

Minutes
Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council
City of Chattahoochee Hills, Georgia
September 1, 2020 / 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order

Mayor Reed called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Councilmembers in attendance were Ruby Foster, Richard Schmidt, Laurie Searle, Alan Merrill, and Troy Bettis. All members were present. Also present was Attorney Tom Lacy for City Attorney Rick Lindsey.

Review and Approval of Agenda

Mayor Reed called for a motion to amend the agenda as follows:

- 1. Add a Proclamation in Appreciation for Outstanding Volunteer Service by Diane Hautt and Sandy Simblist*
- 2. Move Councilmember Alan Merrill's announcement to later in the meeting*
- 3. Remove the Southern Comprehensive Transportation Plan presentation (presented at the August 27th Work Session)*

Councilmember Schmidt made a motion to approve the agenda as amended.

Councilmember Merrill seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

- 1. Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 4, 2020*
- 2. Minutes of the Special Called Meeting of August 20, 2020*

Councilmember Merrill made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 4, 2020 and the Special Called Meeting of August 20, 2020. Councilmember Foster seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentations/Proclamations

- 1. Proclamation in Appreciation for Outstanding Volunteer Service by Diane Hautt and Sandy Simblist*

Mayor Reed read a proclamation recognizing Diane Hautt and Sandy Simblist for their volunteer work with Community Brickworks.

- 2. National Suicide Prevention Month Proclamation*

Mayor Reed read a proclamation proclaiming the month of September as National Suicide Prevention + Action Month.

Public Comment

Jennifer Landers, 9110 Selborne Lane #210 – said she wanted to introduce herself to the Council. She is the new VP of Operations for Serenbe Development and is looking forward to working with the city.

Danean Crawford, 5575 Cochran Mill Road – thanked Public Works Director Darold Wendlandt for his help repositioning 26 signs throughout the city. She also spoke in opposition to the mask ordinance. She said she has been a registered nurse for 24 years and works in the Piedmont Healthcare System. She has been tracking the COVID numbers. She said the numbers had been trending up but are now on a downward fall. She asked the Council to not make a mandatory mask ordinance in the city. She said we have large properties with vast amounts of land and the citizens should have the freedom to choose whether or not to wear a mask.

Staff Reports

Financial Update: City Manager Robbie Rokovitz

Mr. Rokovitz commended Fire Chief Greg Brett and Public Works Director Darold Wendlandt for working in the middle of the night to clear a tree from the road in front of city hall. He also reported on the financials as of August 31, 2020. The city is 17% through the fiscal year. Revenues do not come in quickly this time of year so the city must rely on fund balance. General fund expenditures are 14%, and total revenue including fund balance is 41%.

Fire Department Report: Greg Brett

Chief Brett reported that Brad Wilson was promoted to Fire Lieutenant for A-shift. He also said EMS statistics are trending upward and the patients are predominately COVID related. The department has had challenges maintaining manpower levels with during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the reliance on part-time employees, but response times have not been affected. The next step for the automatic aid agreement with the City of South Fulton is configuring the computer aided dispatching. He also presented the COVID-19 statistics in the city by Council district.

Police Department Report: Jim Little

Chief Little reported that calls in August were in line with the numbers from the same time last year. The number of traffic tickets are down because the officers are spending more time patrolling. Parking tickets are up significantly. All officers have completed the annual training hours required by the state, and new hire Officer Joseph Wells started work on August 31st.

Public Works/Parks Report: Darold Wendlandt

Mr. Wendlandt said that he and Fire Chief Greg Brett worked hand-in-hand during the early morning hours to clear the tree in front of city hall and Chief Brett is a huge asset. He also said that the gravel roads have held up well with the recent heavy rains. He has two staff out on medical leave and one employee resigned to take a job closer to home. He said the Department of Natural Resources is doing great work on the construction of the Campbellton Park boat ramp but work has been delayed due to weather.

Community Development: Mike Morton

Mr. Morton reported there were a total of 14 building permits issued in August with five of them for single family dwellings. There will be filming on Campbellton Redwine Road with intermittent traffic control on September 16th. Three Rivers Regional Commission has extended the comment period for the DRI for the proposed rock quarry in Carroll County until September 26th. The next Planning Commission meeting is September 10th. The agenda will include the variance application and concept plan for Deer Hollow and the preliminary plat for Creation at Serenbe.

