



**CITY OF DAHLONEGA
WORK SESSION
OCTOBER 19, 2017, 4:00 P.M.
MINUTES**

The Dahlonega City Council met Thursday, October 19, 2017 in the Council Chambers in City Hall at 4:00 p.m. for a Work Session.

Council Members Roman Gaddis, Bruce Hoffman, Ron Larson, Mitchell Ridley and Mayor Gary McCullough were present.

City Manager Bill Schmid, City Attorney Doug Parks, Finance Director Melody Marlowe and City Clerk Kimberly Smith were present. Downtown Development Authority Executive Director Jan Harris was present.

Discussion of Bid Award for Sidewalk Construction Project on Wimpy Mill Road Off System Safety Project #2017-003

City Manager Schmid reported the bids were received yesterday and are still being evaluated. The intent is to seek another OSS grant next year from Georgia Department of Transportation for the other side of Wimpy Mill Road from the reservoir to Golden Hills with the sidewalk attaching to the bridge, if the bridge can support the load. This may have to be done in phases

Discussion of Potential Outdoor Dining Options

City Manager Schmid said the City has an ordinance for outdoor dining not outdoor alcohol.

Mayor McCullough said he does not think we need to allow customers to take alcohol out of establishments.

Council Member Hoffman asked which establishments were requesting outdoor alcohol sales. Council Member Ridley replied Gustavo's and Capers.

Council Member Ridley said he feels outdoor dining enhances the town and we need to look at how we can foster businesses. All establishments do not have or cannot have a porch or deck.

Council Member Ridley explained the concept of parklets which take up two parking spaces and can be moved.

Council Member Larson said he agrees with Council Member Ridley's thoughts but would like to know what the current ordinance allows. City Manager Schmid replied it allows alcohol in outside areas that are enclosed, and the patrons must enter and exit the enclosed outdoor area through the inside of the establishment.

Council Member Ridley said fencing or railing the outside dining areas could obstruct the area and cause ADA compliance issues. The tables could be put out in the morning and taken in at night.

Council Member Gaddis said Council needs to also consider the prohibition placed on outside or sidewalk sale of merchandise several years ago.

City Attorney Parks said sidewalk sale of alcohol is currently prohibited, but sidewalk dining is permissible if ADA requirements can be followed.

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Council Member Gaddis said both parklets and sidewalk alcohol sales need to be given some consideration.

Council Member Hoffman asked what the next step will be and that he would like to see diagrams of exactly where tables and chairs would be located.

Council Member Larson asked for research on what other jurisdictions allow.

Discussion of Changes to Zoning Ordinance to Allow Nightly Rentals in R-1 Zoning

Council Member Ridley said he asked for discussion on this topic because of the companies like Air B & B that are offering vacation rentals of properties in Dahlonega. The previous discussion was to allow nightly rentals in R-1 zoning in an area up to two blocks off the Square. Council member Ridley suggested possibly allowing overnight rentals in all residential zoning.

Council Member Ridley said if nightly rentals were permitted in residential zonings the property owners would be more likely to keep their properties maintained and looking good and the City could collect lodging tax from the rentals.

Council Member Larson said there are currently people with properties in Dahlonega that rent them on sites like Air B & B and they should be set up so lodging tax is collected and remitted to the city.

Helen Fincher Hardman asked to be recognized from the audience. Ms. Hardman said that Tourism Leaders have been talking to legislators for three years about the issue of web hosted nightly rental businesses not collecting and remitting lodging tax to the jurisdictions that the rental properties are located.

City Manager Schmid said this was discussed a couple of months ago and at that time discussion was to restrict nightly rentals in or near downtown.

Mr. Schmid recommended looking at three layover maps that will show an area in and around the square, an area larger than that and the entire city.

City Attorney Parks said there is a class action suit currently being put together to compel web based nightly rental agencies to collect and remit lodging tax.

Discussion of Intergovernmental Agreement with Lumpkin County Board of Commissioners for Fueling Station

City Manager Schmid said the intergovernmental agreement is included in the packet and staff recommends approval.

