  
Vote unanimous.

X. **CLERK'S REPORT**

We have opened City Hall to the public since Covid-19 pandemic with safety measures.

XI. **MAYOR'S REPORT**

To give everyone an update, the property owner located at 2949 Hwy. 81 was sent a certified letter in reference to the garbage and junk cars in the yard. They have 15 days to comply or risk receiving a citation. Also, the person running the car lot/salvage business in Papa John's parking lot has until June to vacate due to our city ordinance does not allow for this type of business in this location.

On a positive note, for Arbor Day, I am promoting planting a tree in June. On Walnut Grove Parkway, a group of children planted a weeping willow and unfortunately it died, so we would like to replace it. We have had several suggestions on what type of tree to plant, but

FROM MAY 14, 2020

XII. **DISCUSSION ITEM**

Kim Moore – does the Arbor Day recognition coincide with the Tree City Proclamation?  
Mavor answered yes.

There was discussion about applying to become an Ethics City once again. Personally I think it is hypocritical to even apply when it feels like we are so far from what it takes to be a registered Ethical City. I think this is another of those things that is being done because it is election year. If it had been important to Mayor Moore before now, it should have been kept up from the beginning. There was also discussion about how and when the city should have an ethics board. The Mayor kept expressing how it would make us “stand out”.

**Mayor and Council Stipend** – Councilwoman Moncrief brought this topic back up. I was glad to see it as I have been a proponent for a number of years. I brought it up last year during budget time as I thought it the very best time for implement the change with it being a non-election year. It is obvious that the Mayor nor Councilwoman Pilgrim want anything to do with this based on their statements. They feel that our employees are MORE important than council. I have to VEHEMENTLY disagree. While the employees are important so is EVERY CITIZEN. The council should be a representation of EVERY citizen, so to me saying that council is less important than the employee, you just showed your bias and designated

ME, the citizen, to have less importance than a city employee. That's about 1600 citizens to 5 employees. By having a strong council that fairly represents everyone, there is no doubt the employees will be covered as well and then it becomes a WIN WIN. That's what good council members do. By denying a fair pay to council you are also denying access to good council candidates. To ask our council to continue at \$100.00 monthly is outrageous. We have 100 more homes in place as well as much more for council to do in another arenas. They attend at least 2 mandatory meetings month, most try to attend Planning & Zoning and DDA Meetings as well as other events around the city. Several attend the County Commissioners and other meetings. There are events for leaders across the County they are expected to join. There is a ton of research and work that is required of a competent council person which means lots of time away from family and friends in order to serve the citizens. As councilwoman Moncrief pointed out, even in Between, GA they pay much more for their council and mayor. I believe it was \$500 a month for council and more than \$1000 month for Mayor. By having a bit more incentive that could encourage more people to step up and serve. The mayor stated "if you're doing it for the money, you don't even need to apply" or something to that effect. I was really offended by that statement. Even at a \$1000 a month it would not be for the money and Councilwoman Moncrief suggested \$300-\$500 for council and \$1000 for Mayor (MONTHLY). That is only about \$20,000 more for the next two years. The Mayor very quickly put about that amount in the budget for the employees. With new homes sold this year that should put quite a bit more than that in the budget with ease.

We have very smart reliable people in our town. It is possible that due to circumstance beyond their control, their budget is so tight that just the gas to get back and forth to the meetings could be a strain. By knowing there is enough stipend to help might encourage those people to step up and run for office. For me, it is more a matter of respect that we are fair with our leaders. As I said when I presented it last year, "whether I like you or don't, whether you are doing a good job in my eyes or not, you still deserve a reasonable stipend for your service to the city." Now with that being said, I suspect that the Mayor is also opposed as this is an election year and as he is up for re-election he wants to be able to say that he voted "no" on the raises (just like he did when he ran for Mayor in 2019). I have to tell you folks, I, MUCH MORE ADMIRE and have RESPECT for a council person that is willing to put this agenda item on the docket for consideration

especially when they also step up and tell you that this is an election year for them as well. Please support council in bringing us up to a respectable stipend for our leaders. . . and if you do...even if you don't like who is there, maybe by supporting them better you will have more choices. For general information, not everyone on council would get the raise this year. . . there will be 3 spots up for grabs so the Mayor and 2 council elected will see it and then in 2 years the other two spots will be increased accordingly. NOTE to the Mayor –Stipend - it is pronounced STY-PEND (It is a long I and does not include an R)

**Budget** –Mayor presented a proposed budget to council for review. He noted a few things \$65,000 balance transfer for Public Works Equipment. Mayor says they need a new trailer for hauling equipment, \$14,000 for retirement plan for the employees, a 6% pay increase for employees. He putting up \$70,000 for the Library this eyar (yes, he is finally agreeing to the \$70,000 that some of us have been fighting to see happen .. This...just as I predicted... after all, it's election year.) He indicated this is based on using a roll back rate for taxes.

The Mayor stated his personal county taxes had gone up \$1500.00 which I would like to see. This figure seems totally inaccurate. As the county “freezes” your “net taxable” value on your residence only the tax rate affects how much change you experience. I just don't see this as a realistic change for a home in Magnolia Springs being affected to that degree (if still the same owner). If I am right, why would you embellish?

**Forest Glen Rezone** – still moving forward at this time to change from an R-2 to an R-3. Discussion was around what parameters would be appropriate to include or exclude because the lot sizes are mostly around 1/3 of an acre.

**Steering Committee (a panel to help plan the downtown)** - DDA voted and are putting Sarah Tuchscherer in as their representative for the committee. Council discussed how they will put forth their representatives. I put my name in the hat for this committee when I first heard about it, but no one has even answered my email.

**Dial Farm Amenities** - There was a discussion about the fact that the residents there do not yet have amenities in place even though the original PUD required that those be in place prior to the 31st home being built. I personally cannot tell you why this did not happen, but in listening to the conversation, it sounds as though the Mayor made arrangements with the developer and allowed for him to continue building by putting up a bond. There are now about 100 homes in place with still no amenities. Councilwoman Moncrief was asking for anything at Dial Farm, including the Commercial portion be on hold until there is more discussion about working out the amenities. Not sure what will happen here, but seems to me like the council needs to put the entire project "on hold" and not approve any plans until care is given to the residents and they "get what they paid for".

All government, of right, originates with the people, is founded upon their will only, and is instituted solely for the good of the whole. Public officers are the trustees and servants of the people and are at all times amenable to them.<sup>1</sup>