

MINUTES

DECATUR CITY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting
January 20, 2009
City Hall: 7:30 p.m.

Mayor Floyd called the Regular Meeting of the Decatur City Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 20, 2009.

PRESENT: Mayor Floyd, Mayor pro tem Baskett, Commissioners Boykin and Kemp; and, City Manager Merriss.

ABSENT: Commissioner Cunningham

MINUTES of the Organizational Meeting of January 5, 2009 were approved on a motion by Commissioner Kemp, second by Commissioner Boykin, and Mayor Floyd and Commissioners Boykin and Kemp voting “aye”¹.

PRESENTATION OF THE JUNE 30, 2008 AUDIT REPORT.

Assistant City Manager Andrea Arnold introduced Adam Fraley of Mauldin & Jenkins Certified Public Accountants, LLC and stated that this was Mauldin & Jenkins seventh year as the City’s auditing firm.

Mr. Fraley stated that the City had been issued a clean, unqualified opinion and that the finances of the City as a whole looked strong. Mr. Fraley noted that no new standards or regulations from a governmental accounting perspective had changed since the 2007 audit.

Ms. Arnold provided the City Commission with a copy of a memo to City Manager Merriss that outlined the City’s response to the audit findings. Ms. Arnold stated that the City’s comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR) would be posted on the City’s website.

In response to a question from Mayor pro tem Baskett, Ms. Arnold stated that the one material weakness was due to limitations in the municipal court software accounting system provided by the State of Georgia. Ms. Arnold stated that the City was attempting to locate private software that would prevent the finding but had been unsuccessful in finding a system that would work. Ms. Arnold noted that the unaccounted for balance had been significantly reduced from prior years but that it was possible that this finding would reoccur.

City Manager Merriss stated that last year’s CAFR had received an award from the Government Finance Officers Association and the 2008 CAFR would be submitted again this year in hopes of receiving the award for a sixth time.

City Manager Merriss stated that revenues exceeded expenditures as of June 30, 2008 and that \$925,000 was contributed to fund balance. City Manager Merriss reiterated that the City was in an excellent financial position and that the Solid Waste Fund was slowly reducing their negative retained earning position.

¹ Mayor pro tem abstained from voting due to his absence on January 5, 2009.

In response to a question from Mayor pro tem Baskett, City Manager Merriss stated that due to the City's fiscal capacity the absorption of the Homestead Tax Relief Grant (HRTG) was something that City Commission could consider should the HRTG not be funded by the state.

In response to a question from Commissioner Boykin, City Manager Merriss stated that the savings in the Police Department in the prior year were reflective of the vacancies in police officer positions and that she did not expect that the lower expenditures would continue indefinitely.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS.

The following people spoke in opposition to annexation: Frank Miller, 461 Landover Drive; Duane Weiskircher, 2370 Greylock Place; Jennifer Bowman, 2476 Medlock Commons; Doug Beebe, 2454 Vivian Circle; and Margaret Shaw, 371 Poplar Lane Way.

Paul Lorentzen, 1123 Clairemont Avenue, spoke in favor of annexation.

The following people spoke in opposition to the resident only parking in the 400 block of Sycamore Street: Beverly Herbert, 420 Sycamore Street; Valerie Maier, 510 Sycamore Street; Shirley Trussell, 5 Sycamore Square; and Bill Mayer, 428 Sycamore Street.

Walter Winn, 14 Sycamore Square spoke in favor of the resident only parking designation.

There were no further comments from the public.

ANNEXATION REPORT.

City Manager Merriss recommended that the City Commission defer consideration of a large-scale annexation plan for the next twenty-four months and revisit the issue in 2011. City Manager Merriss stated that the City Commission had always indicated that annexation would have to support community interests including retaining a high quality of life, maintaining the small city "feel" and providing a superior school system. City Manager Merriss stated that given the City Commission's interest and commitments, delaying consideration of options was recommended for a number of reasons including current economic conditions that made the likelihood of redevelopment of adjacent gateways minimal, the incorporation of Dunwoody and its potential impacts on the tax digest for DeKalb County, better data due to the 2010 census, and the issues currently being faced by the City Schools of Decatur.

City Manager Merriss noted that deferral of substantial annexation until 2011 did not prohibit any annexation opportunities within the next two years that addressed and supported strategic objectives including increasing the property tax base, managing long-term redevelopment of properties adjacent to the existing city limits or reducing the unincorporated area between the City of Decatur and the City of Avondale Estates. City Manager Merriss stated that the City Commission should not accept single or small lot annexation applications that are placed in mid-block areas of adjacent streets that do not support the City's interest in clarifying the city limits.

Mayor pro tem Baskett concurred with City Manager Merriss' recommendation in favor of obtaining better data.

Commissioner Kemp stated that she was not surprised that in the process neighborhoods were brought closer together but that budget and financing difficulties in the County would likely have an impact on the tax rate in unincorporated DeKalb County.