Employee Benefits and Insurance Renewals for 2018

Finance Director Marlowe explained details of current group dental, vision and life insurance offered to eligible City employees. Rates did not change for dental, vision or life insurances for 2018. The health insurance through G.M.A. increased by 25% for 2018 due to claims experience. Staff has determined that the increase in health insurance is unaffordable for both the city and employees.

Ms. Marlowe said she reached out to Matt Bidwell of M.S.I. who has done insurance work for the city in the past. Mr. Bidwell obtained health insurance quotes from the private sector which resulted in coverage that is much lower than what is offered now. Mr. Bidwell then spoke to G.M.A. on the City's behalf to negotiate a lower rate. G.M.A. responded to the negotiation with a 20% increase over current year.

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Ms. Marlowe said staff still felt that this increase was too high for both the City and employees. At this point other coverage options were explored with GMA. The options staff is requesting approval to offer are two different Point of Service plans that have comparable benefits to the current plans with a few changes.

Ms. Marlowe reviewed reports with Mayor and Council that detail coverage levels and costs for health insurance for 2016, 2017 and proposed for 2018; differences in current coverage provided by the HMO and PPO plans compared to the two levels of POS plans being recommended for 2018; along with comparisons of what other similar sized governments offer.

Ms. Marlowe detailed the changes and benefits of the proposed POS plans such as out of pocket expense being lower while there will now be a deductible on the basic plan and a higher deductible on the premium plan.

Ms. Marlowe said staff is proposing a four tier pricing for the plans which are employee only, employee plus spouse, employee plus children and family coverage. The city will continue to cover 93.5% of the cost for employee coverage and will cover 90% of the cost of dependent coverage.

Council Member Larson said he and Council Member Hoffman spent over an hour with the Finance Director and City Manager reviewing the options being presented. The work that was done to come up with the options proposed is commendable.

Council Member Larson said it was very important to show what other governments pay towards employee and dependent coverage.

Mayor McCullough called for a motion to suspend the work session for the purpose of going into a special called meeting with Lumpkin County Board of Commissioners.

Motion by Council Member Gaddis and seconded by Council Member Larson. Mayor McCullough called for a vote of those in favor to signify so by saying aye, like sign for those opposed. The motion carried with a unanimous vote in favor. The work session was suspended at 4:39 p.m.

Council Member Gaddis made a motion to resume the work session at 4:49 p.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Ridley and approved with a unanimous vote in favor.

Banking Services Contract Renewal

Finance Director Marlow said the city is satisfied with the services received from United Community Bank.

Ms. Marlowe informed Mayor and Council that staff will be requesting renewal of the banking services contract with United Community Bank for one year at the current interest rates.

Owens Farm Lift Station

City Manager Schmid said he had anticipated a recommendation being ready, but is still waiting for information from the developer. Until such information is in hand we will not have a recommendation on this item.

Discussion of W.K. Dickson's preparation of Draft Total Maximum Daily Load Comments for State EPD

City Manager said he will be seeking approval at the special called meeting this same date for approval of a proposal submitted by W.K. Dickson for preparation of comments on Lake Lanier Total Maximum Daily Load. The proposal, if approved will not exceed \$5,000, is required for Waste Water Treatment Plant discharge permits and is a budgeted item.

Discussion of Relocation of Statues from County Administration Building to Square

Council Member Ridley said discussion regarding relocation of the statues is still underway.

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Discussion ensued regarding locations on the Square and near the Square that may be suitable for the statues.

Discussion of Changes to City Charter Regarding Election Requirements and Voting Quorum Requirements

City Attorney Parks said the charter amendments have already been mentioned to the Senator and Representative for this area. The legislators will draft language for the changes, not the city and hopefully this will be done early in the next legislative session.

Mayor McCullough suggested appointing a committee to review the entire charter to make see if other changes are necessary.

The work session adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Kimberly Smith