



CITY OF LITHONIA
MINUTES–WORK SESSION MEETING
Monday, September 19, 2022 @ 5:30 PM

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The City Council In Person & Virtual Meeting was called to order at 5:32 pm by Mayor Shameka Reynolds. A roll call was taken, and the following City Council Members were present: Darold Honore, Diane Howard, Amelia Inman. Yolanda Sheppard joined during presentations. Vanerriah Wynn was absent.

II. Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

III. Approval of Agenda

Councilman Honore motioned to approve the work session agenda, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Howard and approved by a vote of 3-0.

Additions:

Councilman Honore: Presentation letter h-Desiree Emmanuel, Action Item letter c-Lithonia Housing Authority.

Councilwoman Howard: Old Business letter d-Trucks, New Business letter a-Kudzu.

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

a. Ms. Cindy Butler

As a business owner and now resident at 7061 Swift Street, expressed complaints on the Crystal Ball Room on Swift Street which occurred last month, awakened at 4:00 am, music and loitering took place until 4:30 am, gunfire ensued to disburse the crowd, asked if a curfew is in place for the ballroom, also illegal parking. Councilwoman Howard deferred to Chief of Police to provide procedure for reporting a nuisance, and/or his familiarity with the occurrence. Councilman Honore referred to the noise ordinance and to always call 911 to make a complaint to build a case.

b. Ms. Dawn Massey

In 2020 came before council concerning amending the event ordinance, acknowledged that council agreed to allow for a variance, intends to move forward, asking for clarity on whether a hearing is required, thank you acknowledgement. Agreeing with Ms. Butler on her experience with Grand Crystal. Councilwoman Howard summarized that a few years ago a moratorium was placed on events, recalled considering the women's club to give it purpose and that Dawn declined the variance offer, the ordinance would have to be changed, however there was no interest to do it at that time. Dawn would like to revisit this to apply for the women's club and her personal home for wedding events. Mayor Reynolds will be in touch with a response.

V. Presentation (Limit 3-minutes per person)

a. Mr. Conroy Reid: Tropical Sports Clubs

President of Tropical Sports Clubs, desire to use the Lithonia park play field on Sunday's between noon and 5pm, cricket games, there are 6 leagues, they are a 50-member league, non-profit organization, have liability insurance for games, always clean up after their games, asking if the bathroom can be accessible, hold a fundraiser every year to provide scholarships, back to school activities.

Councilwoman Howard asked about the scholarships, Mr. Reid replied that scholarships are offered annually to freshmen in Dekalb County, awarded 2 this year totaling \$5,000.00 and back to school packages for students in Conyers. Councilman Honore had no questions. Councilwoman Inman asked for clarity on the request, Mr. Reid stated that 2 dates are remaining this year and no dates are firm for next year at this time. Councilwoman Sheppard asked Mr. Reid if he was aware of the new fees to use the park, Mr. Reid will visit the website and remarked about Dekalb county fees for sporting events. Mayor Reynolds stated that council would have to reach a decision on fees and the city would be in touch.

b. Ms. Kristen Neal: 3068 Stone Mountain Street

Owner of 3068 Stone Mountain Street, proposing a new business Amy's Studio 61 LLC a media production studio, providing branding and corporate videos, feature film production, commercials, green and blue screens, private photography area, styling, and dressing rooms. Received clearance from HPC, and Zoning. Wants to give back to the community by providing waivers and vouchers to neighboring schools and tours to see how films are produced.

Councilwoman Howard spoke favorably of the presentation and clarification of the proposal for a production studio and approved use for the edge district. Councilman Honore had no questions. Councilwoman Inman asked for clarity on the location. Councilwoman Sheppard had no questions and spoke favorably on the presentation.

c. Mr. Shareef Abdul-Malik: The Soul Food Market Team

Following up to conclude the presentation that his assistant Jynsen provided, proposing to lease 6980 Main Street, first visited the area in 2017 when sponsoring a "Black Business Ambush" to patronize Green Love Kitchen, loved the City of Lithonia experience. Since that time raised \$1/2 ML to open a store in Atlanta, wants to be a part of the growth in COL to sale African American products. Has a large reach and track record of building successful businesses, will provide local delivery, projected revenue \$1 ML+ first year, works with black farmers throughout the metro area, looking to support COL farmer's market, this effort is supported by quite a few celebrities, seeking a 10-year lease with option, \$100k in investment the first 2 years, \$1,800/month and \$2,500 for up and downstairs, \$50k investment next 2 years.

Councilwoman Howard confirming the use as a grocery store and leasing the building as is, feels the city would benefit from The Soul Food Market. Councilman Honore stated that he has talked to Malik regarding his proposal. Councilwoman Inman remarked great presentation, no questions at this time. Councilwoman Sheppard had no questions.

d. Mr. Donald Blount: Blacktober Fest Oct 22

Proposed to bring back the Blackdot Cultural Arts Festival, took place prior to covid, noon until 6:30 pm, closing Main Street from Swift to Johnson, and usage of the courtyard, 10:30 am until 7:00 pm. In touch with Senator Warnock's office for appearance and Dekalb Democratic party, seeking a speedy decision, activities, poetry, did very well the first year.

