**Minutes**

**Forsyth City Council Meeting**

**July 21, 2025**

**Call to Order**

Mayor Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation, and Roll Call**

Mayor Wilson led the Pledge of Allegiance. The invocation was led by Mrs. Carol Cook. In attendance for the meeting was Mayor Eric Wilson, Councilmembers Josh Hill, Chris Hewett, Lois Allen, Greg Goolsby, Charles Wilder, and Mike Dodd. Also in attendance was City Manager, Craig Mims; Assistant City Manager, Regina Ivie; City Attorney, Brian Causey; and City Clerk, Shayla Furlow. Six members of the council were in attendance for the meeting; therefore, all unanimous votes will be six votes (Hill, Hewett, Allen, Goolsby, Wilder and Dodd).

**Approval of the agenda.**

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the agenda with the amendment to move the executive session between items seven and eight. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of the minutes from the council meeting held on July 7, 2025.**

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the minutes from the council meeting held on July 7, 2025 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously**.**

**Approval of a street closure request on September 20, 2025 for Glory Ministries.**

Mr. Kevin Arbogast at 366 Blue Store Road stated that they plan to have an uptown revival with three churches. He stated that he needed to change the date of the event to Saturday, October 4, 2025. He requested the close of N. Jackson between W. King Street and W. Morse Street from 10:00a.m. to 2:00p.m.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the street closure request on October 4, 2025 for Glory Ministries. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of the appointment of Martin Pennington** **to the Planning and Zoning Commission.**

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the appointment of Martin Pennington to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Seconded by Mr. Wilder; the motion carried unanimously.

**Public Hearing to partially rezone Parcel 053 001B from Highway Business (HB) to Residential Multi-Family (RM), Brian Wesley, Meredith Homes, LLC.**

Mr. Dean Nelson, the Community Development Director, stated that Brian Wesley of Meredith Holmes LLC is requesting Monroe County Tax Parcel 053 001B located between 266 Oak Ridge Drive and 320 Oak Ridge Drive and currently owned by Sam Patel of Monroe Ventures LLC be partially rezoned from Highway Business (HB) to Residential Multi-Family (RM). The request is to allow the petitioner to construct 150 townhome units for sale on 30 acres of the 55.2 acres. The entrance will be along North Frontage Road, and the remainder will remain in the same Highway Business (HB) with the intention of subdividing the property after the sale from the current owner to the applicant. The townhomes will be adjacent to the currently inhabited low to moderate density neighborhood with the egress and ingresses planned for North Frontage Road by a right-of-way through property owned by Monroe Ventures LLC or future developers. Residential Multifamily is a zoning district designed to support multifamily residential designation which includes townhomes. A similar project was proposed in 2023 but was withdrawn after negative feedback concerning traffic congestion from the planned entrance and exit onto the existing Betsy Lynn Subdivision. He stated that on May 27, 2025, the Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing, and provided the staff review based on the standards within the zoning code. He stated that staff recommended either denial of the application due to inconsistency with the Comprehensive Plan or denial of the application due to partial-lot rezoning, which is typically not a best practice or approval with a condition the parcel be subdivided and sale closed within 60 days or revert to Highway Business. The board noted concerns about ownership of the 60-foot private drive connecting the property to North Frontage Road and controlling the ingress and egress of the development. At the close of the public hearing and after discussion, the board voted unanimously, 3-0, to recommend the denial of the rezoning request with recusal by Chairman Steve Coleman**.**

Mayor Wilson opened the Public Hearing for those in favor of or opposition to the proposed partial rezoning of parcel 053 001B from Highway Business (HB) to Multi-Family (RM), Brian Wesley, Meredith Homes, LLC.

