

Canton, Georgia

*110 Academy Street
Canton, Georgia 30114*



Minutes - Final - Draft

Thursday, June 6, 2024

6:00 PM

**City Hall
110 Academy Street**

City Council

1. Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was led by Boy Scout Troop 125 and an invocation was given by Ms. Pat Tanner.

2. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Grant.

Members Present:

*Mayor Bill Grant
Mayor Pro Tem Dwayne Waterman
Councilmember Farris Yawn
Councilmember Shawn Tolan
Councilmember Sandy McGrew
Councilmember Bryan Roach
Councilmember Travis Johnson
Mr. Billy Peppers, City Manager
Ms. Audrey Conley, City Attorney
Ms. Melissa Forrester, Finance Director
Mr. Steve Green, Zoning Administrator
Mr. Ken Patton, Housing Initiatives Director
Ms. Bethany Watson, City Engineer
Ms. Brittany Anderson, City Planner
Mr. Kevin Turner, Community Development Director
Mr. Marty Ferrell, Police Chief
Mr. Jeff Tucker, Deputy Police Chief
Ms. Teresa Fitts, Municipal Court Clerk
Mr. Jacky Cheng, Digital Content Specialist
Mr. Mike Loizou, Digital Content Specialist
Mr. Mike Morgan, Information Technology Director
Ms. Annie Fortner, City Clerk*

Absent:

None

3. Consideration to Approve Agenda

*Mayor Pro Tem Waterman made a motion to approve the agenda.
Councilmember Yawn seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.*

4. Guests and Visitors

Mayor Grant read and presented a proclamation for Municipal Court Clerks Week to Municipal Court Clerk Teresa Fitts.

5. Public Hearings

- A. Public Hearing for Case MPA2404-001 - Master Plan Amendment Request to Add Residential as an Allowed Use in Riverstone Pod B and Variance Request to Reduce Required Buffer - Zoning Administrator Steve Green - Attachment 5A

Attachments: [MPA2404-001 Documentation](#)

Zoning Administrator Steve Green stated the applicant requests to add residential as an allowed use to construct four duplex buildings for a total of eight living units as well as requests reducing the 50-foot required buffer/setback line to 10 feet. Mayor Grant opened the public hearing and asked for the applicant to present their case. Ms. Melissa Casteel represented the applicant. Ms. Casteel discussed the site location, noting these affordable housing units would have ease of access to parks, jobs, retail, and public transportation. Ms. Casteel stated this proposed use is a reduction in density and provides a transition between general commercial and adjacent residential. Ms. Casteel reviewed the topography at the location and discussed potential facades. Ms. Casteel stated the required buffer makes this parcel unusable, which is the reason behind the request for a reduction. Having no one else to speak for or against the application, Mayor Grant closed the public hearing. Councilmember Tolan stated he would like some clarity as to the affordability of the units. Mayor Grant asked about sidewalks. Mr. Green stated they would be required. Mayor Pro Tem Waterman asked about the citizen participation meeting. Mr. Green noted there were four in attendance of which none spoke in opposition. Councilmember McGrew asked if the units would be rentals. Mr. Green stated that is undetermined. Councilmember McGrew asked about the exterior materials. Mr. Green noted the applicant will be asked to present their exterior elevations to the Design Review Committee. Councilmember Johnson asked if the units will be ADA compliant. Mr. Green stated he will check with the applicant. Councilmember Yawn asked if the neighboring residential properties would be adversely affected by the reduction of the buffer. Mr. Green stated in his opinion, no.

- B. Public Hearing of 2024 Millage Rate - Finance Director Melissa Forrester - Attachment 5B

Attachments: [2024 Millage Rate](#)

Finance Director Melissa Forrester provided a presentation on the millage rate which reviewed the importance of property taxes as a revenue source for the City, requirements for advertising, twenty-year history of the City's millage rate, current tax digest, history of County Fire Tax Rates, calculations for property taxes, upcoming public hearings, and timeline for adoption. Mayor Grant opened the public hearing and called for anyone wishing to speak. Mr. Chris Everett spoke stating he does not agree with maintaining the City's millage rate in anticipation of Cherokee County's Fire Tax. Mr. Thomas Weaver spoke discussing concern with the possible increase in the County Fire Tax as well with the City's Senior Exemption. Mayor Grant closed the public hearing. Mayor Grant reiterated there will be two more public hearings. City Manager Billy Peppers discussed conversations with Cherokee County staff regarding the potential increase in the Fire Tax and how that will affect the City's budget process. Mayor Grant asked how the recent compensation study for City staff will impact the budget. Mr. Peppers discussed the recommendations received and noted he is still reviewing and adjusting the information before presenting it to Council for approval but believes each employee will receive around a 4.8%-5% increase in pay which matches the employment cost index for local government employees. Council and staff discussed the City's Fund Balance, how the City is trying to be financially frugal, increases in taxes across the county as well as increases in all goods and services, and the City's Senior Exemption.

