

Minutes
Forsyth City Council Meeting
June 15, 2020

Call to Order

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

Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation and Roll Call

Mayor Wilson led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Dodd gave the invocation. Present for the meeting was Mayor Eric Wilson, Councilmembers Melvin Lawrence, Chris Hewett, Greg Goolsby, Julius Stroud, and Mike Dodd. Mr. Howard attended the meeting by video conferencing. Also in attendance for the meeting was City Attorney, Bobby Melton; City Manager, Janice Hall and City Clerk, Regina Ivie. All members of council were present for the meeting therefore all unanimous votes will be six (6) votes (Lawrence, Hewett, Howard, Goolsby, Stroud, and Dodd).

Approval of the Agenda

Mayor Wilson stated one correction to agenda was necessary; deletion of item number five.

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the agenda with the deletion of item number five. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes from the June 1, 2020 Council Meeting

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Stroud; the motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing – Consider application of Eric and Laurie Thomas dba Forsyth Georgia Pizza, LLC with regard to a sign variance application

Mr. Melton stated the variance application is for a mural wall sign at the location of 26 E Johnston Street; first came to Council June 1, 2020. It was advertised in the Monroe Reporter on May 27, June 3, and June 10, 2020. Planning & Zoning met on May 19, 2020; recommended approval.

Mayor Wilson opened the floor in favor of or opposition of the proposed sign variance application for Forsyth Georgia Pizza, LLC; several audience members were recognized by Mayor Wilson to speak for or against the proposed sign variance.

Mrs. Pierson stated Planning & Zoning Board approved the sign variance; Design & Review approved the artwork.

Mr. Thomas stated the basic proposal a mural will be for Jonah's and the entire town. Wings would be painted on the side of the building to promote the City; customers could post photos on social media with hashtags. A pizza with slices displaying businesses within the square; retail only. Each retail business was emailed regarding the idea for the mural; for a slice of the pizza each business would pay for the cost of the artwork.

Mrs. Thomas stated that the premise of the pizza with slices was to promote local businesses that await customers coming into the square of Forsyth. Six businesses have confirmed they would like to participate with the pizza slices for promotion of their business; Hometown Treasures, A Goat and a Girl, Scoops, Wild & Rooted Hair Salon, Magnolia's and The 1823 Artisan Guild. Sage & Sparrow and Cotique have also expressed interest.

Mr. Pressley stated he's in support of the Thomas' idea of the wings on the building. He suggested that perhaps any guidelines for the artwork; and or murals on buildings; that perhaps the guidelines be presented to Council prior to making a final decision on the matter.

Mr. Emami stated he likes the idea of the mural. Mr. Emami further stated he has concerns over businesses using the side of their building as advertising space; there is potential if deviations are allowed we would not be proud of

depending on what's displayed. An additional concern is that a businesses would have advertising directly in front of a competing business; that the side of every building doesn't turn into an advertisement that doesn't belong to the actual business in the building.

Mr. Thomas further stated that Mr. Emami expressed his concerns to him prior to the public hearing; he agreed that it would create unnecessary conflict with the retailers.

Mrs. Thomas further stated that if guidelines are needed to approve the advertising and if tabled tonight; she requested that the mural with the wings be approved to promote the business and the City.

Mr. Melton per Mr. Dodd's request defined a variance; to allow something to occur that would not normally be permitted in that area. It's not so adverse to the area that it wouldn't fit in; it's an amendment.

Mr. Stroud stated he loves the idea of the wings and murals; would like to see further discussion on the slices of the pizza; advertising versus a mural.

There being no further comments for or against the variance Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the variance application for the mural with wings; and to table the advertising portion of the mural till guidance for the rules and regulations can be determined. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing – Consider application of Harvey Crowe and Paul Hamilton Jossey, III with regard for conditional use as a wedding and similar event venue.

Mr. Melton stated the conditional use application came before Council on June 1, 2020 for tax parcel F16 010 at 311 W. Main Street. It was advertised in the reporter on May 27, June 3, and June 10, 2020. Planning and Zoning met on May 19, 2020; approval was not recommended. Currently the property is zoned R2 – Residential, Detached Single Family, Low to Moderate –Density District. Zoning is not to be changed; this is a conditional use application for a wedding or similar event venue in that district.

Mayor Wilson opened the floor in favor of or opposition of the conditional use application. Mayor Wilson recognized Mr. Harvey Crowe and Mr. Jossey to speak in favor of the conditional use application.

