



CITY OF LITHONIA
MINUTES–SPECIAL CALLED VIRTUAL MEETING
Discussion: Old Boy Scouts Hut and COPS Grant
Thursday, January 13, 2022 @ 5:00 PM

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The Special Called Meeting was called to order at 5:06 pm by Mayor Shameka S. Reynolds. A roll call was taken, and the following City Council Members were present: Diane Howard, Amelia Inman, and Vanerriah Wynn. Yolanda Sheppard joined after roll call. Darold Honore was absent.

II. Approval of Agenda

Councilwoman Howard motioned to approve the agenda, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Inman and approved by a vote of 4-0.

III. Discussion

a. Old Boy Scouts Hut (Amphitheatre)

Councilwoman Inman (and Councilwoman Howard) called for the meeting regarding Mr. Reynolds mention of his nonprofit and rehabbing the boy scouts hut during the Amphitheater presentation made by Commissioner Mereda Johnson. There was an alert when stated that Mr. Reynolds was rehabbing the space, putting money into the hut, and the collection of filming fees were never brought to the attention of council. Question, how can you rehab the building if it is not under your ownership and how we should move forward.

Mr. Fred Reynolds (LDDA President) acknowledged that filming would still operate under the city (agreement and all funds) and the cleaning of the building was announced through city hall during the month of October and in the city newsletter. Will cease on any additional repairs without reimbursement and take a loss.

Councilwoman Inman acknowledged that any repairs and approvals should always come before city council.

Councilwoman Howard expressed a concern that money was put into a building and asked how he planned to get reimbursed. Her understanding was that Mr. Reynolds' statement made during the Amphitheater presentation was that he would be reimbursed by the filming company. Clarification is needed on the plans for the hut and making the city aware of it.

Councilwoman Wynn reiterated there is a process and the importance that council is made aware of his plans, asked Mr. Reynolds to clarify whether Eagle Rock Educational or LDDA would be involved.

Councilwoman Sheppard had no questions, the questions that she had were answered.

Mayor Reynolds stated that Mr. Reynolds did reach out to her when the hut was being cleaned out, however not aware of the filming prospect or investment made to rehab the hut.

City Clerk Blount stated that filming scouts reached out to the clerk's office when looking for a location to build out a scene set in the city, the scouts were also in conversation with Public Works Director Monson who allowed for a tour of the hut, and that is what led the filming company to the hut.

Mayor Reynolds confirmed that any repairs and use of the hut must come before council and asked moving forward how council would like to proceed.

Councilwoman Howard would like to know what the expectations are for both sides, if LDDA would like to rent the building, or if other improvements and repairs should be performed. Councilwoman Inman going forward to uphold integrity by communicating and in favor of improvements of the hut and put something in writing, and a separate meeting to establish fees for filming. Councilwoman Wynn would like to be informed from the beginning and there should be a format in place to do so. Councilwoman Sheppard had no additional response. When asked by Councilwoman Inman, City Clerk Blount provided a general summary of the Dekalb Entertainment application/location/procedures process for filming.

Mayor Reynolds asked Mr. Reynolds what he is looking for at this time to move forward. Mr. Reynolds is uncertain at this time, just looking at improvements at this time to the hut, with no interest in revenue generation, willing to give another presentation if needed and working through a process, inviting Council to the organizations website www.soareaglerock.org.

b. COPS Grant

Mayor Reynolds stated that the city has 10 days to accept or deny the grant. Chief Pollard stated the grant that he and Major Ferguson worked on was received November 2021, will allow the city to hire 8 additional officers, and provided requirements of the grant during the 3-year grant period, with progressive increments of repayment: 25% the first year at \$68,938, 45% the second year at \$93,066.64, and \$113,748.11 for the final year. Total amount of the grant is \$827,258, the total award is \$1,103,011. The grant will provide the city \$275,752.00 each year for 3 years. The City Accountant and Administrator Sands were involved and in agreement with the proposal of repayment. Have tried to make contact since November with the grant representative, Ms. Seawright on Nov 18, Nov 19, Nov 27, and 12/7, Ms. Seawright has yet to respond.

Councilwoman Howard just finding out that it is a payback grant, the hold up with providing this information, waiting to see if the waiver was granted, Administrator Sands confirmed that the waiver was denied.

Councilwoman Inman asked for more clarity on numbers, and if the grant was for hiring new officers. Sees this as a positive, however cautious of the repayment commitment. Chief Pollard provided clarification.

Councilwoman Wynn stated that Chief Pollard answered an earlier question regarding the waiver that she had in mind.

Councilwoman Sheppard stated that she is very excited to have more officers and based

on the numbers would like more time for review.

Mayor Reynolds then verified through Chief Pollard the deadline to accept or deny the grant is Wednesday of next week (January 19) based on the notification letter received.

Councilwoman Howard then asked what cars the new officers would drive and if funds were available through the grant, Chief Pollard indicated no funds would be available for cars through the grant, suggesting the incentive for take home cars would be removed, however replaced with an increase of \$4-5k for those officers, still needs a K-9 vehicle, code enforcement vehicle. Councilwoman Howard expressed concern previously about take home cars that it stop. Chief Pollard acknowledged that the take home vehicle incentive was not eliminated.

Mayor Reynolds expressed favorable sentiments for having additional officers in the city.

Councilwoman Howard asked Chief what the officers' salaries would be, Chief stated that salaries and outfitting would be included. Councilwoman Howard would like to see a strategy plan for cars and all expenditures, what would that look like? Concrete plan for repayment.

Councilwoman Inman would like to review the document more thoroughly and also expressed the need to see a strategy for repayment.

Major Dejarnette expressed enthusiasm of the response that he received from officers who would like to work for the City of Lithonia upon learning of the grant, and that he is willing to answer any questions if needed to.

Councilwoman Sheppard thanked the Major and Chief, feeling empowered, however would like more time to review everything, retention of officers is important.

Chief Pollard indicated for future planning that another SPLOST vote is coming up in 2023 that would go into effect 2024 and would contain additional capital improvements to include vehicles, looking to separate from Public Works, so vehicles could be acquired. Police department currently generates \$5k monthly through the court system with 1 officer.

Mayor Reynolds closed by acknowledging the next scheduled council meeting on Tuesday, January 18 at 5:30 pm, the COPS Grant discussion would continue.

IV. Executive Session (NONE)

V. Adjournment

Councilwoman Howard motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:29 pm, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Sheppard and approved by a vote of 4-0.