



Blakely City Council Minutes

March 7, 2023, City Hall, 5:00PM
Special Called Meeting

- i. Disciplinary Appeal Hearing
Cancelled



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Regular Meeting
March 7, 2023, City Hall, 6:00 P.M.

- I. Public Hearing RE Semi Truck Parking of Howell Street
Mayor Travis Wimbush called the hearing to order at 6:03pm. Mayor Travis Wimbush, Councilmember Margaret Davis, Councilmember Al Hutchins, Councilmember Ray Jarrett and Councilmember Brad Clenney were all present. Also present was the City Attorney Tommy Coleman and the City Clerk Melinda Crook.

The Mayor explained the hearing procedures, stating that they had up to 10 minutes each and that each would be allotted the same amount of time, then asked if anyone for the rezoning wished to address the Mayor and Council.

Attorney for the rezoning requestee, Ben Armstrong, addressed the Mayor and Council. He stated that his client was working with the authorities to address the items related to this project. He stated that his client is in communication with the State/GDOT and it is their intention to get an entrance off HWY 27 and not on local street. He then stated buffering is being worked on to make sure that there are types of trees and shrubs to buffer the traffic and supply safety for the property owners.

Celia Bostwick addressed the Mayor and Council stating that she understood the safety issues and noise issue but that this project needs to be looked at from an economic stand point. She then stated that requestee will do their very best to make certain that this project will be handled very well and that they have done nothing but good for Early County.

Charlie Sol addressed the Mayor and Council against the project. He stated that he lives in the neighborhood in which the rezoning is being proposed and that it is a nice quiet neighborhood. He stated that he is a truck and school bus driver and that trucks are loud and when you get a lot it will be noisy. He stated that they did not move to this neighborhood to hear this noise.

Sandra Cawthorn addressed the Mayor and Council against the project. She stated that her opposition was not just for the truck issue but the total rezoning of Howell St. She stated that everyone knows that trucks make a lot of noise. She stated that having lived in Atlanta she has lived behind the barriers and they do not buffer all the noise. She then stated that if a vote was taken at this meeting it is on the plans presented at the Planning Commission meeting and those plans did not show an entrance off HWY 27 but off of Howell St. She requested that a vote wait until they get everything in order and/or corrected. She then stated that if Howell St. was rezoned commercial it opens it up for other commercial items can come into a now residential area. She stated that all is being asked is that they give these residents the same consideration



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that has been given to other zoning issues previously presented. She stated that she would love to see Early County flourish because it is her hometown and is for bringing people in. She stated that the citizens should come first. She requested that the residents be taken into consideration not just politics.

The public hearing was closed at 6:13

II. Call To Order, Roll Call, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance

Let the record show that Mayor Travis Wimbush called the meeting to order. Mayor Travis Wimbush, Councilmember Margaret Davis, Councilmember Al Hutchins, Councilmember Ray Jarrett, Councilmember Brad Clenney were all present. Also present was City Attorney Tommy Coleman and City Clerk Melinda Crook. There was a moment of silence for President Jimmy Carter and family, the Gilbert Family and Brooks & Miracle Carter. After the moment of silence Bradley Crews gave the invocation. The Mayor and Council led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance

III. Recognition of Lady Bobcats

The Mayor and Council recognized the 2022-2023 Lady Bobcats as the Region 1A Division 2 Region Champs along with Coach Kimmie Graham, named Coach of the Year, Player of the Year and other players that made all-star. Coach Graham named off the players and their awards

The Mayor and Council recognized Fire Chief Randy McDonald for 41 yrs. of dedicated service with the City.

The Mayor and Council recognized Kenneth Jones for 47 yrs. of service. The Mayor stated that even though retired Kenneth is still working part time.

