



CITY OF DAHLONEGA Council Meeting Minutes

January 02, 2024, 6:00 PM

Gary McCullough Chambers, Dahlonega City Hall

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, those requiring accommodation for Council meetings should notify the City Clerk's Office at least 24 hours prior to the meeting at 706-864-6133.

Vision – Dahlonega will be the most welcoming, thriving, and inspiring community in North Georgia

Mission Statement - Dahlonega, a City of Excellence, will provide quality services through ethical leadership and fiscal stability, in full partnership with the people who choose to live, work, and visit. Through this commitment, we respect and uphold our rural Appalachian setting to honor our thriving community of historical significance, academic excellence, and military renown.

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Ms. Csukas, the City Clerk, called the organizational meeting to order and introduced Judge Raymond George, Superior Court Judge of the Enotah Circuit, who will swear in the newly elected officials.

Judge Raymond George swore in Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Bagley, and Councilmember Brown.

The newly elected officials and Judge Raymond George signed the Oaths of Office.

Ms. Csukas turned the meeting over to Mayor Taylor.

Mayor Taylor thanked Judge Raymond George for coming.

PRESENT

Mayor JoAnne Taylor

Councilmember Roman Gaddis

Councilmember Johnny Ariemma

Councilmember Ryan Reagin

Councilmember Ross Shirley

Councilmember Lance Bagley

Mayor Taylor called to order the City Council Meeting of January 2nd, 2024, at 6:04 P.M. She thanked everyone for coming and wished everyone a happy new year. She welcomed the returning councilmembers back and congratulated newly elected Councilmember Brown.

PRAYER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

Councilmember Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilmember Gaddis led the prayer.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve the agenda.

Motion made by Councilmember Reagin to approve the agenda, Seconded by Councilmember Shirley.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Taylor turned the Public Hearing over to City Attorney Parks.

He stated that this was a public hearing and that there would be no vote. He asked Mr. J.R. Johnson to give his presentation.

a. Public Hearing Squaretail Request to Rezone, Doug Parks, City Attorney

Mr. Johnson presented his request to rezone to the Mayor and Council.

City Attorney Parks opened the floor to public comment concerning the proposed item.

Mr. Sylvester opposed this project based on the concern of Dahlongega's growth.

Ms. Booth spoke in opposition concerning the dangerous road, traffic, price, and renters. She also requested consideration of applying a rear setback. Mrs. Booth presented a document to the council.

Mr. Sherrill said he would like to share and make suggestions before approval. Mr. Sherrill went on to share information and his recommendations.

Ms. O'Gorman spoke in opposition to her concern for Alicia Lane's safety. She suggests doing more research before approving.

City Attorney Parks opened the floor to the City Council and Mayor for questions.

Councilmember Bagley asked if adding another entrance from Tipton Drive was possible. Mr. Johnson said this would be hard because of the hill's steep slope. Councilmember Bagley then asked about the prior development of Laurel Drive. Mr. Johnson noted that the Laurel Drive project was always intended for student housing.

Councilmember Shirley questioned if they have added homes since the original plan. Mr. Johnson stated that the original plan had a parking lot, but to keep a residential feel, they went with the driveways.

Councilmember Ariemma asked if Mr. Johnson thinks ten buildings are high density. Mr. Johnson stated that they are under the density that a B-2 allows. Councilmember Ariemma voiced his concern about traffic and the price of these units. He noted that housing seems more appealing than an office building. He asked Mr. Johnson to explain the setbacks. Mr. Johnson stated they are willing to design with as many setbacks as possible with the slopes and driveways. Councilmember Ariemma noted that there were a lot of safety concerns. He states that since this is the first time being presented to the council, it is hard to decide.

Mayor Taylor asked if the HOA would prohibit rental by the room. Mr. Johnson stated that there would be no room rentals.

Councilmember Gaddis asked when Mr. Johnson built the Laurel Drive housing. Mr. Johnson stated that it was around 2019. Councilmember Gaddis noted that he was glad he learned that because he remembers them being presented as single-family homes. Mr. Johnson said that the Planning Director did not present that project well.

Councilmember Reagin asked if the way the plans are shown is the best plan for driveways. Mr. Johnson stated that the slope is above what a commercial drive is allowed. He says they plan to put turnarounds at every unit so the residents will not have to return to the road.

Councilmember Bagley stated that they want to keep Dahlongega a walkable and livable city for people. He says that this is challenging terrain. He asked if they plan on putting up a sidewalk. Mr. Johnson stated that per code, they must put in a sidewalk. They will have a five-foot sidewalk connecting both sides of the property.

Councilmember Ariemma asked if they are flexible about the design layout and would be open to removing some townhomes to make more room. Mr. Johnson stated they have looked into multiple angles and want to build responsible housing. He says that these homes fit perfectly into the side of the mountain.

City Attorney Parks stated that the public hearing had adjourned.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

There is no Consent Agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT – AGENDA SPECIFIC / THREE MINUTE LIMIT

Mayor Taylor opened the floor to the public for comments.