Public Hearing

1. **Item 20-010:** Public Hearing and Action on an Ordinance to amend the Official Zoning Map to Rezone Ten Acres from the RL (Rural) District to the HM-MU (Mixed-Use Hamlet) District – property is ten acres in two parcels on the west side of Atlanta Newnan Road between Selborne Way and Selborne lane.

Community Development Director Mike Morton presented the item. The proposal is to add the ten acres to the Serenbe hamlet. The plan shows three acres developed and seven acres of open space. The site plan includes lots along the north side that are within the required buffer. The applicant has applied for a variance which is on the agenda under New Business for a first read. The recommendation is to continue the public hearing to coincide with the requested variance.

City Attorney Tom Lacy read the rules for the public hearing.

Mayor Reed opened the public hearing.

The following people spoke in support of the item:

1. *Pepper Bullock (emailed comments read by City Attorney Tom Lacy) – as a co-owner of three properties on Atlanta Newnan Road, he supports the rezoning request.*
2. *John Reid, 8390 Hearn Road (applicant) – said most people know the property as “Deer Hollow”, which is the location of many charity events. In 2019, he and his wife divided the property into 3-acre lots under the RL guidelines. After discussing it more, they became aware of a better plan which would preserve seven acres of the property in perpetuity. He said the proposal is a better plan for them, Serenbe, and the community.*

There was no other public comment.

Mayor Reed closed the public hearing.

Mayor Reed called for a motion to continue the public hearing for Item 20-010 to the October meeting. Councilmember Merrill made a motion to continue the public hearing to the October meeting. Councilmember Bettis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

1. **Item 20-027:** Ordinance for a Variance to the Required Zoning District Buffer – application is to eliminate the required district buffer. Property is ten acres in two parcels on the west side of Atlanta Newnan Road between Selborne Way and Selborne Lane. *First read only. No action will be taken.*

Community Development Director Mike Morton presented the item. The property is currently under consideration for a rezoning and the applicant has requested a variance to eliminate the required district buffer. There would be no buffer along the north side of the property and a 70-foot buffer along Atlanta Newnan Road. No action was taken.

2. **Item 20-028:** Approval of the Southern Fulton Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

Mayor Reed presented the item. The presentation of the plan was given during the August 27th Work Session. As discussed at the Work Session, there are several areas of federal funding that the city would be not be eligible for unless it participates in the plan.

Mayor Reed called for a motion on Item No. 20-028. Councilmember Searle made a motion to approve Item No. 20-028. Councilmember Merrill seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Item 20-029:** Resolution Adopting Revisions to the Fiscal Year 2020 Budget. *City Manager Robbie Rokovitz presented the item. This resolution is an audit item for the FY2020 audit. The city collects a fee based on a percentage of court fines, and Georgia law requires that the city adopt a Technology Fund Budget for those fees that are collected.*

Mayor Reed called for a motion on Item No. 20-029. Councilmember Schmidt made a motion to approve Item No. 20-029. Councilmember Foster seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Item 20-030:** Ordinance Requiring the Use of Masks or Face Coverings in Public During the COVID-19 Outbreak.

Mayor Reed presented the item. Governor Kemp's office has requested that cities adopt this or a similar ordinance. The ordinance ties the wearing of face coverings to the case load statistics.

Mayor Reed called for a motion on Item No. 20-030. Councilmember Merrill made a motion to approve Item No. 20-030. Councilmember Foster seconded.

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Councilmember Bettis said the city would be making a mistake by passing the ordinance. Businesses can create their own policies for requiring masks. He said the mandate sets a dangerous precedent.

Councilmember Merrill said we have situation in which the equivalent population of every person and every animal who lives in Coweta County would be dead from Coronavirus. 180,000 deaths means there would be no one there. The Governor is begging local officials to put an ordinance like this into effect, and the city owes it to the leader of the state to back him up.

Councilmember Schimdt said he agrees that people are intelligent and can make their own choices.

Councilmember Searle questioned if businesses, specifically those in more populated places like Serenbe, could still require masks if the ordinance did not pass. Other than that, she tends to agree with Councilmembers Schmidt and Bettis.

Councilmember Foster said she agrees with wearing masks. It is especially important for protecting public safety employees that are interacting with the public and staff dealing with people coming in and out of city hall.