Mr. Harvey Crowe stated the goal is to bring an elegant venue to the City of Forsyth. A venue like this has been done in Ballground where we were met with the same opposition with planning and zoning. Mr. Crowe presented photos of the venue in Ballground. He further stated that the home would be restored to its original state. Mr. Crowe further stated that Mayor & Council of the City of Ballground greatly appreciates the Wheeler House and what it has to offer; over 21 thousand people visited the area that came for events at the Wheeler House. A wedding venue such as this will generate revenue for the City; brings people back to the City after being married here; it could be a hidden gem to guests that aren't familiar with the area.

Mr. Jossey stated he was raised in the home; he wouldn't restore the house in the future. He feels it's win situation; the house would be remodeled, restored; and the City would get a nice venue.

Mayor Wilson recognized members of the audience in opposition of the conditional use application.

Mr. Matt Griffin stated he was born and raised in the City of Forsyth. His main concerns is the increase in traffic around the property; and the sound disturbances with the events occurring in the evening hours; and marketability of our homes. We are staunchly against bringing a party venue next door.

Mr. Hal Clark stated he lives directly across the street from the proposed location. His concerns are the noise, traffic that would change the style of our neighborhood. The traffic would be dramatically increased with over 200 to 300 hundred cars coming in possibly weekly for events. It would change the quality of life in our neighborhood.

Mr. Kirk Ham stated he lives next door to the Legion Hall; across the street from the proposed location. He's concerned about the vehicle safety issue, trash and noise in the area.

Mr. Jimmy Pace stated he doesn't feel that commercial business should be in that area. The traffic would come in and out of the same place unless you go on the backstreet; drainage issues along the creek. He feels it's not a suitable use for it; negative affect on what's around it. Traffic is bad with all the truck noise.

Mr. Harvey Crowe responded that the goal would be to not utilize W. Main Street as the entrance/exit for the venue. Typically there's between forty five to sixty vehicles usually on Saturdays. Traffic certainly could be handled; we have leased a lot to shuttle attendees back and forth to the event to reduce traffic in the area.

Mayor Wilson acknowledged that a petition has been received prior to the Council Meeting by himself and Council. The City Clerk's office has not received a copy of the petition.

There being no further comments for or against the application Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to deny the application. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence; the motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing – Consider zoning application of St. James Baptist

Mr. Melton stated the zoning application is approximately 3 acres on Railroad Avenue; parcel F35003 currently zoned traditional neighborhood. Request is to rezone to office professional. The property is currently owned by St. James Baptist Church. Planning & Zoning met on May 19, 2020; recommend approval. It was advertised in the Monroe Reporter on May 27, June 3, and June 10, 2020.

Mayor Wilson opened the floor and recognized those in favor of or opposition of the zoning application.

Mrs. Pierson stated Mr. Pelt has applied to rezone the three acres. Currently the County map isn't correct. The Church is currently zoned office professional, one lot is zoned traditional neighborhood, one lot is mixed use, and one lot is zoned highway business. Planning & Zoning recommend approval. If zoning is changed all lots within the 3 acres will be commercial use.

Mr. Emami stated for over two years he's assisted Mr. Pelt locate a property to conduct business. He builds a quality product; it complements the parcel to the left. Mr. Emami stated he's in favor of the rezoning.

Mr. Pelt stated he's looking to build a quality business within the City with the potential of two more in the future.

Mr. Stallwood stated the Church is selling Mr. Pelt 1.3 acres; the church will retain 1.6 acres.

There being no further comments for or against the application Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to rezone the parcel to office professional. Seconded by Mr. Dodd.

Mr. Stroud amended his original motion to allow three years for construction; later during the discussion withdrew this motion prior to Mr. Goolsby motion.

Mr. Melton recommended that within the ordinance that construction be completed within three years.

Mrs. Pierson stated currently there is four different zones in that area. Updating the zoning for the property being sold to Mr. Pelt to office professional as the Church currently is; the entire property would be zoned office professional.

After lengthy clarification of property ownership and the current incorrect zoning within the specific area by Ms. Hall and Mrs. Pierson; Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to rezone the property to office professional. Seconded Mr. Stroud.

Mr. Howard stated he would recuse himself from the vote as he is a member and an officer of the church; the motion carried with five (5) votes (Goolsby, Stroud, Dodd, Hewett, Lawrence).

Public Hearing – Proposed ordinance for alteration and amendment of the corporate boundaries of the City of Forsyth through annexation.

