



CITY OF LITHONIA
MINUTES–WORK SESSION VIRTUAL MEETING
Monday, February 21, 2022 @ 5:30 PM

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The City Council Virtual Meeting was called to order at 5:32 pm by Mayor Shameka S. Reynolds. A roll call was taken, and the following City Council Members were present: Diane Howard, Darold Honore, Amelia Inman, Vanneriah Wynn, and Yolanda Sheppard.

II. Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

III. Approval of Agenda

Councilwoman Inman motioned to approve the Work Session meeting agenda for Monday, February 21, 2022 with a change to section 7 under New Business letter d, to include that all agenda items and documents are placed into a one drive format for easy access; the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn and approved by a vote of 5-0.

IV. Public Comments (Limit 2-minutes per person)

Ric Dodd (Resident Swift Street) concerned cops grant as far as termination goes, if the city accepted and found that fiscally could not handle, the city can reach out and request termination, 22 police officers working for the city, out of those 22 with majority of reserve, 7-12 of the officers are for court, only required to provide 24 hours/month which covers 2 of the 12-hour shifts, asking that council reconsider turning down the cops award.

Dawn Massey (Resident Main Street) there are some really good things happening in Lithonia, pandemic seems to be waning and looking forward to getting back to in-person meetings, things are starting to come to fruition such as the senior center on Bruce Street and Arabia is really committed to seeing Lithonia succeed, investments are being made to provide upgrades to the parking lot, Arabia Trail, LDDA has signed a contract with a new manager for the Amphitheater, few things that are not positive need to be addressed, since January 2020 Lithonia has become a hub for late night entertainment, a local pub is staying open until 5am on Saturday night, Premier stays open until 3am, Luxor lounge is staying open until 5am, Crystal Ballroom, DJ's are cranking the music up, why does Lithonia need to be a late night hub for entertainment, noise are factors, is the community being duped or bullied. Has a few suggestions for solutions, amend the event ordinance to limit crowds to 125 ppl, hours of operation Sun-TH close at midnight, FRI-SAT open until 1am, amend the noise ordinance eliminate the decibel meter. Has talked to the chief and asked that they are more proactive about the noise. Another suggestion needs clear cut hours of operation for restaurants and bars.

Larry Long to discuss providing covid testing, vaccines (telemedicine services) to the community. Mary Reynolds suggested that Mr. Long reach out to the clerk's office to schedule a presentation during the next work session meeting.

V. Presentation

a. Ms. Ash Safehaven, Director of Outreach, Untitled Community, Inc.

Co-founder and partner Iris Safehaven provided the presentation summary proposal, nonprofit affordable housing cooperative to develop human scale housing intentional communities in Lithonia if possible. Would like to have units available for rent by the end of the year, likes Lithonia because it is a small close-knit community with heritage, likes the city's vision, growth, and master plan. Looking for exposure on the digital sign, and if there is any land available, asking for a letter of interest as codified declaration of the city's support, the press coverage would be good, tourism, provide the missing middle housing.

Council Questions:

Councilman Honore asked for clarity on the type of homes and if funding is contingent on a letter from the city. Response, architectural plans will need to be approved through zoning first, the letter is more of a welcoming of engagement.

Councilwoman Inman had no questions as both attending the Roundtable Discussion, thinks that it is a unique proposition and asked if there is a desirable area of interest. Response, a few lots of interest, have not reached out to anyone, few lots belong to the housing authority, LDDA properties, planning on 6 acres or smaller.

Councilwoman Wynn upon receiving their information has been in conversations with another acquaintance that has tiny homes and thinks that it is a good idea.

Councilwoman Sheppard asked if they are currently working with other cities. Response we are brand new, however a letter of interest is forthcoming from another group, working with a Masko co-op. Councilwoman Sheppard asked another question regarding the timeline phases, curious to understand what the second phase looks like and entails. Response, it's a 4-plex for a total of 8 units for different lifestyles, shared community area with different amenities. Councilwoman Sheppard then asked for an interpretation of helping to educate participants on home ownership. Response different model as traditionally thought of where everyone would communally own the unit to make it the cooperative. Councilwoman Sheppard likes the idea and thinks that it is creative.