IV. Mayor's Spotlight

The Mayor stated that the February Mayor spotlight was Officer Trakendra Mitchell. He spoke of a recent incident where in trying to control a situation and looking out for the wellbeing of others was struck by a moving vehicle

V. Approve Minutes

A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Jarrett to approve the minutes from the February 7th work session and regular session. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present



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VI. Citizens And Delegations Recreation Department

A representative from the Recreation Department, Mr. Freeman, came before the Mayor and Council to give an update on Recreation Department activities. He stated that they had 125 participants in basketball three girls leagues and 4 boys leagues. He gave a thank you to First State Bank for their 2022 support of the basketball league. Mr. Freeman gave an update of the GRPA league. He then spoke on the upcoming Spring 2023 activities, basketball, softball, and T-ball. He stated that there is a shortage of umpires if there is any interest. He spoke about sponsorship. He stated they are trying to keep the kids occupied. The Mayor question if someone was gotten and safe serve certified could it be worked where concessions help offset costs (hotel and travel) for the parents and the department.

Bradley Crews – First Baptist Church

Mr. Crews thanked the Mayor and Council for what they do for the citizens of Blakely. He stated that he is coming on behalf of First Baptist Church trying to help keep citizens safe in crossing the street. He stated that there is a lot of traffic on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. He stated that there are elderly who cannot move as fast as they used to and children crossing not always looking. He stated what they try are presently doing to watch for traffic. He stated that even with what they are doing it hasn't always help because traffic is concerned with beating the traffic light. He asked if there was any way to make the light a four-way stop on Wednesday's and Sundays at particular times. He said that speed bumps and/or repainting the crosswalk was questioned. The Mayor questioned the City Attorney who stated that the City could do all the things suggest and they stated that Chief Caudill should talk with Pastor Crews. The Mayor informed Pastor Crews that he would have Chief Caudill get with them.

VII. Administrative Committee Will Caudill – Updates

Chief Will Caudill gave his monthly report. Councilmember Hutchins questioned shots fired on Howell St. and if included in the report to which it was stated that it would be included in the March report. Chief Caudill stated that no one has been caught yet. Chief Caudill informed the Mayor and Council that the Police Dept is still short staffed with several out on medical leave vacancies for a total of 7 short. He stated they had hosted a training class and that other areas had come in for the training as well. He stated that they had been approved for a grant for \$21,000 which would work in conjunction with the other grants. He stated that they had training on the Apex Trainer along with going through orientation on the Rural Crime grant that had been award. He stated that the grant writer has applied for Highway Safety Grant for some more items to go along with the police car computers grant project.



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Matt Hromalik - E911 Updates

E911 Director Matt Hromalik gave the monthly report. He stated that there were a total of 3,324 calls

VIII. City Attorney's Report
MOU Animal Shelter

The City Attorney, Tommy Coleman, stated that the MOU was for a \$10,000 grant from the Atlanta Humane Society for the Animal Shelter. He stated that he had made some amendments regarding the contractor section, the confidentiality section and added a section regarding insurance. The Mayor informed the Council that the grant was for kennel replacement. A motion was made by Councilmember Davis and seconded by Councilmember Clenney to approve the MOU with the condition that the Attorney's agree to language amendments. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

IX. City Clerk's Report

The City Clerk presented the Mayor and Council with financial reports for the last fully completed month of January. She then gave a powerpoint presentation of the month financials for the public

X. New Items Proposed By Mayor And City Council
Surplus Items for Sale

The Mayor informed the Council that the 10 Ford Rangers and one Explorer had been received. He asked that the Council approve the list present declared surplus to be placed on GovDeals for sale. A motion was made by Councilmember Jarrett and seconded by Councilmember Clenney to approve declaring the items surplus. The Mayor asked if the old tables and chairs from the Community Center be added to the list. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

Reappointment of Wallace O'Neal to Planning Commission

A motion was made by Councilmembers Davis and seconded by Councilmember Clenney to approve the re-appointment of Wallace O'Neal to the Planning Commission. Councilmember Hutchins questioned if it had been put out to the public that this appointment comes up every four years for appointment. The Mayor stated that there is a motion on the floor the re-appoint because his appointment has come up. The Mayor stated that this is the way this has been done in the past. There was some more brief discussion. The motion carried with Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Jarrett, and Councilmember Clenney voting "YEH" and Councilmember Hutchins voting "NAY"



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The Mayor spoke to the Council about the generator at E911. The Mayor stated that the current one is outdated. He stated that there was a quote on a new one split by all entities covered under warranty in the amount of \$17,300. He stated that he and Councilmember Jarrett had spoke with Tony Gentry on a generator owned by EMA. He stated that a grant could possibly be gotten to cover up to 35%. A motion was made by Councilmember Jarrett and seconded by Councilmember Clenney to purchase a new generator. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present.