Mr. Melton stated the proposed ordinance is for four parcels (054 007, 054 008, 054 008A, 054 008B); approximately 8 ½ acres at the Corner of Patrol Road and Harold Clarke Parkway. All are contiguous to each other and to the City limits as an aggregate. Currently zoned Commercial under County zoning; only commercial zoning the County has. The request is to rezone and annex the property into the City to Highway Business in the City limits. This was advertised in the reporter on May 27, June 3, and June 10, 2020. Planning & Zoning met May 19, 2020; recommended approval. A certified letter was sent to the County on the City's behalf pursuant to Georgia Law notifying them of the City's intent to conduct a public hearing for the purpose of rezoning and annexing the four parcels into the City limits. The letter was dated May 19, 2020; received by County May 20, 2020. No objection has been received by the County as of today; thirty days is allowed; expiration date is Friday, June 19th. Mr. Melton recommended an effective date of July 1, 2020 to allow for the County to have the full thirty days to object or respond.

Mayor Wilson opened the floor in favor of and or opposition of the rezoning and annexation of the four parcels stated; recognized Ms. Judy Allie from QuikTrip.

Mrs. Pierson stated this would be beneficial to the City's behalf having these properties within the City limits.

Ms. Judy Allie, Real Estate Project Manager with QuikTrip stated she is ready to begin moving the project forward; excited to come to town; the City has been most welcoming.

There being no further comments for or against the proposed ordinance Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the ordinance with an effective date of July 1, 2020. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence; the motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing – Proposed ordinance to enact an amendment to the zoning code and zoning ordinance to adopt “A, Agricultural/Rural District” as a zoning district in the City of Forsyth.

Mr. Melton stated currently the City doesn't not have an agricultural/rural district; ordinance would amend and add a new zoning category. It was first presented to Council on June 1, 2020; advertised in the Monroe Reporter on May 27, June 3, and June 10, 2020. Planning & Zoning met on May 19, 2020. The amendment would allow same parameters as County currently has with an Agricultural/Rural District.

Mayor Wilson opened the floor in favor of or opposition of the proposed ordinance regarding the agricultural/rural district within the City's limits.

There being no comments for or against the proposed the ordinance Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve the zoning ordinance. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing – Proposed ordinance to amend Chapter 4, Alcoholic Beverages of the code, to add definitions of “growler” and “micro-brewery”.

Mr. Melton stated the proposed ordinance first came before Council on June 1, 2020; it was advertised in the Monroe Reporter on June 3, 2020 and June 10, 2020. Currently the terms are not within the City's alcohol code; this would be an addition of the two terms with definitions of growler and micro-brewery provided by Mr. Melton.

Mayor Wilson opened the floor in favor of or opposition of the proposed amendment to the City's ordinance.

There being no comments for or against the proposed the ordinance Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the amendment of the ordinance to add growler and micro-brewery. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of event permit for Ramael Davis on July 25, 2020

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the event permit for Ramael Davis for July 25 & July 26, 2020. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of agreement with Department of Corrections

Ms. Hall stated in year's past the City has utilized two crews from the Department of Correction although we have only been charged for one. After some consideration regarding the budget and departmental needs we are requesting only one detail with a maximum of ten for the detail; to focus on right of way and cemetery needs. New agreement is effective July 1, 2020.

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve the agreement with Department of Corrections. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Award bid for CDBG Grant

Ms. Hall reviewed the bid tabulation and the recommendation letter from Hofstadter; to award bid to Robert's Hauling and Pipeline at \$516,979.00.

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to award bid to Robert's Hauling & Pipeline. Seconded Mr. Lawrence; the motion carried unanimously.

Award bid for LMIG – Local Mileage Improvement Grant

Ms. Hall reviewed the bid tabulation and recommendation letter from Hofstadter; to award bid to East Coast Grading for \$230,103.91.

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to award the bid to East Coast Grading. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of change orders for City Hall Construction Project.

Ms. Hall reviewed the change order; to replace the sewer line on Chambers Street. Pyles Plumbing is the subcontractor with an estimate of \$42,438.00 which includes the Pellicano markup.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the change order for the City Hall Construction Project. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of agreement with Golf Club for LWCF Grant – tabled from June 1, 2020 Council Meeting

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to table the approval of the agreement. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Approval to open City facilities

Ms. Hall stated City Hall facilities have not reopened based as of yet. Ms. Hall recommended to reopen City facilities; to follow social distancing and precautionary guidelines already in place.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to reopen City facilities. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Stroud inquired about the cleaning of the facilities in between facilities being rented. After some discussion regarding cost of cleaning the City facilities Mr. Hewett withdrew his motion. Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to table the approval to allow for further research for cleaning the facilities until the next council meeting on July 7, 2020; city facilities would remain closed. Seconded by Mr. Lawrence; the motion carried unanimously.