6. Consideration to Approve Minutes

- A. Council Meeting Draft Minutes - May 16, 2024 - Attachment 6A

Attachments: [Minutes - Council Meeting - May 16, 2024](#)

Councilmember Tolan made a motion to approve the minutes. Mayor Pro Tem Waterman seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

7. Informational Items

- A. Review of April Financials - Finance Director Melissa Forrester - Attachment 7A

Attachments: [April Financials](#)

Ms. Forrester discussed noteworthy activities during April including the payment of the semiannual debt service for the 2021 Water and Sewer Bond and the waiving of late fees on utility bills due to lost and/or delinquent mail. Ms. Forrester stated the Fiscal Year 2025 budget planning is underway and may include increasing water and sewer rates to be effective October 1, 2024.

- B. Explore Canton Updates - Digital Content Specialist Jacky Cheng

Digital Content Specialist Jacky Cheng provided a presentation showing the brand growth analytics for Explore Canton. Mr. Cheng discussed the website overview noting user engagement, categories searched, and top cities of users. Mr. Cheng further discussed the strategies used on the City's Facebook, Instagram, and newsletter pages.

8. Other Announcements

None.

9. Ten Minute Public Input

None.

10. Consent Agenda

None.

11. Old Business

- A. Discussion and Possible Action on Canton Housing Team Recommendation that the City Create a Canton Community Land Trust - Housing Initiatives Director Ken Patton - Attachment 11A

Attachments: [Canton Community Land Trust](#)

Housing Initiatives Director Ken Patton provided an overview of the information that was provided at the May 2nd Council meeting and stated the Canton Housing Team is in support of the Community Land Trust. Mr. Patton discussed possibilities for the creation of the Board of Directors for the land trust and spoke about other established land trusts. Mayor Grant stated he believes this topic would be great to further discuss at the Council's fall retreat. Councilmember Tolan asked about an update on the regional land bank. Mr. Patton stated draft documents have been created and are being reviewed.

- B. Discussion and Possible Action on an Amendment to the Resurfacing Intergovernmental Agreement with Cherokee County - City Manager Billy Peppers - Attachment 11B

Attachments: [Resurfacing IGA Amendment](#)

Mr. Peppers stated back in March the City as well as other municipalities within the County entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement for a joint resurfacing project. The City received an additional Local Road Assistance (LRA) grant to combine with the Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG). Mr. Peppers stated that staff is asking Council to amend the current agreement with Cherokee County to include the additional paving under the joint contract. Mr. Peppers discussed the base and alternate bids and stated Baldwin Paving has been awarded the project. Staff is requesting action on this item due to not having a second Council meeting in June. Mayor Pro Tem Waterman made a motion to approve and allow the Mayor to sign the amended Intergovernmental Agreement with Cherokee County. Councilmember Johnson seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

12. New Business

- A. Discussion and Possible Action on the Award of Task Order 6 for the Transportation Improvement Project Reinhardt College Parkway at Highway 140 Intersection Improvement Project Design Services to Michael Baker International in the Amount of \$78,391.47 - City Engineer Bethany Watson - Attachment 12A

Attachments: [Michael Baker International - Task Order 6](#)

City Engineer Bethany Watson stated this task order is for a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment on five parcels. Ms. Watson reminded that this project is being funded 80% by the federal government and 20% by the City. The City's portion is paid for using Impact Fees and Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). Councilmember McGrew made a motion to approve the award of Task Order 6 for the Transportation Improvement Project Reinhardt College Parkway at Highway 140 Intersection to Michael Baker International in the amount of \$78,391.47. Councilmember Roach seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

- B. Discussion and Possible Action on Private Railroad Crossing Agreement with Georgia Northeastern Railroad Company, LLC - City Engineer Bethany Watson - Attachment 12B

Attachments: [Railroad Crossing Agreement](#)