Councilwoman Howard asked for clarity on the name Blacktober Fest, are officers lined up, and if a vote is being requested, enjoyed the event, sounds great, in favor to push this through. Mr. Blount stated that he is returning the event to its original name, will go through Chief for 2 officers at the hourly rate, bringing in porta potty's, hiring a security company to monitor, and yes seeking a vote. Councilman Honore enjoyed the last one, no questions or concerns. Councilwoman Inman same sentiment putting on great events. Councilwoman Sheppard asked if anything is needed from the city and recommended the city can look at the budget to provide porta potty's, good event to bring the city out. Mr. Blount stated anything the city can do in terms of participation such as signs or police coverage. Mayor Reynolds and Councilwoman Howard agree to vote on the event.

Councilwoman Howard motioned to approve the Blackdot Cultural Arts Festival for October 22, and to approve the contribution for 2 porta potties', the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Sheppard, and approved by a vote of 4-0.

e. Ms. Ehrael Lambert: Colonial Life

Appealing to businesses to provide voluntary ancillary benefit products; dental, accident, individual, group cancer, major medical, hospital confinement, surgeries, diagnosis procedures, wellness readings.

Councilwoman Howard thanked Ehrael for the presentation and suggested that she participate with upcoming events in the city. Councilman Honore, Councilwoman Inman, and Councilwoman Sheppard

had no questions.

f. **Ms. Taylor Boyce, Family Event**

A nursing student graduating in December, founded an organization to sponsor community service events, wants to expand outside of campus to give back to the community to provide care packages, social and charity event, drive through option, requesting help with event space, volunteers, and marketing, an event for December or January.

Councilwoman Howard recommended using a parking lot, and asked if she approached Dekalb County, she wants it to be a county event. Councilman Honore remarked a good presentation and if any commissioners were approached, yes but waiting on following up checked with NAACP, National Council of Negro Women, and Arabia Mountain. Councilwoman Inman remarked great presentation. Councilwoman Sheppard had no questions. Mayor Reynolds indicated the city would be in touch.

g. **Ms. Sharon Harrison/Ms. Sharon Inman-Thomas, AI Inc.**

Fall fest party October 22 from 7:00 pm-10:00 pm for annual scholarship to raise funds, Old City Hall building free of charge, entry fee \$10-\$12, targeting college students from ages of 18-25 years of age. Dancing games, food grab bag, donations.

Councilwoman Howard expressed a concern about sponsoring an event as a councilmember and once clarified would be in favor, Councilwoman Inman talked to the attorney, must go by standards for use of the space and would provide something in writing. Councilman Honore asked if city hall would be big enough for the event and recommended using the courtyard as well, Councilwoman Inman indicated that last year there were less than 40 persons who attended and does not see that number increasing to over 50 people tops, can monitor through Eventbrite. Councilwoman Sheppard had no questions.

h. **Ms. Desiree Emmanuel**

Community member proposing to host an open mic event rotation in the community, 3 dates proposed October 29, November 26, and December 17, from 7-10 pm, fun and family friendly. Block off the area and street from the courtyard to Green Love Kitchen, complimenting the close of farmer's market.

Councilwoman Howard stated an open mic event sounds great, asked for clarity on the location, feels the segment location described will block the entirety of Main Street, not sure the location would be the best one, perhaps an event center would best serve the purpose. Councilman Honore is not in favor of blocking the street however in favor of an open mic event. Councilwoman Inman remarked a great presentation, no questions. Mayor Reynolds stated the city would be in touch.

VI. Action Item

a. **Park Reservation Manager**

Councilwoman Howard motioned to approve Renee Miller as the Park Reservation Manager, the motion was seconded by Councilman Honore and approved by a vote of 3-0. Councilwoman Sheppard was opposed.

Mayor Reynolds stated the park manager agreement is still under review by the attorney, advised to proceed with approval of the selection and provide any revisions to the agreement thereafter.

b. **AI Inc. Fall Fest Party**

Councilwoman Howard does not feel comfortable to have the event at the old city hall building unless written documentation is provided by the attorney there is no conflict. Councilwoman Inman stated the attorney will be providing an email based on their conversation and recommending for the sake of timing of the event for October 22 to proceed with an approval with a clause pending statement from the attorney. Mayor Reynolds is reaching out to the attorney to provide commentary prior to the close of this meeting.

c. **Lithonia Housing Authority**

Councilman Honore motioned as agreed upon by council to dissolve the remaining members of the

board, minus the Mayor's board selection that occurred in April, and to select 3 additional board members with the attorney's permission, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Sheppard and approved by a vote of 4-0.