Councilwoman Howard responded that it sounds like a really good idea, no questions at this time.

Mayor Reynolds thanked both for the presentation and will reach out with anything else that council needs.

b. Mr. Fred Reynolds, President, LDDA: Old Scout Hut, City-owned Properties, New Park Manager

From the Property inventory parcel list there are 2 offers on one of the parcels, requesting a quit claim deed from the city. The property on Bruce Court belongs to the city of Lithonia, requesting those are deeded to LDDA as well. Asking for next steps on the reimbursement of the old boy scout hut renovation expenses. Additionally made the announcement of the new Amphitheater Event Coordinator, Renee Miller of Enigma Group.

Councilwoman Wynn inquired about the Bruce Court property, if there would be residential input and what's coming to that area, no truck stops. Mr. Reynolds indicated that the area is designed for housing consistent with the development plan. Councilwoman Inman regarding the old scout hut would like to see receipts, more time is needed for a meeting to go over the numbers, the renovations were not approved, wants to know why the LDDA is asking that properties are deeded. Mayor Reynolds indicated there would be a separate meeting to go over the numbers.

VI. Action Item

a. Moratorium Ordinance #2022-02-02 Automobile and Truck Services

Councilwoman Howard motioned to approve Moratorium Ordinance #2022-02-02 Automobile and Truck Services, the motion was seconded by Councilman Honore and approved by a vote of 5-0.

b. Park Hours and Management

Councilman Honore stated that park hours were discussed, proposing dusk to dawn. Mayor spoke to the director of Dekalb County parks and recreation and the hours of sunrise to sunset are already in place, would like to get with the county on how this could be passed, if help is needed to ensure adherence that he would get Dekalb County involved as well, not a good idea to vote at this time to ensure everything is in line, table for now. For Park Management, Administrator Sands stated that 4 RFP's were received, Mayor Reynolds asked if council is

ready to review, Councilman Honore would like to discuss if events will be in the park of not during the next work session.

VII. New Business

a. CSX Crossing Quiet Zone

Councilwoman Sheppard expressed the need to discuss 2 letters dated September 2021 and January 2022, asked if council would allow her to take the lead on obtaining additional information. Initial letter was terminating the quiet ordinance and the city did not respond to the letter, the horn has resumed and is loud. Wants to look into what should be done to get the city back to the quiet zone and channel this conversation to the next work session. Does not appear that a vote needs to happen, just a petition to return to the quiet zone. Councilwoman Inman is curious based on 3 accidents that have occurred and if that was implemented for safety reasons. Councilwoman Sheppard stated that her research inquiry is to ask about the other safety measures that are in place to avoid the quiet zone. Chief Pollard said that he spoke with Liz Hudd at CSX when the letters were received and because those accidents happened it was repealed and would not be in compliance, instructed to take the signs down, will provide Ms. Hudd's contact information. Councilwoman Howard indicated that a bell replaced the horn blowing to let people know the train is approaching. Councilwoman Sheppard wants to see what type of information can be provided as to why the train sits sedentary for so long as part of her inquiry as well.

b. Old City Hall

Mayor Reynolds received information from the housing authority to discuss a few things, if the old city hall building is owned by the city or not, Dekalb tax assessors web site clearly shows city of Lithonia on the parcels and the housing authority shows something different that they will forward for review. A letter was recently mailed to the housing authority requesting ownership of Kelly Park, Old City Hall Annex, and the lots next door to the Masonic Lodge, hopes to have more concrete information for the next meeting and will keep this as an on-going discussion on the agenda.

Councilwoman Howard is happy that we are moving forward on this to obtain the title, would be great if we choose to rent the parcel.

Councilman Honore feels there is an issue to straighten out, we don't have any insight as to what's going on with the housing authority, last assigned board seat was 2006, all are to serve at the Mayors privilege, need new fresh blood on the housing authority to make the city a better place. Mayor Reynolds will touch on additional news during her mayors report.

Councilwoman Inman excited there is more clarity and when they would sign. Mayor Reynolds stated the housing authority asked what the city could transfer. Councilwoman Inman stated there is a law that after you have maintained a property past 7 years the ownership changes, could our attorney draft something in writing, we don't need to trade anything.

