



**CITY OF LITHONIA  
MINUTES– WORK SESSION MEETING  
Tuesday June 20, 2023 @ 5:30 pm**

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**I. Call to Order and Roll Call**

The meeting began at 5:47 pm.

Mayor Pro Tem Sheppard, Council member Howard, Honore, and Wynn were present in person while Mayor Reynolds and Council member Inman attended via phone.

**II. Moment of Silence**

**III. Approval of Agenda**

**Motion** – made by Council member Inman to approve the June 20, 2020 Work Session agenda. Council member Howard seconded.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**IV. Public Hearing**

*Citizens interested in commenting on the public hearing portion of the meeting may comment in person or virtually via zoom. You may also submit your comment in writing to [cityclerk@lithoniacity.org](mailto:cityclerk@lithoniacity.org) by 2 pm the day of the Public Hearing to be read into the record at the meeting. If you choose to submit your comment in writing, please include your full name, address, the item you are speaking about and if you are for or against it. When it is your turn to speak, please state your name, address, and relationship to the case. There is a ten (10) minute allotment for each item per side during all public hearings. Only the applicant may reserve time for rebuttal.*

**a. Fiscal Year 2024 Budget**

**• Open Public Hearing**

**Motion** – made by council member Honore to open public hearing for Fiscal Year 2024 Budget. Council member Wynn seconded.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**• Report from City Manager, Chief Dejarnette**

City Clerk, Ashley Waters, provided a brief overview of the discussion held earlier and asked if Council had any additional questions. No one presented any new questions about the budget.

**• Comments in Opposition (10 Minutes allotted)**

No one spoke in opposition.

- **Comments In-Favor (10 Minutes allotted)**

No one spoke in favor.

- **Close Public Hearing**

**Motion** – made by Council member Howard to close the Public Hearing. Mayor Pro Tem Sheppard seconded.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- **Council Deliberation**

There was no deliberation.

- **Decision**

**Motion** – made by Council member Honore to approve the FY 2024 Budget. Council member Sheppard seconded.

**Motion passed 4-0. Council member Inman abstained.**

## **V. Action Items**

### **a. For Decision – Parkway & Main St. Repair – Chief Dejarnette**

There were several questions asked by Council for clarification regarding where the sewer would be placed and why there was such a difference in the price quotes. Chief Dejarnette stated that he requested Hari Karikaran with Lowes engineering look and recommend someone to do at the job. The company suggested was DAF. Quinton Munson, Public Works Director stated that he can request a drawing of the projected work from DAF for the Council to review. Chief Dejarnette stated that this repair will be paid out of SPLOST. This item was tabled until the next council meeting.

### **b. For Decision – Tree Trimming – Chief Dejarnette**

Chief Dejarnette explained that Public Works has received complaints and concerns from citizens about trees on Rock Chapel Rd and decided to ride through the entire city and identify any additional problem areas and attempt to take care of all of them at the same times. The council was presented with three quotes for tree cutting services.

**Motion** – made by Council member Sheppard to approve the quote from KR2 legacy group to tree trim all nine areas for \$20,650.00. Council member Howard seconded.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**c. For Decision - Wiggins St. Parking Lot Drainage and Improvement Project with Lowe Engineering – Chief Dejarnette**

Chief Dejarnette requested this item be tabled until the next meeting after speaking with Hari prior to the meeting. He stated there needs to be a correction to the wording and this will be presented by Hari on July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**VI. Discussion Items**