Mr. William Tillary at 2200 Keys Ferry Court, McDonough stated that he was there on behalf of Meredith Homes. The newest site plan has the depiction of the 90-foot buffer that will be to east of the neighborhood and there's been some other changes on the plaque, including the label that describes the two lots. He showed the rendering or a facade in concept of what they believe the development would look like. He stated that this is one of the few times he can recall that he asking to down-zone a property. In this instance, this is a different or a less intense zoning use. Mr. Tillary stated that it is a fifty-five-acre tract with the proposal of thirty acres be rezoned as Residential Multi-family (RM). If it's not rezoned the property could be used for automobile sales and service establishments, automobile service establishments without sales, bed and breakfast, big box commercial, building material sales, lumberyards, machine shops, movie theaters, open-air businesses, farm and garden supply dwellings located in a business containing non-residential principal uses. Mr. Tillary addressed the traffic concerns stating that if the property owner were to develop under any of uses mentioned, the average daily trips would be greater. He stated that the developer has just under 50% set aside for green space within the acres that would be developed. It is not as dense as it may seem or may be feared by those who spoke in opposition to this initiative. The average price is estimated to be between $250,000 and $325,000. They are proposing a mandatory HOA that would be managed by a professional company. He stated that the build-out on the project is about five years, and that also allows the schools to catch up. If they are at capacity now, then they likely already have a plan.

Ms. Jessica Marsh at 136 Boxankle Road stated that she has been a resident of Monroe County for five years and currently employed with the Monroe County School System. As well as a repeat customer of Meredith Homes. She stated that she was speaking in favor of the rezoning and for his affordable housing approach. She stated that Forsyth is a true slice of small-town heaven to raise a family and a wonderful place to live and work. But the lack of affordable housing options can be a significant challenge. Many educators, health care workers, firefighters, and police officers commute substantial distances to serve the community, which takes a toll on their effectiveness and engagement. Currently, there are less than twenty single-family homes for sale under $300,000. None of which are new, and most would require minimal work at best. She stated that this scarcity makes it nearly impossible for professionals who wish to contribute meaningfully to Forsyth to find a home close to their workplace. This project is a proactive step towards alleviating our affordable housing challenge. These townhomes will provide much-needed options for teachers, other public service professionals, single-parent families, and others who want to live in Forsyth and be more involved in the community. Affordable housing is essential, not just for the individuals and families who will benefit from it, but for the overall health and vibrancy of the city.

Mr. Mike Huffman at 5235 Bowman Road stated that he was employed in Forsyth. He stated that in his opinion there is a lack of affordable housing in the city for public servants and professionals that work in the city. Mr. Huffman stated that he was in favor of this project for that reason.

Ms. Kerri Swearingen at 412 Reedy Creek Road stated that the project came to fruition a couple of years ago for not having entry-level housing. She stated that growth is going to happen because that property is already zoned highway business. Ms. Swearingen stated that she had some information on traffic counts for retail strip centers, fast food restaurants, and gas station convenience store. So the She stated that there is a lack of entry-level housing. Currently in the City of Forsyth, there are four houses for sale, price range $250,000 to $325,000 and she thinks that what they build would be something that will attract the same kind of people that were attracted to live in the Betsy Lynn neighborhood.

Mr. Chuck Richardson at 355 Oak Ridge Drive stated that he was not against new housing. The county does need new housing, but he was against the fact that it's going to be in his neighborhood. He stated that he thought it was only one lot. Mr. Richardson had concerns about traffic in the neighborhood.

Ms. Latrelle Cunningham, 8 Lakeside Drive, stated that someone needs to do a traffic study during school hours between the hours of 7:15a.m. and 8:15a.m. going out to the Highway 83. She asked that someone look into the traffic, and she wants an agreement that they will not use Lakeside Drive for construction.

Ms. Marsha Linton, 333 Oak Ridge Drive state that she opposed basically because of the number of units, traffic, and school congestion. She stated that she would like to see it rezoned, but for single-family housing rather than multifamily.

Ms. Susan Butler at 59 Maplewood Drive stated that the proposed site is just two lots down from her and she felt that somewhere else would be more appropriate for the apartment complex. She expressed her concerns with traffic in the area and on N. Frontage Road.

Mr. William Tillary addressed concerns from those opposing.

Mr. Dodd questioned what the plans for the second lot are.

Mr. William Tillary stated they plan to build houses.

There being no further public comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed partial rezoning of parcel 053 001B from Highway Business (HB) to Multi-Family (RM), Brian Wesley, Meredith Homes, LLC Mayor Wilson closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Hill questioned whether the lot will be used as an entrance to the development.

Mr. William Tillary stated that it will not be used as an entrance.

Mr. Wilder questioned how they could ensure that private corporations don’t buy them and rent them out.