Councilman Honore spoke to address the Mayor's effort to work with Lithonia Housing to move the city forward and assigning new board members, yet there is still no guidance in place according to the state law. The following must occur based on the avoidance of communicating, acknowledged the improvements that are taking place however the new board members have not been involved in the process for operational approvals. There has been an avoidance of the Mayor's request for meetings. Recommends dismissal of the remaining board members to take place immediately with a letter from Mayor Reynolds delivered to Lithonia Housing. Convene the new board for the governance of Lithonia Housing. Cast a vote of no confidence with the new director, not in agreement with how everything is operating. Mayor said that 2 board members have been assigned. Councilwoman Sheppard, Councilwoman Howard, and Councilwoman Sheppard agree with Councilman Honore. Mayor Reynolds will proceed with the request as council wishes and needs to see everything in writing as legal.

VII. New Business

a. Kudzu

Councilwoman Howard stated that kudzu control is needed on Conyers Street and the Bruce Street area, grows 12 inches per day and covers everything in its path, everyone must play a part, kudzu can take over a city. How can we address this to be controlled? Mr. Monson as well has observed how rapid the growth is occurring and working with Code Enforcement with this effort. Councilman Honore stated that kudzu is a problem, also growing near the Amphitheater, coyotes live in kudzu, raccoon families and rats, agrees with Councilwoman Howard, and advised Mr. Monson to treat with chemicals.

VIII. Old Business

a. Old City Hall Building

Mr. Monson stated that Mr. Tijuan Dawson, Architect will have information for the next council meeting. Mayor Reynolds asked if the city hall building is in good repair to have an event. Mr. Monson stated that some work is needed and potentially by an outside company.

b. Masonic Lodge Repairs

Mr. Monson stated that Chief is working on a grant to perform the next phase of work.

c. Vacant Building Ordinance

Councilwoman Inman is awaiting Councilwoman Wynn's reference of the masonry ordinance, no further updates on the fees and asked that council forward any information that will in turn be forwarded to the attorney.

d. Trucks

Councilwoman Howard today observed two 18-wheelers on Conyers Street, occurring on a consistent daily basis, cabs of those trucks are parking in the city at church parking lot and in front of homes, directing this observance to Chief DJ. Chief DJ stated that 2 observational studies were performed thus far, 4:30-6:00 am on Bruce/Conyers, and Rogers Lake/Center, not much activity though. Violators are starting to come into court, there was a conflict regarding routes that recently occurred in court, per state code Polaris is allowed to take a direct route through the city, working with solicitor to ensure state guidelines are being followed. Councilwoman Howard further made the suggestion to place speed breakers along those routes.

IX. Other Business

a. Police Department Report

Mayor Reynolds asked Chief DJ to address tonight's public comment concern made by Cindy Butler. Chief DJ stated the Crystal Ballroom was informed to shut down by 3:30 am and be gone by 4:00 am and will readdress this with the owner, parking was addressed on Cagle/Johnson/Wiggins and looking at a way to prevent future occurrence, if parking on the street the business owner may be fined.

Councilman Honore made a recommendation to place no parking signs on Swift, additionally for 2023 change the event center ordinance that events end at 1:00 am, and the regulation of bars that pose as event

centers. Councilwoman Sheppard asked about the proper way to report noise. Chief DJ stated to call the Dekalb County non-emergency number, or 911 for tracking purposes to show any patterns for future reference.

Chief DJ stated that logistics are in the works with someone who will donate a police K9, one year food supply, and bullet proof vest. Starting in 1-2 weeks Officer Brooks will cover full time as code enforcement and will be attending code enforcement training in Athens/UGA with Officer Roseberry. Informed council the need for returning to a 3-day/month court calendar based on the municipal court load increasing.

b. Mayors Report, Councilmember District Update

Mayor Reynolds indicated that recognitions would take place in October for Mr. Monson and his son a business owner in the city who recently received an Emmy.

Councilwoman Howard remarked that she loved the event which took place at the Amphitheater, nice crowd. Councilman Honore had no updates. Councilwoman Inman provided a reminder of the Roundtable Discussion this Thursday at 5:30 pm. Councilwoman Sheppard had no updates.

VIII. Executive Session

Councilwoman Howard motioned to go into executive session for personnel at 8:14 pm, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Sheppard and approved by a vote of 4-0.

Mayor and all Council were present, with the exception of Councilwoman Wynn, returning from Executive Session. Mayor Reynolds stated no action to be taken at this time.

Mayor Reynolds stated the attorney is reviewing notes provided on the event that AI Inc. is proposing. The attorney's questions are, who owns the building, is it fit for use and is it used regularly, why is this event being discussed in a meeting, additionally that Councilwoman Inman would recuse herself from the vote. Councilwoman Howard wants to ensure the event has insurance coverage.

Recommendations by the attorney are: if there is a fee schedule must be treated like any other business or non-profit, must be fair, Councilwoman Inman cannot vote. Councilwoman Howard indicated for non-profits fees are waived as they give back to the community.

Councilman Honore motioned to approve the old city hall building for the AI Inc. event, applying all non-fees for a non-profit organization, and the event organizer will purchase event insurance, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Howard and approved by a vote of 3-0. Councilwoman Inman recused herself.

IX. Adjournment

Councilwoman Howard motioned to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded by Councilman Honore; the motion was approved by a vote of 4-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:12 pm.