

CITY OF THOMSON
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
April 9, 2009

6:30PM

CITY HALL

Present:

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

Also Present:

Jim Wallace, the Progress
Fred Guerrant
Bea Hart-Moss
Chris Wallace
Billy Hobbs, the McD. Mirror
Donna Branch, WTHO

Absent:

Alton Belton, Councilmember
John Smalley, Councilmember

Mayor Usry welcomed all to the Regular Council Meeting of April 9, 2009. The invocation was given by City Attorney, Jimmy Plunkett followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag.

PRESENTATION:

Mayor Usry issued a Proclamation declaring May 3 through May 9, 2009 as Municipal Clerks Week. The office of the Municipal Clerk is the oldest among public servants. Mayor recognized Municipal Clerk Dianne L. Landers and Deputy Clerk Rhonda P. Brown for the vital services they perform and their exemplary dedication to the community.

MINUTES:

Councilmember Jones moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Council meeting on March 12, 2009 and the Executive Session. Councilmember Lunceford seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

Gas Safety Agreements:

Per the Public Service Commission and as discussed in the March 2009 Regular Council meeting, a Countywide Natural Gas Safety Plan Agreement has been written for Glasscock, Jefferson, Warren and McDuffie County. These are counties in which our gas system has assets

Councilmember Lunceford moved to approve the adoption of the Countywide Natural Gas Safety Plan Agreement for the abovementioned Counties. Councilmember Brown seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Planning and Zoning-Chris Wallace, Bethel Baptist Church:

Fred Guerrant presented an application received from Chris Wallace representing Bethel Baptist Church for a variation in use of a residence located at 422 Holt Street across Oak Court from the Church. The Church desires to use the property at 422 Holt Street for adult church activities only, such as Sunday school and Bible Study. It was also discussed that should the church cease to use the property for such use or sell the property, the parcel will revert back to a residential use with no structural changes inside. The Planning Board recommended approval of the application for the Church with the requirements of reverting back to residential use only.

Councilmember Lunceford moved to accept the recommendation of the Board followed by a second from Councilmember Jones. All were in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Contract for Indigent Criminal Defense Renewal-Lucy Bell:

The City of Thomson is renewing its contract for the rendering of representation for Indigent Criminal Defendants who appears before the Municipal Court for the City of Thomson. Attorney Lucy J. Bell, attorney at law, has served for one year and has agreed to serve with the new contract beginning May 1, 2009, through May 1, 2010.

Councilmember Jones moved to accept the contract between the City of Thomson and Attorney Bell as Indigent Criminal Defense representative. Councilmember Lunceford seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Senior Residences, Rental Assistance, Tax Abatement Amendment:

The original property tax abatement period committed to DCA originally was 15 years not 10 years as passed in the February 2009 Regular Council Meeting. Mayor Usry recommends we approve for the time originally committed, 15 years. The same conditions would apply with regard to reviewing yearly for appropriate tax status. Councilmember Jones moved to accept the abatement amendment. Councilmember Lunceford seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Part two of the original commitment letter to the Senior Residences was Project Based Rental Assistance. The City of Thomson will be responsible for four years and one quarter of rental assistance for 15 units. The City will use HODAG funds that we have used for various housing initiatives in order to service this request. Mayor Usry recommended approval of issuing payments quarterly, once a satisfactory system is in place for verification. The duration will be five (5) years, beginning from January, 2008. Councilmember Brown approved the recommendation from the Mayor with the necessary program in place for verification before payment and that said payments will be paid from HODAG funds. Councilmember Jones seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Mayor Usry stated that we will have to amend the Senior Rental Assistance agreement. The City of Thomson has to adopt a formula to assist in subsidy payments for low income housing units. The formula recognized by DCA is the IRS Section 42 Low-income Home Tax Credit for the affordable housing program.

Councilmember Belton moved to adopt the LIHTC as utilized by HUD and as amended by HUD from time to time. Councilmember Brown seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Stimulus Projects:

There are stimulus dollars available for work in our 13 County regions that is being routed through East Central Georgia Consortium or “One Stop”.