Councilwoman Wynn looking forward to the mayor following up with the additional information, report.

Councilwoman Sheppard happy to hear that mayor is moving forward. Mayor Reynolds stated the housing authority is willing to be more involved to move forward in the city.

c. Consideration of Text Amendment(s) to the Form Based Code

Bill Johnston, Zoning Administrator seeking direction on the range of permitted uses in the edge districts, funeral home at 6861 Main Street has expansion plans for a chapel, and there is a proposed hospice that is not listed on the form-based code either. From the provided list of

permitted uses the funeral home is not on that list and is non-conforming. There are steps that can be taken; inventory list of current uses, consider text amendments that would provide for desired uses, third step to revise the ordinance to reflect what council decides upon. Should we proceed with this? To introduce the subject, do we want to reevaluate the uses in the form-based code?

Councilwoman Howard asked for clarification on an existing funeral home that wants to expand, will this be on an individual basis or all the way around. Bill Johnston reiterated the suggestion of completing an inventory list and asked for authorization to have city staff perform the task, not focused on one specific address, that's just what triggered it.

Councilman Honore asked for clarification on Bill's recommendation for the proposed hospice. Bill stated the hospice is not listed on the form-based code. There are 27 permitted uses in the edge district, mayor and council can review the list once completed and add those at your pleasure to the form-based code. Councilman Honore is in agreement to move forward with the suggestion.

Councilwoman Inman would like more insight, reminded a few years ago that a vote came up regarding personal care home or group home, is that related to this. Bill stated the personal care home state requirement is that they are ambulatory, his understanding of distinction is that when you enter hospice you don't leave, not saying that you should add hospice, but an inventory is needed that it's come up, recommending that we look at this to get more information, will get with Lathaydra on the details. Councilwoman Howard stated as a FYI, some people do walk out of hospice to recovery.

Councilwoman Wynn agrees with others would like to get more information; how will this impact surrounding communities.

Councilwoman Sheppard thoughts are both funeral homes are important to the city and thrive for the community, agree to take an inventory of all businesses to ensure that we are not overlooking anything.

Councilwoman Howard referred to the hospice as a downscale from a hospital setting, noise factor on the other side of Main.

Mayor Reynolds in transparency stated the funeral home is Tri-cities, looking to add a chapel for families to assemble for a funeral for their loved one's because church's are closed. In addition to the academy building that's looking to have a hospice at that location.

d. Meeting times outside of our regularly schedule meetings, and including all agenda items into a one drive format for easy access

Councilwoman Inman, for discussion would like operations to schedule all meetings at 5:30 pm for those who work during the day. Mayor Reynolds asked that all changes to the meeting agenda are provided by 4pm on the day of distribution otherwise any changes can be made during the approval of the agenda. All councilmembers agree. City clerk asking for clarity on scheduling public hearings and will adjust the 5:30 pm time for scheduling, also indicating the time sensitive nature of the special called meeting for filming at the last minute which was isolated. Mayor then asked a question on behalf of a resident, "Has there been any townhall meetings to get public input into meeting times? I ask because it is important to make meetings as available to the public as open to the public as possible. Mayor Reynolds indicated the consensus from council during the pandemic was to move the meetings from 7:00 pm to 5:30 pm which had become lengthy up to 10:00 pm at times. Council was in agreement to keep the meeting time at 5:30 pm, and to provide all documents for the agenda on a one-drive platform.

VIII. **Old Business**

a. **Masonic Lodge Repairs**

Public Works Director Monson wants council to vote on 3 electrical quotes provided, to be revisited during the next meeting. Councilwoman Howard plans to meet with a few engineers regarding the big chunk of concrete that needs to be removed, seeking approval to meet with the engineers and bring her findings to council.

