



**CITY OF DAHLONEGA
WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
JULY 20, 2017, 4:00 P.M.**

The Dahlonega City Council met Thursday, July 20, at 4:00 p.m. for a Work Session.

Council Members Michael Clemons, Roman Gaddis, Sam Norton, Mitchell Ridley and Mayor Pro Tempore Bruce Hoffman were present. Mayor Gary McCullough and Council Member Larson were absent.

Staff present were City Manager Bill Schmid, City Attorney Doug Parks, Finance Director Melody Marlowe, Public Works Director Mark Buchanan and City Clerk Kimberly Smith.

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No minutes were presented for review.

City Manager's Budget Presentation

City Manager Schmid gave the presentation of the proposed budget for FY 2018. Schmid said the draft of the budget was included in the agenda packet with an executive summary. Mr. Schmid said there are no proposed increases for property tax or solid waste; water and sewer tap fees are proposed to remain as they have been since 2011 and there is a 4% increase proposed for water and sewer rates consistent with the rate study.

City Manager Schmid said the largest item impacting expenses for FY 2018 is an anticipated 25% increase in health insurance premiums if the City remains with the current carrier which will impact all departments and funds. There is a Request for Proposals soon to be issued for an independent benefits broker to aid the City in evaluation of overall benefits including health insurance options. Savings are anticipated, but are currently not known.

City Manager Schmid reviewed the following portions of the FY 2018 proposed budget: General Government, Hotel/Motel Tax, Water and Sewer, Solid Waste Downtown Development Authority and Five Year Capital Improvement Program.

City Manager Schmid said the budget was developed and reviewed at two lengthy meetings of the Budget Committee which includes Finance Director Marlow, Council Member Larson, Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman and himself.

Council Member Clemons said he saw no problem with the budget as presented, it is explained very well and more readable than past budgets.

Council Member Gaddis asked if all SPLOST funds have been transferred as it should be.

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City Manager Schmid replied that it will be as SPLOST is received. The City borrowed from Water Sewer Fund reserves to renovate the Waste Water Treatment Facility rather than seeking financing, and will paying SPLOST Proceeds to the Water and Sewer Fund as they are received.

There was discussion regarding the 4% increase in water and sewer rates being the last of three increases chosen as the preferred option upon two years ago instead of a 17% increase. It is consistent with the rate study.

Council Member Norton stated that the increases in water and sewer rates were implemented to keep the General Fund from subsidizing the Water and Sewer Fund.

City Manager Schmid said the General Fund subsidized the Water Sewer Fund by approximately \$390,000.00 per year in administrative costs.

City Manager Schmid said the Capital Improvement Program is a fairly new facet to the budget and is not merely a wish list of what is wanted. All items included in the Capital Improvement Program are necessary and assigned over the five year period in the year they are most likely to occur.

Mayor Pro Tempore asked if the City has received the property tax digest. Finance Director Marlow replied that is was received Tuesday, July 18, 2017. The amount of real growth is negligible at .7%. Most of the growth in the digest is due to reassessments. The Taxpayer Bill of Rights will require a millage rate roll-back due to the growth in the digest.

Council Member Norton asked what comprised the 26% increase in the Downtown Development Authority portion of the proposed budget. Finance Director Marlowe said the increase is mainly personal services and a \$10,000.00 capital purchase of parking software.

City Manager Schmid said, when the City Marshall position is filled the Ambassadors and Code Enforcement positions will be under the direction of the City Marshall and will be moved to that department.

Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman asked when the next budget hearing will occur. Finance Director Marlowe replied, at the Regular Meeting August 7, 2017 and at a Special Called Meeting August 17, 2017 after the Work Session.

Council member Norton said this is a really good clean budget.

Jeremy and Penny Sharp of Dahlonega Walking Tours– use of Mount Hope Cemetery

Penny Sharp said she sent a packet of information containing the business license, state sales tax certificate, a letter from Sheriff Jarrard in advance and brought a copy of her business insurance with her.

Jeremy Sharp said they are in attendance to seek official permission to be in Mouth Hope Cemetery after 9:00 p.m. with their walking tours. Mr. Sharpe gave a detailed history of the cemetery.

Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman asked the Council if they have any questions.

Council Member Ridley asked if the walking tour remains on the roads in the cemetery. Jeremy Sharp said for the most part they do, however, they do venture into the cemetery to visit the headstone of Confederate Officer William Pierce Price.

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Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman asked how long the walking tour is in the cemetery. Mr. Sharp replied from 9:15 p.m. to 9:30, or a little later depending on the number of questions asked.

Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman said that the cemetery closing time was put into place to curtail vandalism and illegal activities and to promote safety.

City Manager Schmid said Ordinance 2015-8 Section 2: Exceptions, states business or individual seeking an exception from this ordinance may do so by seeking approval from the City Council. There is the necessity the business to be insured with the City named as an additional payee.

City Attorney Parks said that an active cemetery is more liable than a historic, non-active cemetery. Mount Hope Cemetery falls somewhere between the two and should be treated as an active cemetery due to liability issues. The liability would be the same as for any other business.

Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman asked if anyone else wanted to comment regarding Mount Hope Cemetery.

Tim Ragland, Commander of Camp 1860 Blue Ridge Rifles Sons of Confederate Veterans said we sit here in this town with one of the most valuable historical cemeteries. There are 69 Confederate Veterans buried in Mount Hope and we strive to preserve, protect and honor those graves. The City Council needs to consider keeping the cemetery closed after 9:00 p.m. There are markers that are now in pieces that have been damaged over the last three years.

