

MINUTES

FORSYTH CITY COUNCIL RETREAT

JANUARY 24, 2021

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Mayor Wilson called the retreat to order at 9:10 after all members of council were logged into the meeting and Mr. Howard gave an invocation.

ROLL CALL

The retreat was held virtually with the Zoom platform. Present for the retreat was Mayor Eric Wilson, Councilmembers Mike Dodd, Julius Stroud, Greg Goolsby, John Howard, Chris Howard, and Melvin Lawrence. Also present was City Manager, Janice Hall.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS GOALS

Ms. Hall reviewed the overall, top 3 goals for previous years beginning with first annual retreat held in 2016. Ms. Hall explained the headings for the spreadsheet provided to Council stating those listed in the "on going" category will be those type goals/projects that will never be considered as complete such as annexation as we will always work on annexation.

Mr. Howard asked for a status on Code Enforcement and blighted properties. There was a lengthy discussion regarding code enforcement issues and blighted properties, and it was determined that the Code Enforcement Officer will make quarterly reports to City Council.

Mr. Stroud stated that Council needs to be aggressive regarding annexation. Mr. Stroud stated that if a resident has city services, they should have a voice in the City and for those outside the city limits with city services, they do not currently have that voice so Council should continue pursuing annexation of especially those properties that have or want city services.

Mr. Hewett reviewed information presented to the Housing Authority by the Code Enforcement Officer. Mr. Stroud stated that Jackson and Macon both have good blight plans.

Ms. Hall reviewed the previously approved annexation plan and phases asking Council if they wanted to continue with that plan or make changes. By consensus, Council agreed to continue working the previously approved plan and phases.

Mr. Stroud reviewed issues with parks and stated that an additional Splashpad is needed at Kynette Park for children in that area that cannot get across town to the one at Country Club Park. Mr. Lawrence reviewed repeated vandalism at Kynette Park and questioned whether having a Splashpad at that park would be a good idea. Mr. Howard stated that issue of vandalism should not be reason for not bettering the park. Mayor Wilson stated that spending tax proceeds in 2021 would be a good start to show progress for the parks. Mr. Goolsby stated that amphitheater at Indian Springs Park was done well and should be looked at to possibly mimic. Mr. Dodd reviewed road in Park Plan at Country Club Park and that the connectivity of the road is essential. Council agreed to research bonding the entire Park Plan rather than taking years to complete.

GOALS FOR 2021

Mayor Wilson called on each councilmember to provide the goals they would like to consider for 2021. Ms. Hall explained that since the retreat this year is virtual, that once all goals are stated, she will enter those in the poll section of Zoom and each council member will be able to vote on as many of those goals as they would like.

Mr. Goolsby – park, gateway to City, and use of Welcome Center after new City Hall is complete

Mr. Lawrence – park, gateway to City and use of Welcome Center after new City Hall is complete
Mr. Stroud – park, annexation, 3 designated parking spaces in new building parking lot for Veterans, and better internet options for residential
Mr. Howard – blight, passive recreation/park, and annexation
Mr. Dodd – annexation, recreation, and infrastructure
Mr. Hewett – annexation, truck traffic around the square, and completion of City Hall
Mayor Wilson – citizen awards similar to those that County provides each year, signature solar project with Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition, College & Career Academy support

Voting results:

Parks 71%
Gateway 29%
Welcome Center use 14%
Annexation 71%
Parking spaces for Veterans 0%
Blight 57%
Infrastructure 43%
Truck Traffic on square 14%
Internet 0%

Mayor Wilson asked that Ms. Hall keep Council apprised of the status of each goal throughout the year and possibly post listing of goals in Aldermen Hall to be a reminder to all what we are working on.

Mayor Wilson reviewed the 2021 Goals:

1. Annexation – council agreed to move forward with Phase 1 of the Annexation Plan
2. Park improvements – council agreed that by end of 2nd Quarter should know funding sources and process to move forward with groundbreaking for all park improvements not just the ones currently under consideration for grant funding.
3. Blight – council agreed to have Code Enforcement Officer attend a council meeting quarterly to provide update on issues being worked on; any assistance needed from council; and any additional legislation that would be helpful to the Officer. The City Manager will provide updates on a more regular basis. Housing Authority will review applying for CHIP Grant for funding to remediate blight.
4. Infrastructure – continue work towards USDA funding for water and wastewater plant upgrade projects. Include sidewalks and road improvements; solar project; look at underground electric lines; and resurface and widening of Montpelier Road.