Mr. Gordineer welcomed the new council members and wished everyone a happy new year. He states that both developments are very nice, but each would cause a lot of traffic.

Ms. Cole voiced her concern about the Pine Tree Way development. She states that this development would not be for locals and would cause a lot of traffic.

Mr. Allen expressed his concerns about the Pine Tree Way project. He said it would congest downtown Dahlonega and cause lots of traffic.

Ms. Dawsett voiced her concern about both projects. She stated that these projects will affect traffic and the small-town feel of Dahlonega.

Mr. Underwood spoke on behalf of the Mountain Top project.

Mayor Taylor thanked everyone who commented publicly and appreciated everyone's feedback.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- b. City of Dahlonega Work Session Minutes - November 20, 2023
Mary Csukas, City Clerk
 - c. City Council Special Called Meeting Minutes - November 20, 2023
Mary Csukas, City Clerk
 - d. City Council Special Called Work Session Minutes, 11/27/2023
Sarah Hunsinger, Assistant City Clerk
 - e. Joint Special Called Meeting - City Councilmembers - Board of Commissioners Minutes - December 4, 2023
Sarah Hunsinger, Assistant City Clerk
 - f. Council Meeting Minutes - December 4th, 2023
Sarah Hunsinger, Assistant City Clerk
 - g. City Council Public Hearing Meeting Minutes December 18th, 2023
Sarah Hunsinger, Assistant City Clerk
 - h. City Council Work Session Meeting Minutes December 18th, 2023
Sarah Hunsinger, Assistant City Clerk
- Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve minutes A-G.
Motion made by Councilmember Reagin to approve minutes A-G, Seconded by Councilmember Shirley.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

APPOINTMENT, PROCLAMATION & RECOGNITION:

Mayor Taylor stated that she is very grateful for the volunteers on commissions, authorities, and committees, as we would not be as vibrant of a community as we are without them. She says several appointments are to be made to different authorities, committees, and commissions. She asks the council to approve them individually.

1. Re-appointment to the Public Housing Authority, JoAnne Taylor, Mayor

Mayor Taylor called for a motion for re-appointment to the Public Housing Authority.

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis to approve Jan Tolbert to the Housing Authority, Seconded by Councilmember Bagley.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

Mayor Taylor announced that the Housing Authority would swear in Ms. Tolbert and thanked her for volunteering.

2. Appointment to Downtown Development Authority, JoAnne Taylor, Mayor,

Mayor Taylor called for a motion of appointment to the Downtown Development Authority.

Motion made by Councilmember Bagley to approve Melanie Dunlap and Zach Payne to the Downtown Development Authority, Seconded by Councilmember Gaddis.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

3. Appointment to Cemetery Committee, JoAnne Taylor, Mayor

Mayor Taylor called for a motion of appointment to the Cemetery Committee.

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis to approve Rick Harriss to the Cemetery Committee, Seconded by Councilmember Ariemma.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

4. Appointments to the Planning Commission, JoAnne Taylor, Mayor

Mayor Taylor called for a motion of appointment to the Planning Commission.

Motion made by Councilmember Reagin to approve James Guy and Noah Steinberg to the Planning Commission, Seconded by Councilmember Shirley.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

Mayor Taylor asked each member to read and sign their Oath of Office, then congratulated and thanked the new members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Announcements.

CITY REPORTS:

5. Financial Report - November 2023, Allison Martin, City Manager

City Manager Martin reviewed the November 2023 financial report with the Mayor and Council. She informed them that the percentages were incorrect due to a programming error in the system.

Councilmember Gaddis asked if they could get more specific information on Hotel/Motel stays.

Councilmember Shirley asked about the insurance premium tax.

Councilmember Ariemma stated that the City is doing a great job with its finances.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to accept the November 2023 financial report.

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis to accept the November 2023 financial report, Seconded by Councilmember Reagin.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

6. Request to Rezone – (062A 075), Doug Parks, City Attorney,

Mayor Taylor asked City Attorney Parks to inform the Council and Mayor of this rezoning request.

City Attorney Parks stated that this is a request for Squaretail, LLC to amend the zoning map of the City of Dahlongega by changing the zoning on a parcel of land owned by Steven H. Fuller Jr. and William T. Hardman Jr., Executor of Bill T. Hardman. The request is to change the 3.81+/- acres located at Alicia Lane from B-2 Highway Business District to R-3 multi-family or to remove the existing conditions for B-2 and remain in the B-2 category.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve the rezoning request.

Councilmember Gaddis motioned to table this item to a Special Called Meeting on the day of the Work Session, Seconded by Councilmember Brown.

Councilmember Ariemma agreed with Councilmember Gaddis. He suggested giving the council more time to review this development and hear from the public.

Councilmember Gaddis apologized for not having a vote today but wants the council to have more time to review.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

Mayor Taylor stated that this item will be moved to a Special Called meeting at the next Work Session on January 16th, 2024.