**a. For Discussion - House Bill 1405 and 916 – Bill Johnston**

Bill Johnston explained House Bill 1405 and the implications for the zoning process in the City of Lithonia. He stated House Bill 1405 seeks to establish and clarify the means of judicial review of the exercise of local governments zoning power based on whether the power exercises legislative (city council) or quasi-judicial (board of appeals or zoning officials like a zoning administrator). Under House Bill 1405, quasi-judicial officers, boards, or agencies decide variances, special administrative permits, special exceptions, conditional use permits, and other zoning decisions. This bill also amends the code by providing new hearing requirements for certain city boards and/or commissions and new procedural requirements for zoning decisions involving multi-family residential districts. He stated that this bill passed July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Bill Johnston explained the passing of House Bill 916 to be about the abolishment of the mechanism petitioners have used to appeal quasi-judicial decisions, for example, decisions of your zoning administrator. It clarifies that appeals House Bill 916 will provide a single modern and uniform procedure called the petition for review that requires judicial decisions from lower courts to be decided on the merits and avoid dismissal solely on procedural grounds. House Bill 916 sets some specific requirements for performing services, pleadings, case management, preservation, and transmission to the reviewing Court of record. Mr. Johnston then shared the recommendations by the city attorney which included that the city initiates steps do the following:

1. Implement the new zoning procedures requirements by July 1
2. Adopt the proposed amendments into the zoning ordinance provided in the related attorney work product memorandum.
3. Incorporate any amendments to any zoning policies and procedures that are not now codified in the city's ordinances.

He stated that this bill allows the jurisdiction to look on a case-by-case basis whether family dwellings should be allowed in the single-family zoning district.

**b. For Discussion - Blight Ordinance – Councilmember Amelia Inman**

There was much discussion about the Blight Ordinance and the allowed steps the city could take to implement a fee for buildings that are in a state of blight. City Attorney Alicia Thompson explained that per Georgia Code there was a restriction on how much the fee could be for those buildings and

it maxes out at one hundred dollars per registered building. She stated the ordinance that the city has provisions for the city to obtain ad valorem taxes which are property taxes and those are the largest contributors to the revenue line item on the city's budget. So if there are buildings in your city that after investigation are deemed by the municipal court to be considered buildings that are operating in blight, you can provide notice to the county tax commissioner and they could raise that building's taxes. And when the building's owner goes to the tax commissioner to pay off the property taxes, the property tax rate will be higher for those buildings until they come out of the state of blight. Ms. Thompson stated that she wants to caution away from kind of seeking Revenue when we look at fees but if you look at taxes that's where revenue is typically raised in the cities.

Ms. Thompson explained that the current ordinance provides for the City to deem properties to be in a state of blight through the municipal courts, to charge property owners a higher tax rate on properties deemed to be in a state of blight and to create and maintain a registry of foreclosed and/or blighted buildings located within the city. Code Enforcement Officer Brooks stated he currently has a list of blighted properties in the city and would share that list with the Council.

## **VII. Reports and Updates**

### **a. Police Department Report – Chief Dejarnette**

There was a residential burglary that took place over the weekend, but officers were able to catch the individuals very quickly with the items still in their hands. The police also located a resident within the city that had federal warrants out of Kentucky and turned them over to the Kentucky State Police.

Chief Dejarnette introduced Officer Romant, the city's grant writer and announced the award of a grant from the State of Georgia for a youth program as well as additional funding to directly help the Police Department. The final paperwork will be presented to the council July 3<sup>rd</sup> with details of the STEM Youth Program and Police Protect Our Streets grants.

### **b. Mayor's Report and Council Member District Update**

Council members Howard, Honore, and Mayor Pro Tem Sheppard stated they did not have an update.

Council member Wynn stated Pine Mountain Road looks great and stated that citizens are very happy after the cleanup. She wanted to acknowledge that it makes a difference when everyone shows up. Mayor Pro Tem Sheppard thanked council member Inman for organizing the clean up and Council member Inman expressed her gratitude to everyone who came out and assisted.

## **VIII. Executive Session**

*(When an executive Session is required, one will be called for the following issues: 1. Personnel 2. Litigation 3. Real Estate)*

## **IX. Adjournment**

**Motion** – made by Mayor Pro Tem Sheppard to adjourn the meeting. Council member Wynn seconded.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

The meeting ended at 7:20 pm.



Mayor Shameka Reynolds

Attest:



City Clerk