Commissioner Boykin concurred with City Manager Merriss' recommendation.

Mayor pro tem Baskett noted that communication errors had been made during the process but as the City Commission was merely exploring options and there had not seemed to be a reason to notify residents in potential annexation areas until the potential became more of a reality.

Mayor Floyd stated that the main reason to be either for or against annexation was financial. Mayor Floyd stated that now was not the time to consider large scale annexation.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Baskett, second by Commissioner Kemp, and all present voting "aye", the recommendation was accepted.

AMENDMENT TO RESIDENT ONLY PARKING ORDINANCE.

City Manager Merriss stated that the City received a request from Walter Winn, 14 Sycamore Square, to change the parking restrictions of the north side of the 400 block of Sycamore Street between Commerce Drive and Hillyer Place from two hour parking to resident only parking. City Manager Merriss stated that Deputy Chief Lee had reviewed the request and had indicated that it was possible to change the restrictions.

City Manager Merriss stated that every property owner in the 400 block had been sent a letter regarding the request and with the exception of Mr. Winn, all of the feedback indicated opposition to the requested change. City Manager Merriss noted that it was the City Commission's practice to approve a request for "Resident Only" designation when a majority of the residents indicated their support and that it did not appear that the request had widespread support among the neighbors.

Due to a lack of a motion, the existing ordinance was not amended.

DESIGN SERVICES FOR DECATUR CEMETERY IMPROVEMENTS.

Deputy City Manager Hugh Saxon recommended approval of an agreement with the design team of Edward L. Daugherty Landscape Architects, Alexander Engineering and Register-Nelson Environmental Consultants for design services for the Decatur Cemetery in an amount not to exceed \$140,000. Mr. Saxon stated that the work will include preparation of construction documents to implement the Cemetery Master Plan approved by the City Commission in September, 2008.

In response to a question from Commissioner Kemp, Mr. Saxon stated that design should take four to six months and that construction could begin in ten to twelve months.

In response to a question from Commissioner Boykin, Mr. Saxon stated that the City had acquired the property on Bell Street for the improved entrance.

On a motion by Commissioner Kemp, second by Mayor pro tem Baskett, and all present voting "aye", the City Commission authorized the City Manager to execute an agreement for design services for the Decatur Cemetery.

REQUESTS AND PETITIONS

City Manager Merriss stated that the City had received a request for installation of new street lighting at 214 Madison Avenue. City Manager Merriss stated that after an inspection by the City's Engineering Department and Georgia Power it was recommended that one new streetlight be installed on existing utility poles.

On a motion by Commissioner Kemp, second by Commissioner Boykin, and all present voting "aye", the City Commission approved the street light installation at 214 Madison Avenue.

REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS

City Manager Merriss stated that Preservation Planner Regina Brewer was applying for a 2009 Georgia Certified Local Government Grant for \$6,000 to hire a consultant to prepare the nomination to place Decatur's downtown on the register of National Historic Districts. City Manager Merriss stated that Ms. Brewer spoke about this project at the January 5, 2009 City Commission meeting.

In response to a question from Commissioner Kemp, City Manager Merriss stated that if the grant was received and if adoption of the district was desirable, then Ms. Brewer would educate property owners about the benefits of being registered as a National Historic District.

On a motion by Commissioner Kemp, second by Commissioner Boykin, and all present voting "aye", a grant application to develop a National Historic District designation for the central business district was authorized.

Assistant City Manager Lyn Menne stated that the Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Day project was a huge success with 1,040 volunteers working for three days. Ms. Menne stated that work was done on 13 homes and that yard work was done for an additional 17 homes. Ms. Menne thanked Patrick Grier and Paul Wells for serving as house captains for the City sponsored house and thanked the 30 city employees who worked. Ms. Menne congratulated Volunteer Coordinator Lee Ann Harvey and the Decatur Preservation Association for spearheading the event.

Mayor Floyd read the Planning Commission agenda for February 5, 2009.

City Manager Merriss stated that the February 2, 2009 work session would be devoted to discussing a Mixed Use zoning district for the Avondale LCI area and a discussion of interim amendments to the zoning ordinance to address transitional buffer requirements for areas where commercial properties were adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

City Manager Merriss stated that the City had a positive experience gathering input on the annexation issue through the Open City Hall project. City Manager Merriss noted that the annexation question would be removed from the Open City Hall site and would be replaced with questions regarding transportation and development.

Commissioner Boykin stated that DeKalb County CEO Burrell Ellis would be speaking at the January meeting of the DeKalb Municipal Association on January 29, 2009.

Mayor pro tem Baskett thanked the City Commission for re-electing him as mayor pro tem for another year.

Mayor pro tem Baskett commended Ms. Harvey and all of the volunteers for a job well done.

Mayor pro tem Baskett thanked City staff for presenting the four work sessions on sustainability.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Peggy Merriss
Acting City Clerk