

CITY OF HOSCHTON
CITY COUNCIL
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2023 AT 6:00PM
HOSCHTON COMMUNITY CENTER
65 CITY SQUARE, HOSCHTON



PUBLIC HEARING
DRAFT MINUTES

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER *at 6:01pm by Acting Mayor James Lawson*

INVOCATION *by Phil Alongi*

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE *by Pete Bava*

ADMINISTER OATHS OF OFFICE TO MAYOR DEBBIE MARTIN AND TO
COUNCILMEMBER DAVID BROWN

Judge Ben Green administered oaths of office to Councilmember Brown and to Mayor Martin.

[At this point, Mayor Debbie Martin assumed control of the meeting.]

AGENDA APPROVAL *no changes*

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Martin turned the public hearing over to Attorney Abb Hayes to run.

1. **Z-23-12 Rezoning:** Horace J. Healan, applicant and property owner, seeks to rezone 1.09 acre fronting approximately 247 feet on the north side of Pendergrass Road (SR 332) across from the intersection of Pendergrass Road and Towne Center Parkway (Map/Parcel 120/018) from A (Agricultural District) to C-1 (Neighborhood Business District). Proposed use: Office / Business. (Consulting Planning Staff Recommendation: Approval)
Dr. Jerry Weitz stated that the Staff Recommendation is approval.

Public Comments

Denise Healan Smith, Franklin County, GA, spoke on behalf of her father, the applicant. Mr. Healan has lived in Hoschton for over 60 years and was Postmaster of Hoschton for 40 years. Mr. Healan has no plans to develop his property, but feels the time is right to have it rezoned because of the current growth and opportunity to maximize the property value. He plans to continue to live in the home for the rest of his life.

Mayor Martin asked Dr. Weitz if the requested zoning is in compliance with the future land use plan. Dr. Weitz replied yes, the property is recommended for institutional zoning, but office-residential (OR) use would be very close to that. C-1 would be overall consistent with the future land use plan.

Mayor Martin asked the councilmembers if they had any opinions on changing the zoning from C-1 to OR.

Councilmember David Brown stated that based on the land use map and the described needs of the resident, he would like to see OR zoning.

Councilmember Sam Waites was not ready to comment.

Councilmember Fredria Sterling responded that she would like to comply with the resident's request.

Councilmember Tracy Carswell stated that it is important to make sure the change to OR would fit the applicant's needs.

Councilmember Lawson asked if there were any tax ramifications for choosing OR zoning over C-1. Dr. Weitz replied that he thought the value of the property would increase more with C-1 than with OR zoning, therefore the real property appraisal/taxes would increase as well.

Dr. Weitz directed the Council to his report in which he explains that unless restrictions/conditions are placed on new zoning, the applicant would be able to use the property for any of the uses listed within the specified zoning district.

2. 2024 FY Budget

Finance Director Tiffany Wheeler listed a few key points of the proposed budget:

General Fund:

-\$4.4 million operating budget, a decrease of a bit less than \$400,000 from 2023 (expect building permits to be half of last year's number and took a roll-back on property taxes)

-Capital Projects: Public Works building and continuation of road paving

-Mulberry Park project (approved for \$500,000 grant)

-Two new employees budgeted: Police Department (already hired) and Public Works

Water/Sewer:

-\$3.8 million operating budget, an increase of approx. \$950,000 from 2023 (partly because solid waste and stormwater will be moved back under the water/sewer umbrella, as they are not self-sustaining)

- Multiple upgrades to water/sewer infrastructure will continue or begin in 2024: water lines, wastewater treatment plant, etc
- One new employee budgeted: water operator

Public Comments

Cathy Vera, 298 Chatuge Dr, asked several questions:

- 1. Does the police department have liability insurance? [Hayes: Yes, and the police department also has sovereign immunity to protect against liability in lawsuits. Wheeler: The premium payments are included in the budget within the insurance line item.]*
- 2. Why did Culture and Recreation repairs and maintenance increase from \$100,000 to \$500,000? [Wheeler: The Mulberry property falls under the repairs and maintenance category because a new structure is not being put on the property at this time. The budgeted funds will be used with the \$500,000 grant money to continue enhancing the property.]*
- 3. Why did building improvements decrease from \$250,000 to \$0? [Wheeler: The building improvements budget of \$250,000 for 2023 was designated as follows: \$125,000 for the Cabin Drive project (basketball courts in progress) and \$125,000 for the Oak Street project (which has been put on hold). The City does not plan any building improvements for 2024 (\$0 budgeted) since a decrease in revenue is expected.] What is the Mulberry project? [Wheeler: It is the 7 acres on Broad Street next to the gravel parking area-- will eventually include walking trails, an amphitheater, and playground.]*
- 4. Why did Building Inspections expenditures decrease from \$214,000 to \$144,000? [Wheeler: The City will have a new building official and the pay scale has been adjusted.]*
- 5. Under the Downtown Development Authority, what was the \$720,000 for site improvements spent on? [Wheeler: It wasn't spent. It had to be included in the budget since it was part of a GDOT grant (for sidewalks) that required a match from the City. On the revenue side of things, you would have seen \$546,000 from the GDOT grant. Nothing has been spent.]*
- 6. Water/Sewer: Why is there \$509,000 revenue from refuse collection for 2024, but nothing for 2023? [Wheeler: Solid waste was not a part of water and sewer last year, but it will be under that umbrella for 2024.]*

Tom Hamberger, 627 Cumberland Trail, asked how SPLOST funds are worked into the budget and how are they distributed? [Wheeler: SPLOST funds are kept separate from all other money. The City must appear before the Jackson County SPLOST committee to request permission to use SPLOST funds on specific projects/items that were previously submitted to the county upon setting up the SPLOST fund. Hayes: SPLOST is different from the rest of the budget in that it is decided by voters. A project list is put on the

ballot when the voters decided for or against SPLOST; the list could be specific (i.e. Mulberry project) or general (i.e. roads). When the revenues are collected, they must be spent as it was outlined to the voters. So, when the City goes to the committee requesting to use the SPLOST dollars, the committee decides if the proposed projects fit within those outlined parameters.]

How does the City get its fair share of SPLOST funds collected by the county? [Hayes: It is a matter of negotiation with the county based on population and forecasts of revenue raised.]

ADJOURN Motion to adjourn at 6:39pm by Sterling, seconded by Lawson, and all in favor.

ROLL CALL:

Debbie Martin, Mayor
David Brown, Councilmember
Tracy Carswell, Councilmember
James Lawson, Councilmember
Fredria Sterling, Councilmember
Sam Waites, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Jerry Weitz, City Planner
Abbott S. Hayes, Jr., City Attorney
Jennifer Harrison, City Manager
Tiffany Wheeler, Finance Director
Jen Williams, Assistant City Clerk
Media

Approved:

Debbie Martin, Mayor

Date

Jennifer Williams, Assistant City Clerk