Reschedule first Council meeting of July 2020.

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to conduct the first Council Meeting of July as Tuesday, July 7, 2020. Seconded by Mr. Goolsby, the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Requisitions Greater than \$5,000**GWJ motor/pump for jail lift station \$28,946.00 – 2014 SPLOST**

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve the requisition as presented. Seconded by Mr. Stroud; the motion carried unanimously.

City Manager's Report

Ms. Hall provided the following report to Council:

- Summer camps began today; list of camps has been posted on city Facebook page; contact county rec dept. with questions or to sign up 478-994-7795; this is a joint city/county project with the city funding the instructors and the county handling putting the camps together; Landon and Shari worked very hard to meet the 33 guidelines put in place for summer camps to be held
- Grits has withdrawn their request that was approved at the last council meeting to close the parking spaces and one lane of traffic in front of their business. They met with the business owners beside them and have spread their tables out down the sidewalk towards Flowers by Helen.
- We will begin advertising for a beer and wine package license for the Royal C Convenience Store being built beside Zaxby's. Hopefully we can get the advertisement in next week's paper and hold the public hearing at the first meeting in July
- City Hall building update – had to close additional street area last week or safety inspector would shut the project down. Kimball at Main is closed to through traffic, people exiting from the bank parking lot can do so and make a right onto Kimball and then right onto Chambers. Drive through is directed to exit on Chambers. Pellicano still on track for March 2021 completion date but it is still very early! Began biweekly meetings with contractor last week to discuss submittals and RFI's. Received pay estimate #2 today in the amount of \$64,864.35 which will be processed this week.
- Splashpad – part still has not been received; manufacturer stated last Monday that it was shipped expedited delivery on Tuesday but still not received and no explanation other than COVID-19 has delayed everything. Those that have not seen their emails today, we did have an issue or misunderstanding, and the equipment was overridden so the pad could open. This may have damaged some of the equipment and we are checking on all of that right now to make sure. As soon as the part is received, Carlos will come back and install it immediately.
- As of last Thursday, all fulltime employees are back at work after teleworking. City Hall has reopened without issues. Welcome Center is still not open as CVB is following other Welcome Centers as to when they reopen.
- T-SPLOST joint meeting with county this Friday at 8:00 am at the County Conference Center. This is to approve the IGA for the T-SPLOST and review projects. Previously we said we would resurface city streets with the funds. I would like to propose that you consider extending the sidewalk from where it ends on Johnston Street approximately at Short Street and go out to connect on Highway 41 and turn down Country Club Drive and extend sidewalk to the city park. We included the portion to connect to where DOT installed sidewalk on Highway 41 in the Regional T-SPLOST projects that failed and at that time the estimated cost was \$720,000. Hofstadter said a good estimate to account for inflation and to add Country Club would be an additional \$500,000 for a total estimate of \$1.2 million. The county is using the same estimates from previous attempts to have the tax approved and they show the city receiving \$2.5 million in revenues for this tax. I feel that the cost estimate may be a little low based primarily on the lay of the land and easements that will be needed and the revenues may be a little high.
- Financial report – the aging continues to look pretty good. Current month shows \$910,703; bills in the amount of \$644,248 were mailed today; shows \$80,000 in the 1+ month and \$8,900 in the 2+ month. SPLOST revenues are down for the entire year. 2019 average of first 4 months was \$63,315 and 2020 average for same time frame is \$53,498. Local Option Sales Tax is down approximately \$42,600 from same time frame as last year.

City Attorney Report

Mr. Melton had no further business to report.

Mayor's Report

Mr. Wilson had no further business to report.

Additional Business

No additional business was reported.

Mr. Howard arrived in person for the Council Meeting at 8:11 p.m.

Public Comments

Walter Goodson expressed concerns over a recent incident he was involved in within the City.

Executive Session

Mayor Wilson stated an executive session was needed to discuss potential pending litigation.

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to adjourn into executive session. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously. Mayor and Council adjourned into executive session at 8:17 p.m.

Mr. Stroud offered a motion to adjourn the executive session. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously. Mayor and Council returned to open session at 8:59 p.m.

Adjourn

There being no further business Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to adjourn the Council Meeting. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.