One such project is a Summer Project for Youth where we would partner with the Thomson Housing Authority and sign up for this program using youth workers to enhance our downtown area, parks, cemetery, and recycling center.

Councilmember Lunceford moved to approve the recommendation to partner with the Housing Authority and implement the program with One Stop. Councilmember Jones seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The Temporary Worker Program will target the unemployed. This stimulus project pays the worker for 90 days and the Local WIA dollars can pay an additional 90 days of employees cost, thus giving the City of Thomson temporary workers in much needed areas. There is no obligation to hire or reimburse if we don't hire.

Councilmember Brown moved to approve the recommendation to bring on temporary employees and get up to 6 months of their salary underwritten. Councilmember Jones seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Stimulus Dollars are also available for infrastructure projects such as the sewer rehab infrastructure funding through GEFA. This is a first come, first serve application process. This program “forgives” 70% of the principal portion of the loan application totals.

Councilmember Lunceford moved to accept the recommendation to approve a resolution so the loan application to GEFA can proceed. Estimated loan will be \$1,700,000.

Councilmember Brown seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

308 Walnut Street Property:

The City of Thomson had condemned property at 308 Walnut Street. As a result of the family not being able to bring the property to proper code, the City of Thomson entered into an agreement with Katrina Mance for the sale of this property to the City of Thomson. This is two parcels that have a tax value of \$9,530, but there are several expenses associated with the property. As a result of \$5,748.42 in liens incurred, the City of Thomson reached a settlement with the property owner of \$3,781.58.

Councilmember Jones moved to purchase the property at 308 Walnut Street from Katrina Mance. Councilmember Brown seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Facade Application – Camellia Partners:

The Camellia Partners presented an application to the City for a façade grant for the buildings at 109 Main Street in the amount of \$7000 and for a pre-approve cost agreement (PACA) for 107 Main Street in the year 2010.

Councilmember Jones moved to approve the application to the Camellia Partners for \$7,000 in 2009 and \$7,000 in 2010. Councilmember Brown seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Historic Preservation Commission Recommendations:

The HPC has asked the Council to review and approve a certificate of appropriateness process (COA). This process, already being followed in principal, will be formalized and required before any building or structure (including signs) within the Thomson Historic District may be erected, demolished, reconstructed, altered or restored. Routine maintenance, signs, or alterations to architectural features not subject to view from a public street may be exempt from this requirement, but must receive Staff Approval and are still subject to other City requirements. Minor projects, including repainting to a different color, storm doors and windows, window boxes and minor landscaping do not require a COA, but do require an exclusion review by the Historic Preservation Commission Review Coordinator.

Design Guidelines are the Guiding Documents for decisions on COA's in the Historic District. The City in the past has used the Department of Interior Guidelines, but the HPC now recommends the Guidelines written by Piedmont Preservation over the past year.

Councilmember Lunceford moved to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness process and the Design Guidelines recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission. Councilmember Brown seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Beer and Wine Application – Harley's Grill:

Harley's Grill, LLC of 931 Augusta Road presented an application for a Beer and Wine license. All the City of Thomson requirements have been met.

Councilmember Jones moved to accept the application for a Beer and Wine license, seconded by Councilmember Lunceford. All were in favor. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

City Administrator Don Powers gave the following report:

- General Fund revenues are satisfactory compared to the budget for the 1st quarter. Of concern are property tax appeals that are still not complete. Sales tax receipts for the 1st quarter were on budget.
- Water/sewer is 5% behind budget for the 1st quarter of the year. However, we are headed into the high usage season.

- Water/sewer expenses are about 2% below the budget for the 1st quarter of the year.
- Gas receipts are down substantially due to our industrial customers, particularly Thiele.
- We are starting the utility cuts necessary for demolition of the buildings in the Greenway Street area. These involve gas, water and sewer.
- The City of Thomson Police Department received a grant from Jefferson Energy Cooperative Foundation for equipment.

Councilmember Jones moved to go into Executive Session. Councilmember Lunceford seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Dianne L. Landers
City Clerk