Ms. Watson stated that the Water Plant Intake Screen project is currently undergoing upgrades as approved by Council in 2023. To do this work, large machinery must cross the railroad. Ms. Watson stated the agreement includes a \$2,000 yearly license and maintenance fee which will increase 5% annually. Councilmember Yawn made a motion to approve the private railroad crossing agreement with Georgia Northeastern Railroad Company LLC. Mayor Pro Tem Waterman seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

- C. Discussion and Possible Action on Private Railroad Crossing Estimate from Georgia Northeastern Railroad Company, LLC for an Estimated Cost of \$82,059.27 - City Engineer Bethany Watson - Attachment 12C

Attachments: [Railroad Crossing Estimate](#)

Ms. Watson informed that this estimate is to construct the actual crossing from the previous agenda item. Councilmember Yawn made a motion to approve the private railroad crossing estimate from Georgia Northeastern Railroad Company LLC for an estimated cost of \$82,059.27. Councilmember Johnson seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

13. City Manager's Report

Mr. Peppers discussed an after-hours work request has been submitted by the developer for the project located at 201 Hospital Road. The request is to pour concrete earlier than the City's permitted hours due to the heat during this time of the year. Mr. Peppers stated the applicant has also submitted a schedule of the pours over the next eight weeks which begin at 4:00 am. It is estimated that they will have 24 concrete trucks per pour. Mr. Peppers stated the following four conditions could be added to the approval if Council chooses: 1) Pouring is to only occur during the months of June and July. 2) The developer would be allowed to start pouring at 4:00 am on weekdays only between now and the end of July excluding holidays. There would be no early weekend pours. 3) All trucks are to enter and exit from Hospital Drive with no access to Hospital Road. 4) Notices must be hand delivered to adjacent residents prior to the beginning of work. Mr. Peppers discussed other approvals that have been given for after-hours work requests, how developers can mitigate noise, and the benefits of being able to pour concrete early. Mayor Pro Tem Waterman made a motion to approve the after-hours work request with the conditions as stated. Councilmember Roach seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Mr. Peppers provided an update on a recent sewer spill at the Water Pollution Control Plant and noted that it was a low impact spill. Mr. Peppers stated the required notifications have been sent and discussed the next steps.

Mr. Peppers discussed conducting an executive search for a new Economic Development Director. Mr. Peppers stated he has submitted to Council a proposal from The Chason Group for professional services to complete that search. Mr. Peppers reviewed the process and fees associated with the contract. Mr. Peppers noted that due to that position being open since December, there is adequate funding available for this search. Mr. Peppers discussed the role and responsibilities of the Economic Development Director. Councilmember Tolan made a motion to add the executive search contract with The Chason Group to the agenda. Councilmember Yawn seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously. Councilmember Tolan made a motion to approve an executive search agreement with The Chason Group to conduct a search for an Economic Development Director and have the City Manager sign the agreement. Councilmember Johnson seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Mr. Peppers stated that Northside Hospital Cherokee is currently working on the expansion of their campus and informed that they will be bringing Council a proposal in July for assistance with signalization at a new intersection.

Mr. Peppers discussed that the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) currently has a Letter of Intent to purchase three parcels along North Street from Prescott Hall, LLC for \$4.3 million. Mr. Peppers noted the DDA has an agreement with the Mayor and Council for a line of credit using the City's Tax Allocation District. This fits within that line of credit. The DDA has a meeting scheduled on June 7th and would like to know that the Mayor and Council are supportive of their moving forward with the purchase and sale agreement for these parcels. Mr. Peppers also noted the agreement comes with a maintenance agreement as it relates to the apartment complex on North Street. The Mayor and Council did not have any objections to the DDA utilizing the line of credit.

14. Council Introduced Items

A. School Zone Cameras

Police Chief Marty Ferrell provided information on the history of RedSpeed, the role and responsibilities of RedSpeed, hours of operation, how a violation is recorded, and options for handling a notice of violation. Chief Ferrell discussed the importance of education and the reduction in violations since the implementation of the cameras. Lastly Chief Ferrell reviewed the benefits of the RedSpeed cameras instead of using City Police Officers.

15. Mayor's Report

Mayor Grant congratulated Police Sergeant Jesse Hamilton and Community Development Director Kevin Turner for being named in the Top 10 in 10 Young Professionals to Watch in Cherokee County. Mayor Grant reminded that there will not be a second Council meeting in June. The next meeting will be held on July 11th.

16. Adjourn

Councilmember Yawn made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Waterman seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Bill Grant, Mayor

Attest:

Annie Fortner, City Clerk

Dates Minutes Approved by Council