b. **Monetizing the City's Digital Sign**

Councilwoman Inman still working out the kinks, working on a fee structure, graphic designer Mr. Kilgore provided an example of digital advertising, would desire an additional \$200 per month based on the number of businesses that would sign up. Must be a business in the City of Lithonia and not owe any fines to the city. Councilwoman Howard likes the idea. Councilman Honore would like to take an updated photo for 2022, Councilwoman Inman suggested that a photo should be taken with uniform shirts. Councilwoman Wynn, everything sounds good. Councilwoman Sheppard, an awesome idea. Councilwoman Inman asked everyone to give consideration and the discussion on the fee structure will con

c. **Lithonia Amphitheater**

Mayor Reynolds met with commissioner Mereda Johnson and would like to know if we can move forward to involve the attorney in the process. Councilwoman Howard would be best to get a proposal in writing. Councilman Honore would like another meeting for discussion. Councilwoman Inman would like to see a summary and what the ownership would look like. Councilwoman Wynn agrees with everyone to have another discussion. Councilwoman Sheppard is personally uninterested but will listen to another conversation, feels that the city can work on funding. Councilwoman Howard asked Mayor how she felt, Mayor Reynolds did not like the first presentation because nothing was offered, the Amphitheatre is the city's asset, when presented again looks good, wants to be careful that the city still has it's hands in it.

IX. **Other Business**

a. **City Administrator Report**

In talks with Charley Anderson to look at grant funding through DeKalb or the option of a resource market. Next class for the health grant is a power positive class to be held during the month of March, final event before June will be a team building event. Spoke to Vista Rep confirming that 4 standard vistas can be hired. Regarding internet outages met with AT&T to provide internet and phone service, also met with Spectrum who partners with AT&T to provide fiber and a new phone system. Reached out to Worksource Dekalb to find funding for an admin person to provide operational assistance, web and Facebook metrics were provided. Council had no questions or concerns.

b. **Police Department Report**

Chief Pollard addressed Ms. Massey's concerns about the club's operation hours at night. There were concerns about the trail that is used for bicycling and walking, 4-wheelers were used to monitor the area over the weekend, looking forward to working with council to work on bringing on one additional officer, and other styles of financing. Major DeJarnett informed Councilman Honore that he obtained a key to the park through Mr. Monson to work on preventing incidents from occurring in the field late at night. Investigation still on-going with the exchange of gun fire that took place at the Amphitheater, uptick in domestics and dealing accordingly, working with Dekalb regarding the individual who has the weapon on Rock Chapel seeking proper services to provide a better quality of life option through the proper channels, incidents on Main Street with Lyft and Uber drivers being approached. Past few weeks steadily busy, called in extra officers to assist.

c. Mayors Report, Councilmember District Update

Mayor Reynolds stated publicly that executive board members are appointed by the Mayor to the housing authority, and if anyone is interested in serving on the board to forward a bio to the mayor personally or to the clerks office. An announcement of those appointed board members will be made during the next city council meeting in March. Mayor Reynolds thanked council for helping the administration and for their love for the city of Lithonia. Plans to f/u with Dekalb Parks and Rec, Commissioner Mereda Johnson, Dekalb's approval is needed for an artist that has designed a mural for the Bruce Street basketball court, will continue to provide updates in March.

Councilwoman Howard indicated there may be some inappropriateness with signage in the city. Councilman Honore no report. Councilwoman Inman plugged in the Lithonia Roundtable reminder for March 17 at 5:30pm via zoom, will continue to obtain feedback on the digital sign at that meeting, GMA is having a convention in June to consider when registration opens that everyone sign up at the same time. Councilwoman Wynn had no updates. Councilwoman Sheppard touched on the need to bring on another officer hopefully for the next agenda.

VIII. Executive Session (For Personnel)

Councilwoman Howard motioned to go in executive session for personnel, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn and approved by a vote of 5-0 at 8:00 pm.

All council members attended executive session and reconvened at 9:47 pm.

Mayor Reynolds stated that Council reached a decision to move the city forward with the Chief of Police.

Councilwoman Wynn motioned for Council's immediate resignation of Chief Pollard, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Inman and approved by a vote of 5-0.

Mayor Reynolds stated that she would provide a letter to Chief Pollard with terms attached by 12 noon tomorrow.

Councilwoman Wynn motioned that Council is moving forward with appointing Major Dejarnette as Interim Chief of Police for the City of Lithonia, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Inman and approved by a vote of 5-0.

IX. Adjournment

Councilwoman Wynn motioned to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Sheppard; the motion was approved by a vote of 5-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 pm.