

CITY OF THOMSON
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
June 11, 2009
6:30PM City Hall

Present:

Kenneth Usry, Mayor
Clifford Lunceford, Councilmember
Alton Belton, Councilmember
John Smalley, Councilmember
Bernice Brown, Councilmember
James Jones, Councilmember
Don Powers, City Administrator
Jimmy Plunkett, City Attorney
Dianne Landers, City Clerk

Also Present:

Riley Stamey
Jim Wallace, the McD. Progress
Lucretia Ferguson
Calvin Ferguson
Robert Farr
Pamela Edmondson
Donna Branch, WTHO
Kristen Francis
Brad Adams
Billy Hobbs, the Mirror
Darryl Wiley
Dr. Sam McGaw
Tamra Fulmer
Elliott Fulmer

Mayor Usry welcomed all to the Regular Council Meeting of June 11, 2009. The invocation was given by Mayor Usry followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag.

MINUTES:

Councilmember Lunceford moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Council meeting on May 14, 2009. Councilmember Belton seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Second reading of the City Signs Ordinance #540.

The second reading of the sign ordinance was due to be presented at this meeting; however, our Attorney has advised that the second and final reading be postponed until the July 2009 meeting in order to adequately address any changes and concerns.

NEW BUSINESS:

Modification to Design Guidelines, Historic Preservation Commission.

This has been tabled until July 2009 in conjunction with the 2nd reading of the Sign Ordinance.

Lee Street Neighborhood Citizen's complaint....speeding on Lee Street.

Mrs. Lucretia Ferguson, spokesperson for Lee Street neighborhood spoke on the problems of excessive speeding. Mrs. Ferguson would like for the City to explore the possibility of speed humps along Lee Street. A petition was turned in with signatures of homeowners within the area. Mayor Usry thanked Mrs. Ferguson and assured her that the Council would in fact take this under consideration however, he alluded to the fact that signage comes with speed humps and there is also cost that has to be addressed. Mrs. Ferguson asked to have the speed lowered in the interim to 25mph from 35mph. Lowering the speed limit was affirmed by Council.

Zoning change on 316 Ware Street.

Fred Guerrant of the Planning board summarized an application from Kristen Francis, office manager for Dr. Darryl Wiley, requesting a change in zoning classification from R-1 (Residential) to P-1(Professional) for a .40 acre lot and residence located at 316 Ware Street. The property has been purchased by Dr. Wiley and it is his intention to convert the residence to a physician's office. There will be no patient traffic crossing Fluker Street to and from Mr. Wiley's office. Parking will be in the back of the office.

Mr. Elliott Fulmer addressed the Council in opposition to the zoning change on the grounds that:

- The change would be the beginning of the spread into their neighborhood of a professional district and alternate uses of current residential property;
- Currently a lack of adequate available housing in the area;
- The value of the nearby residences would be lessened;
- A likely increase in traffic in the neighborhood
- There should be other more appropriate locations in the Professional zone to locate the new office (i.e. behind the hospital).

The Planning Board recommended a conditional zoning approval of the change under the conditions that:

- a. the rear parking area be paved to accommodate not more than ten (10) spaces;
- b. an approved vegetative buffer be planted along the side property lines, and that the rear buffer be maintained;
- c. the rear entrance to the office utilize the "curb cut" for the current alley in the rear of the property instead of a new "curb cut" off of Fluker; and
- d. the new paved parking lot design is to be approved by the Planning Commission.

Councilmember Belton moved to approve the recommendation with the conditions presented and add the stipulation that should the house become vacant, it reverts back to residential. Councilmember Lunceford seconded the motion.

Councilmember John Smalley and James Jones abstained from voted. Three were in favor. Motion carried.

Report on Government Center – Jud Bryant.

Jud Bryant gave the Council an update on the Government Center. Mr. Bryant reported that our project budget was approximately \$20,000,000 and as of today 2.2 million has been spent acquiring all associated properties, thereby leaving 17.8 million dollars.

The building is expected to consist of 69,990 square feet with two (2) stories and configured in an “L” shape design.

Amendment to the Retiree Plan.

The City has worked with the Georgia Municipal Association in order to implement an Early Retirement Incentive Program (ERIP). The City has three (3) employees that are close to retiring but have not reached the age of 65. The amendment designates a 45 day “window” that allows people who are 62 years of age and have 25 years of service, to retire with no early retirement penalty. The amendment has no other provisions and does not look forward and assume any employee earnings or employer contributions to the plan past the retirement date. Approval of this amendment is accomplished by a onetime Adoption Agreement.

Councilmember Jones moved to accept and approve the amendment to the City’s Pension Benefit plan as written, allowing voluntary early retirement (if accepted) for qualifying employees. Councilmember Lunceford seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Façade Grant Application – Stephanie Ivery-Railroad Street.

Stephanie Ivery made an original façade grant application in November 2006, for \$15,000. As the design of the front of her building has developed and changed over time, the rules and regulations of the façade grant program have also been evolving, including a lower maximum allowable grant award...\$7,000 vs the older award of \$15,000, as well as the administrative duties for grants now being handled by the HPC. The Historic Preservation Commission has approved the latest drawings.

Mayor Usry stated that since she had applied early on and had already done so much of the matching interior renovation (required) before the new façade grant policies were enacted, he would recommend that we grant her \$10,000, that this be a onetime “expansion” of the maximum allowable grant, and that the Historic Preservation Commission must approve and administer all changes and expenses, as per the program. Councilmember Belton moved to accept the recommendation as presented. Councilmember Brown seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Board Appointment to replace Greg Derry – Recreation Board.

Mr. Greg Derry has requested to be replaced on the Recreation Board citing new duties as a Board of Education member. Brad Adams has been recommended to serve the remainder of Mr. Derry’s term, expiring in 2011.

Councilmember Belton moved to accept the recommendation of Mr. Brad Adams to the Recreation Board. Councilmember Jones seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Budget Amendment – 2009.

Generally stated, the mid-year amendments to the 2009 Operating Budget were:

- General Fund increase in revenue and expense of \$41,900.
- The Water Fund has an increase in revenue and expense of \$19,000.

- Gas has a decrease in revenue and expenses of \$10,984,256.00, which reflects the dramatic drop in cost of gas from the time the budget was prepared until current.
- Solid Waste has a decrease in revenue and expenses of \$18,600.00.
- There were no changes in the Maintenance Fund.

Councilmember Smalley moved to accept the budget amendments. Councilmember Lunceford seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION:

The Historic Preservation Commission has sent a letter asking that we not demolish the old cotton gin (Lowe's Garage) on Railroad Street, in preparation for the new Government Center. Their resolution is pretty self-explanatory and the Mayor is working with the Lowe family now for resolution.

Bob Flanders and City Administrator Powers will be working on refinement of the Community Development Director Job description over July. This is in preparation for Bob's retirement, expected this year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40pm.

Dianne L. Landers
City Clerk