(Mr. Lawrence left the meeting to participate in a Church program, so all votes going forward will be five (5) votes – Dodd, Stroud, Goolsby, Howard, and Hewett)

REPORTS FROM COUNCIL FOR RESPECTIVE BOARDS – SUMMARY OF WHAT BOARDS ARE WORKING ON

Convention & Visitors Bureau

Mr. Howard reviewed that CVB recently held their annual retreat/planning meeting with the Regional Commission facilitating the meeting. Mr. Howard stated the CVB discussed CVB versus Welcome Center and what each should do and also discussed loss of revenue due to COVID.

Housing Authority

Mr. Hewett reviewed that Code Enforcement Officer attended their last meeting and reviewed all issues he is working on and what the process is that he has to go through for different issues. Mr. Hewett stated the Housing Authority is working with the City Attorney to provide direction on what the Housing Authority can do.

Golf Board

Mr. Dodd reviewed that the grounds superintendent was recently approved as a city employee to provide him with benefits. Mr. Dodd stated that the access route to the adjoining property is being moved by abandoning and moving our electric line; play is down as it usually is this time of year; and encouraged that the golf course be included in the City recreation plan.

Downtown Development Authority & Main Street Board

Mr. Goolsby reviewed that the façade grants continue and the DDA is looking to add a small business grant to incentivize new businesses and looking at what role the DDA needs to have in determining the use of the Welcome Center after the new City Hall is complete.

REVIEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS PRESENTATION

Ms. Hall reviewed the list of new business license provided in 2020 along with several commercial projects currently in progress. Ms. Hall stated that she would like to have each department come before council and review their respective departments along with their accomplishments for 2020.

DISCUSS MAINSTREET 2021 EVENTS

Ms. Hall reviewed the 2020 event flyer that was provided to council. Mr. Stroud stated that he does not agree with holding the Forsythia Festival now with virus numbers still high in Monroe County. Mr. Stroud stated that we need to look 3 months out before finalizing events and determine what risk event would have to the community. Mr. Stroud asked if the City covers the full cost of the fireworks and Ms. Hall stated that we have until 2020 when the County held the fireworks when we cancelled the event due to COVID-19. Council discussed that this would be a good opportunity to look at others contributing to the event. Mr. Howard stated that he is concerned about the Forsythia Festival due to the increased number of virus and that we expect another surge in virus cases. Mr. Goolsby stated that we should use July 4 fireworks as benchmark for that to be the first event if virus count is down.

Mr. Howard offered a motion to change position of closing streets for Forsythia Festival and not allow the streets to be closed for the event. Mr. Stroud seconded the motion. Mr. Stroud stated that we need to look at the virus numbers before allowing. Mr. Dodd asked if the Chamber could delay the event to later date. Ms. Hall stated that the Chamber could be asked to attend the February 1 council meeting to answer questions that council may have. After a brief discussion, Mayor Wilson called for a vote on the motion. Voting in the affirmative was Mr. Goolsby, Mr. Stroud, and Mr. Howard. There were no votes against. Mr. Dodd and Mr. Hewett abstained from the vote. Mayor Wilson stated that he is inclined to vote affirmative but would prefer that the Chamber attend the next council meeting to determine where

they are in their planning process. Mr. Goolsby asked if Roberts Rule of Order required a reason for abstaining. Mr. Dodd stated that his reason for abstaining is that he would like to hear from the Chamber before making a decision. Mr. Hewett stated his reason for abstaining is the same, that he would like to hear from the Chamber before voting. Mr. Howard stated that this is a matter of safety for everyone. Mayor Wilson asked Ms. Hall to contact the Chamber and request that they attend the February 1 council meeting to discuss the Forsythia Festival.

NEW CITY HALL BUILDING UPDATE & PRESENTATION

Ms. Hall provided a presentation showing the interior of the new building especially the material and layout of the council chambers. Ms. Hall stated that she has requested a realistic schedule and completion date from the contractor as they currently have a completion date of April 5 and this does not appear to be realistic.

Mr. Stroud stated that we need to make sure that all boards are diverse, and Mr. Howard stated that we need to make sure board appointments are working and that the boards are working as they should.

Mayor Wilson stated that council needs to complete an annual evaluation on Ms. Hall, and this can be done in executive session at the next council meeting.

There being no further business to discuss, the retreat was adjourned at 12:11 pm.

Submitted by:

Janice L. Hall, City Manager