Mr. Brian Wesley stated they could follow the 80-20 rule and ensure a Homeowners Association.

**Executive Session**

Mr. Wilder offered a motion to go into executive session at 6:57p.m. for legal matters. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to end the executive session at 7:05p.m. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Wilson called the meeting back to order at 7:06p.m.

Mr. Hill offered a motion to approve the partial rezoning of parcel 053 001B from Highway Business (HB) to Multi-Family (RM), Brian Wesley, Meredith Homes, LLC with six conditions.

* The first condition being that the road going into the townhome development meets Department of Transportation standards and is deeded to the city once complete.
* The second condition is that they utilize the 80-20 rule, so that they don't have private corporations owning the majority, turning them into rental homes.
* The third condition is that the zoning of the two lots they are building must remain consistent with that of Betsy Lynn.
* The fourth condition was to add trees to the 90-foot vegetation buffer to keep sound down between the townhome subdivision and Betsy Lynn.
* The fifth condition is that the two lots must not be used for any construction other than the construction of those two homes.
* The sixth condition is that they must have a working Homeowners Association. Seconded by Mr. Wilder.

Mr. Goolsby requested that Mr. Hill add to the first condition that the road be deeded to the city at the completion of the Project.

Mr. Hill and Mr. Wilder both agreed to the amendment of the first condition of the motion.

After a brief discussion Mayor Wilson called the vote on the motion to approve the partial rezoning of parcel 053 001B from Highway Business (HB) to Multi-Family (RM), Brian Wesley, Meredith Homes, LLC with six conditions.

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* The third condition is that the zoning of the two lots they are building must remain consistent with that of Betsy Lynn.
* The fourth condition was to add trees to the 90-foot vegetation buffer to keep sound down between the townhome subdivision and Betsy Lynn.
* The fifth condition is that the two lots must not be used for any construction other than the construction of those two homes.
* The sixth condition is that they must have a working Homeowners Association.

The motion passed with five votes in favor (Hill, Allen, Goolsby, Wilder, and Dodd) and one opposition (Hewett).

**James Green**

Mr. James Green commended the city on a great job with renovations at Country Club Park. He addressed issues with trees on Highway 83 and on Kynette Street. Mr. Green questioned when Kynette Park will close for renovation.

**Convention & Visitors Bureau Quarterly Report by Gilda Stanbery.**

Ms. Gilda Stanbery provided a recap of the second quarter. She provided information on the radio show episodes, storytelling blog on the website, the Visit Forsyth monthly newsletter, published ads, Fish. Beer. Repeat Campaign, published social posts, celebrated community milestones, grants completed, and new swag and collateral developed.

Mr. Wilder stated that Chelsea Ogletree, the owner of Her Majesty Kitchen, won the cooking contest and it would be nice to display a banner to congratulate her.

Ms. Gilda Stanbery stated that she invited the Department of Agriculture, the Commissioner of the Department of Economic Development, and the Commissioner for Tourism all to come down and do something. She stated that Chelsea is also the 2025 Georgia Home Grown Chef. She thought the banner was a good idea.

**Approval of Requisitions Greater than $6,000**

* **Fischer Scientific Company, LLC. - $50, 425.00**

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve the requisitions greater than $6000 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

**City Manager’s Report**

The City Manager, Mr. Craig Mims, had no business to report.

**City Attorney Report**

The City Attorney, Mr. Brian Causey, had no business to report.

**Mayor’s Report**

Mayor Wilson congratulated Chef Chelsea Ogletree and stated that he would like to do a proclamation to recognize a day **as** Chelsea Ogletree Day.

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to make a proclamation for Chelsea Ogletree day with the date to be determined. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

**Additional Business**

Mr. Hill stated that the Mass Effect Band will be performing on August 2, 2025 at 7:30p.m. on the downtown square.

Mr. Hewett stated that the Hospital Board will be meeting on Thursday, July24, 2025 at 5:30p.m.

Mrs. Allen thanked the police department and the fire department for coming out to Hopewell United Methodist Church and being with the children. She thanked the Fire Chief for wet day at the Boys and Girls Club.

**Public Comments**

No Public comments.

**Adjourn**

There being no further business Mr. Hewett offered a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:37p.m. Seconded by Mrs. Allen; the motion carried unanimously.