The Mayor questioned if there were questions on the pay changes. The Mayor explained that the reasons for the increase requests. The Mayor stated that these are not an increase to the budget with one person having left. Councilmember Jarrett asked if a motion could be made to go into Executive Session to discussion the pay changes. A motion was made by Councilmember Jarrett and seconded by Councilmember Clenney to enter Executive Session for personnel. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present. It was discussed to do the Executive Session after public comments to which Councilmember Jarrett went to rescind his motion to which it was stated that the motion could stay in place just enact on it after public comments.

Councilmember Hutchins questioned the City Clerk if Mr. Lee had been contacted completing a report on a pothole incident. The Clerk informed Councilmember Hutchins that Mr. Lee had come in and filed a report. The Mayor stated that he had spoke with the City Attorney regarding this matter and informed Mr. Lee of the decision that the City was not liable.

Councilmember Hutchins questioned about department heads being able to spend up to \$500 without getting in contact with anyone. He asked who had changed this process. The Mayor stated that he had made the change and explained why. There was discussion between the Mayor and Councilmember Hutchins on the current process. The Mayor stated that they are still able to get what they need. The Mayor stated the work that he does regarding the finances and that he won't be taking an attack on how things are being done. Councilmember Jarrett asked to have the department heads present speak on if they have issues with the process. Several department heads responded they were okay with the process/communication and one stated they would like some discretionary spending allowed. The Mayor spoke regarding Councilmembers being over the departments, that the Council can change to an administrator/city manager form of government and the financial stability of the City.

The Mayor stated that from the Town Hall meeting it was asked that if a question is asked and not answered during the public comments that they get contacted with a response.

XI. Public Comments



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Robert Brownlee's daughter addressed the Mayor and Council on a rezoning item that had been paid for on February 16th and she has not heard from anyone regarding this. She was informed that someone would be getting back with her.

Mr. Robert Henderson spoke on the animosity between the Mayor and Council.

Dave Atkinson commended the light department for the replacement of a pole hit between two banks. He stated that no power was lost and the crew did a very professional job.

Sandra Cawthorn questioned if the Howell St. rezoning would be voted on at this meeting. The Mayor stated that it had been missed being added to the agenda. It was questioned if the agenda could be amended to which the City Attorney stated that with the members for the project having left it was felt that it would not be fair to address the issue

Jeffery Haynes commended the Mayor and Council on their recognition of the Lady Bobcats. He also commended the Police Dept for notifying him of items he may have left outside when his business is closed. He stated that he has been working on parking issues with his U-Haul business and does not want it to be a safety issue and appreciates the Police Dept working with him on this matter. He spoke of the Kiwanis Club coming into Blakely.

Celia Bostwick stated that she has never been to a Council meeting with as much animosity. She stated her opinion on the administrator/city manager issue. She then stated that issues addressed at the meeting could have been brought up before the meeting. She also stated that she thinks there are underlying issues about the naming of the Community Center and that there should be procedures on how naming these areas (community center, Jeanette King Park etc...) get done.

XII. Executive Session – Personnel

A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Jarrett to enter Executive Session for personnel matters. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present.

A motion was made by Councilmember Hutchins and seconded by Councilmember Davis to enter back into regular session.

A motion was made by Councilmember Davis and seconded by Councilmember Clenney to approve the pay change increase requests as present. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present



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The Mayor asked that support be given for Peanut Proud and thanked Mr. Newberry and the Peanut Proud committee for their hard work. He thanked the Council for their continued support of Peanut Proud.

XIII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Councilmember Clenney and seconded by Councilmember Hutchins to adjourn the March 7th City Council meeting. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

Travis Wimbush, Mayor