Mr. Ragland said the Sharp's business is not of his interest. His interest is in preserving the history of the cemetery. Mr. Ragland asked the Council to please close the cemetery at dusk daily.

Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman said there is fence work needed on the University side of the cemetery because there are safety concerns for both the City and University. The City is going to employ a City Marshall soon who will patrol the cemetery along with University Police.

Terry Grizzle, Historian for the Sons of Confederacy said when tours of cemeteries are given in other towns such as those in New Orleans, the tour is in the daytime and is directed by a city employee or someone trained by the city. This ensures that the history told is accurate and what the city desires. Mr. Grizzle said he has concern with some inaccuracies in the history being told.

Council Member Gaddis suggested that Dahlongega Walking Tours invite the Sons of Confederacy members to go on a tour, at no cost. The members could most likely be able to add to the history currently being relayed on the tour.

Council Member Ridley said he researched and found an email he sent at the time the ordinance was being developed questioning if Dahlongega Walking Tours was still in business and if so if notice of the ordinance change was provided to them. He could find no evidence that notice was sent to Dahlongega Walking Tours, but recalled them being given permission to use the cemetery in 2014.

Council Member Ridley suggested that the city develop a business fee for use of the cemetery, insurance requirements naming the city as an additional payee and a time limit for everyone to be out of the cemetery.

Council Member Norton said a fee would not be unreasonable to run a business on someone else's property.

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Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman directed staff to prepare recommendation for a business fee, insurance requirements and a time limit that the tour must exit the cemetery, to present to Council for approval at the Council Meeting August 7, 2017.

Council Member Norton said he felt the Council still needed to touch on the issues of liability created such as when students use the cemetery as a short cut.

City Attorney Parks said this has been brought forth in the past and there is valid concern for liability.

Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman said the university should have interest in security as well because of the blind side of the cemetery backing up to student housing being used as a cut through.

Council Member Gaddis said the security issues need to be buttoned up soon because in nine months the Convocation Center will be finished and there will be many events going on there.

Council Member Norton said it appears that the university is using the back gates of Mount Hope Cemetery as a service entrance.

Council Member Clemons expressed his concern for safety issues once the Convocation Center is completed and now because students cutting through the cemetery at night could be at risk of getting hurt.

Mr. Ragland asked if the City does allow Mount Hope Cemetery to be used for the walking tours after 9:00 p.m., who would be responsible for closing the gates.

City Manager Schmid replied the gates currently remain open at all times.

Chad Wimpy of Gold City Growlers – Discussion of Ordinance Governing Growler Stores

Mr. Wimpy thanked the Council for hearing his request for changes to the Alcohol Ordinance section governing Growlers.

Mr. Wimpy requested the following changes to Ordinance 2016-12, Article IX, Growlers:

1. To be able to charge for the 4 samples currently given away for free.
2. Increasing the size of the tastes from 2 to 4 ounces.
3. Allowance to pour a pint twice a month for special events.

Mr. Wimpy said these changes would put his store in competition with the closest competitors in Gainesville and the changes he has proposed are in the City of Gainesville's ordinance regulating Growler Stores.

Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman asked for explanation of the request to allow a pour of a pint twice per month.

Mr. Wimpy said this change would allow special events where breweries could come to his store and do what is termed as a tap take over which is a promotional activity for the brewery. The brewery would be allowed to pour one pint per customer per event.

Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman asked if a customer would be able to purchase a pint and a tasting, because if the tasting is increased to four ounces one customer could consume 32 ounces of beer.

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Mr. Wimpy replied that the customers would have a choice of a flight of four ounce tastings that totals 16 ounces or one pint, not both.

Mayor Pro Tempore Hoffman asked why the request is being made to increase the tasting size to four ounces. Mr. Wimpy replied, this would allow couple to purchase one flight of four tastes and share them.

City Manager Schmid said he met with Mr. Wimpy regarding the three requested ordinance changes. He would prefer to allow one change at a time and see how it goes rather than allowing all three changes at once. Staff has not done an independent study of other jurisdictions with Growler stores. At this time he is in support of the first request only and less so for 2. And 3.

Council Member Gaddis said he is supportive of the first and third request, because allowing tap take overs by breweries would bring people to town

Council Member Clemons said he agrees with Council Member Gaddis as long as the third request allows only the purchase of a pint or a flight of tastings and not both.

Council Member Ridley said he is in agreement with allowing the first and third requested change to the ordinance.

City Manager Schmid said staff will develop recommended amendments to Ordinance 2016-12 based upon discussion and preference of council and present at the Council Meeting August 7, 2017.

City Manager Schmid said Mayor McCullough is doing well, is in good spirits and appreciates all of the visits, calls, thoughts and prayers.

Council Member reported on a meeting with Lumpkin County Emergency Management regarding emergency notification during a major emergency event or catastrophe. The meeting was very informative with discussion of cooperation and communication between agencies. The first item of priority the City needs to consider is purchase of two handheld radios to be used for communication in the event cellular service goes out during an emergency situation.

Council Member Gaddis asked who was represented at the meeting. Council member Norton replied, Lumpkin County Schools, City of Dahlonega, Lumpkin County, Chelsea Park and GEMA. The meeting was well attended ad showed that systems are in place in the 911 center.

The meeting stood adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Smith
City Clerk