

11-30-23 Mayor/Council Q&A Minutes

Phil Alongi- What is the current process of how things come before council?

Staff: Development applications go to Dr. Jerry Weitz (City Planner), through a Public Hearing, and then to the Council for a vote. Dr. Weitz provides a zoning report (which includes a recommendation for approval/denial) which is included in the agenda packet given to councilmembers before the public hearing/work session meetings. (These packets are also made available to the public on our website.)

Councilmember Brown: The council would like to create a package to give to developers detailing what the City would like to see (i.e bare minimums re: landscaping, signage, elevations).

Ace Acevedo- Concerning the proposed DDA meeting time change from 6:00pm to 3:00pm for the purpose of avoiding employee overtime hours: could employees just adjust their scheduled hours worked each week instead?

Yes, that is a possibility. The time change is just a discussion at this point.

Mayor Martin prefers the 6:00pm time so that more people are able to attend.

Scott Butler- Dr. Weitz is probably top 2 in the state for planning and zoning and does a great job. One thing he does not do is evaluate strengths/weaknesses and impacts (i.e. traffic, debt) of projects. The staff should provide this information.

If approved when the new Council takes office, the planning and zoning commission would meet with Jerry Weitz, determine the impacts, and then present their findings to the Council and citizens.

Joe Sullivan- Would the planning and zoning commission consist of employees? With the existing growth challenges the City is facing, would it be prudent to hire a consultant to look at the big picture (evaluating a potential bypass, etc)?

The planning and zoning commission would be made up of citizen volunteers. (They will be looking for volunteers with planning experience.)

There is a 5/10 year plan in the works.

The Georgia Department of Transportation recently held a meeting in the City for local governments and the extended timeline for potential road improvements was discussed. The Mayor would like to get GDOT to present this information to the citizens.

Dee Poteet- What plans are there for the property the city has purchased? Mulberry is an eyesore; could it be cleaned up a bit? Could it incorporate a community garden? Could a "future home of" sign be displayed to inform the public?

Mayor: Mulberry will be built out in 3 phases

Harrison: Phase 1: walkable trails, Phase 2: playground, Phase 3: amphitheater

Wheeler: The cost of the Mulberry project to the city will be about \$1 million and the grant will cover an additional \$500,000.

Larry's Garage?

The city is working with developer Matt Ruppel on a long term lease for the building.

Will the city have to put money into it?

Maybe

Mrs. Poteet expressed her concern about dumping money into something without the community getting anything out of it.

Rodney Cato asked why the city doesn't just sell the property. Does the charter allow the city to conduct commercial real estate business?

Harrison: It's the DDA's job to revamp the downtown area. Look to Braselton as an example; the city of Braselton owns the 1904 building, Local Station, etc.

Oak Street: Nine parcels are owned by the city; instead of a community garden, would the city be better served by shops located here to generate revenue?

The Oak Street property was deeded to the city with the restriction that the property be used as a park. There has not been a consistent vision for the final use of the space, so Harrison suggested that the project be tabled until the new Council takes office in January and has time to develop a vision.

Bevelett McCain-What is the red building on highway 53?

It is going away. This parcel is part of the property assemblage that the Kroger will be developed upon.

Mayor Martin: What do citizens want in parks? Need volunteers and input.

Mayor Martin: The Councilmembers will each head an area of interest/project beginning in January: examples: Parks & Rec/ Facilities/ Economic Development/ Cemetery

Bevelett McCain-What is the vision for Hoschton? Motto?

Mayor Martin: The city needs to establish an identity.

Councilmember Brown: The city needs a long-term plan/vision/target.

Scott Butler-Times have changed and developers/contractors are no longer living in the community, so their profits are not staying within Hoschton.

Mayor Martin: The decisions should be made for the benefit of the citizens.

Ace Acevedo-Is there a plan for road repairs?

Harrison: We do have a road inventory which lists graded roads for future repairs. We want to find revenue for the city through commercial developments to avoid property taxes.

Councilmember Brown: We need a master plan regarding revenue and a Capital Improvement 5 year plan.

Harrison: We are looking forward to a new team with fresh ideas for the city.

Jack Flint- Regarding wells: We need to find new water sources.

Harrison: The city does have two promising locations on the Pirkle property and is also talking to Kolter about a few areas in Twin Lakes. The city needs water and to try to be more independent. She would like to be the one selling water/sewer to neighboring municipalities instead of the buyer.

Phil Alongi- Does Hoschton hire professional consultants re: parks to develop a conceptual vision or model?

Harrison: The city had 3 professionals submit ideas/bids for the Mulberry project. Brewer Engineering was the chosen company and they did create a concept plan as part of their proposal.

Scott Butler- Carl Vinson Institute at UGA could be hired to develop a 5-yr or 10-yr plan for the city.

Mayor Martin: We do have meetings set up, but we are also trying to be respectful of the budget.

Do we know when Kroger will start building?

Yes, they plan to break ground in the second quarter of 2024 and open in summer of 2025. There will be retail space, sit-down restaurants, and drive-thru restaurants. The developer has been invited to the January Q&A meeting which will focus on the results from the Hoschton survey.

Are Hoschton's water and sewer capacity a problem?

Councilmember Brown: Zoning approvals do not guarantee water/sewer until the new phase is completed in 2028-2029. That guarantee comes when the plats are approved.

The commercial developments use far less than residential developments, so it's not a concern for Kroger/Publix.

The city is prepared and able to serve the developments that are already in progress—like Twin Lakes/Cresswind: there will not be an issue with water/sewer capacity. The .95 MGD wastewater treatment plant expansion will be live in 2025.

The booster pump for the new water tank beside the fire department will be started in February, so the water tank should be in use in the Spring. This should improve water pressure for those having low pressure issues.

Ace Acevedo- Have there been fire hydrant water pressure issues?

No, fire hydrant are routinely tested and there have been no issues.

Rodney Cato- Why doesn't the city require septic tanks on the new developments to avoid the sewer capacity issue?

The developments have already been promised sewer capacity as a condition of zoning, so that would not apply to anything already approved.

Melinda Allen (via YouTube chat)- Is there any plan to take the Village of Hoschton off well water because it is affecting pipes?

We will have to check with our engineer.