7. Request to Amend a Previously approved PUD – (079-054 & 079-074)), Doug Parks, City Attorney

Mayor Taylor asked City Attorney Parks to inform the Council and Mayor of this rezoning request.

City Attorney Parks stated that this is a request for Mountain Top Real Estate Group, LLC, to amend a previously approved PUD on land owned by Don Michael Cottrell. The request is to amend a previously approved 62.77-acre property on Pinetree Way. This request aims to construct a mixed-use development to include townhomes and 10,000 square feet of Commercial Space.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion regarding this request to amend a previously approved PUD.

Motion made by Councilmember Gaddis to deny this application to change the PUD, Seconded by Councilmember Ariemma.

Councilmember Ariemma said this was challenging for the City Council and that the property could be marketed differently.

Councilmember Brown stated that this property could be helpful in a different way and says that Mountain Top has had a significant commitment to working with the community. Still, Dahlonega's roadways could not support this development.

Councilmember Reagin stated that his primary concern is that the aquatic center is not open yet, so it is hard to decide on its development based on the unknown.

Councilmember Shirley stated that he appreciates the want to develop in Dahlonega, but some issues must be resolved. He says no one opposes housing but is concerned about the traffic.

Mayor Taylor informs the community that Morrison Moore is a state road. She stated that they have been pushing GDOT about this issue and have not made much progress. She said that they want to keep Dahlonega safe and small. She encouraged community members to contact Lumpkin County and ask them to lobby for the changes to Morrison Moore to the DOT. She stated that the DOT has done a lot for the City of Dahlonega and is excellent to work with, and it would take a whole village to get those changes.

Councilmember Gaddis stated that they try to balance growth and good quality of life in the city. He says they know of some road issues, but this project is too big for the location. He stated that this council needs to work on balancing growth. He thanked Mr. Underwood for all of his hard work.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

8. FY2023 Budget Amendment, Allison Martin, City Manager, SP#3 - Communication

City Manager Martin stated that they made their first pass of entries and did this as a placeholder. They did not need a budget amendment, so an amendment should not exist unless something falls out during the auditors' suggesting entries. She thanks Mayor Taylor and the Council for their consideration.

Mayor Taylor thanked City Manager Martin and thanked her for a great audit.

CONTRACTS & AGREEMENTS:

There were no Contracts or Agreements.

OTHER ITEMS:

9. 2024 Alcoholic Beverage License Renewals – Strategic Priority #3 Communications

Mary Csukas, City Clerk & Doug Parks, City Attorney

Ms. Csukas stated that this is the last tasting room looking for renewal, and everything is in order for them. She recommends approval for the Farm Winery Tasting Room.

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to approve renewing the 2024 alcoholic beverage license.

Motion made by Councilmember Shirley to approve the 2024 Alcoholic Beverage License Renewal, Seconded by Councilmember Bagley.

Councilmember Reagin asked for more details about the tasting room.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

COMMENTS – PLEASE LIMIT TO THREE MINUTES

Ms. Csukas welcomed the new council, commission, and committee members.

City Manager Martin congratulated Councilmember Brown and said she is excited to work with him. She requested a meeting with local GDOT representatives to discuss traffic. She also told the Mayor and Council that Park Street underground utilities' current cost analysis had been revised. The Parks Street Project is expected to begin on January 8th, with the contract mobilizing shortly after that. East Main Street will be completed by the end of January, and the contractor will mobilize to North Square. They will begin work on the sidewalk in front of Spirits Tavern, followed by final striping, and we will start work on the North Square Project, which goes from the front of Brad Walker Pottery and Connie Ice Cream north, possibly in February or March.

City Attorney Parks had no comments.

City Council Comments:

Councilmember Gaddis thanked everyone who commented at the meeting and congratulated Councilmember Brown on joining the team. He also asked City Attorney Parks about rezoning on the agendas and City Manager Martin about the Parks Street Project.

Councilmember Ariemma welcomed Councilmember Brown to the team and stated that their decisions were difficult. He is looking forward to the next four years.

Councilmember Reagin thanked everyone for coming and making comments. He stated that keeping Dahlonoga a small town is hard, but the council tries to make the best decisions.

Councilmember Shirley thanked everyone who showed up this evening and made a public comment. He then congratulated all the returning and new members.

Councilmember Bagley wished everyone a happy new year. He suggested using the monitors more during meetings. He stated that everyone wants the best for Dahlonoga, and deciding what that is can be a great challenge.

Councilmember Brown thanked everyone for coming and making public comments. He states that he sees Dahlonoga growing, and it is their job to control the growth. He says that he is very excited to serve the community.

Mayor Comments:

Mayor Taylor said she is excited to work with the new and returning council members. She states that her goal is to keep the community spirit in Dahlonoga, which is the best thing about this city. She also thanked everyone for coming to the meeting tonight.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Taylor called for a motion to adjourn at 7:38 P.M.

Motion made by Councilmember Shirley, Seconded by Councilmember Brown.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gaddis, Councilmember Ariemma, Councilmember Reagin, Councilmember Shirley, Councilmember Bagley, Councilmember Brown