Mayor Reed called for the vote on Item No. 20-030. The motion failed 2-3, Councilmembers Bettis, Schmidt, and Searle opposed.

5. Item 20-031: Resolution Accepting a Donation from K.D. McMurrain, M.D., in the Form of Two 72-inch Skag Diesel Lawnmowers
City Manager Robbie Rokovitz presented the item. Public Works Director Darold Wendlandt said the mowers will be huge assets for cutting the field in the parks and will save wear and tear on the other equipment.

Mayor Reed called for a motion on Item No. 20-031. Councilmember Searle made a motion to approve Item No. 20-031. Councilmember Merrill seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Reed said Councilmember Merrill had an announcement to make.

Councilmember Merrill announced that he was resigning his position as District 4 Councilmember effective immediately. He will be moving to the Presbyterian Village development in Athens, Georgia in early 2021, and by resigning now, the citizens of District 4 will be able to elect his successor in a Special Election. He said public service has changed his life for the better and he has great respect, admiration, and affection for the people in District 4. He has learned the following five lessons from his 13 years of civic involvement:

- 1. A respectful Council can attract and retain talented City staff;*

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- 2. Growth is required to fund home rule, especially road maintenance;*
- 3. Dense quality development can preempt urban sprawl;*
- 4. Collaboration with state, county and other city governments and NGO's is required for both tangible and intangible infrastructure;*
- 5. Good things happen when citizens become volunteers.*

*6. **Item 20-032:** Resolution for a Special Election to Fill the Council Seat for District 4. City Clerk Dana Wicher presented the item. The resolution allows for a special election to fill the District 4 Council seat which became vacant with Councilmember Merrill's resignation. The qualifying period starts at 9:30 a.m. on September 8th and closes at 5:00 p.m. on September 11th. The qualifying fee is \$36.00.*

Mayor Reed called for a motion on Item No. 20-032. Councilmember Schmidt made a motion to approve Item No. 20-032. Councilmember Searle seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor and Council Comments

Councilmember Searle announced that there will be a District 3 Town Hall meeting on September 17th. She also said it has been a privilege to know Alan and Lynn Merrill and to work with them. She said they have been involved in every volunteer effort and they will be sorely missed.

Councilmember Foster thanked Councilmember Merrill for his encouragement and for being the smile to brighten up the room. She also said she appreciated his leadership, and she thanked Lynn Merrill for all she has done.

Councilmember Schmidt encouraged Council members to come up with ideas such as Councilmember Searle's Quilt Trail idea for spending the hotel motel funds. He said the city has a lot of history so historical markers could be a good use of the funds. He also asked Police Chief Little about trucks parking illegally on the road along Charlie's. He thanked Dr. McMurray for his donation of the lawnmowers. He thanked Councilmember Merrill, who has served the community since before we were a city, and Lynn Merrill for all her work with the charter school.

Councilmember Bettis echoed the sentiment of everyone else and said he will miss out on a great opportunity to get to know Councilmember Merrill better. He said took Councilmember Merrill's "5 lessons" to heart. He also thinks the historical markers are a great idea to pursue and said the city has some great historians. He complimented Ken Langley on his work documenting the graveyards and the connection to the Cash family.

Mayor Reed said the sad thing about the level of thoughtfulness that Councilmember Merrill mentioned about why he is making this decision to move on is that he has spread that thoughtfulness to a group of his friends, so we will be losing several people

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who have been pillars of the community for the same reason. Alan Merrill has done so much for so long in the community-he'll be greatly missed. He and Lynn have become good friends, and it is hard to imagine this role (of Mayor) without him here.

Councilmember Merrill said he has had the pleasure of working with elected officials, members of the board of the Conservancy, with other volunteers, and city staff. He may not know every member of staff by name, but he has a great deal of respect for all of them. Being a member of City Council, you occasionally will receive a text message notifying Council that there has been a serious accident. He worries about the first responders because, with each of those calamities, they are giving up a little bit more of themselves. He said he has a special place in his heart for the first responders. He presented a "First Responder" American Flag as a gift to the city.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Adjourn Meeting

Councilmember Bettis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Foster seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Approved this 6th day of October, 2020.

Dana Wicher, City Clerk

Tom Reed, Mayor