

City of Sparta

Regular Meeting March 9, 2021

5:00 PM

City Council Chambers

Elected Officials present Mayor Allen Haywood, Mayor ProTem James Clark, Councilman David Ingram, Councilman Tom Roberts and Councilwoman Sandra Sherrod. Councilman Roberts and Councilwoman Sherrod were tardy.

City Clerk Virginia Webb and City Attorney John Hitchcock were present. Attorney Hitchcock was tardy.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Pro Tem James Clark at 5:00 PM followed by the Lord's Prayer and The Pledge of Allegiance.

Adopt Agenda

A motion was made by Mayor ProTem Clark to adopt the Agenda and seconded by Councilman Ingram. Vote was unanimous.

Adopt Minutes

A motion was made by Mayor ProTem Clark to adopt the minutes from the February 9, 2021 meeting and seconded by Councilman Ingram. Vote was unanimous.

Renew Face Mask Ordinance

A motion was made by Mayor ProTem Clark to renew the face mask ordinance and seconded by Councilman Ingram. Vote was unanimous.

Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions, Inc.

A presentation was done by Wood's Transportation Specialist on how to help the city identify transportation needs. Most of their professionals are former GDOT employees and would offer expertise in this field. Some already have worked in the Sparta/Hancock area and are familiar with the roads/highways here. They would also offer help with LMIG projects to obtain grants for paving roads. Council will review their proposal during the April 5 work session.

Clerk's Report

1. Matthew Sammons from GDOT regarding the LMIG application, that was submitted February 1, 2021, requested additional information to complete the application. They award grants to allow for maintenance of the streets.
2. Angelica Griffin of Thomson, Georgia contacted me about cleaning the Hancock County Library. The Mayor & I decided that since the city is donating \$5,000 for employee retention/pay raises and continuing to pay utilities, that we suggest cleaning duties be added to each employee's daily assignment.
3. Past Mayor Sistie Hudson & former employee Christopher Edwards of the filter plant began receiving retirement benefits from the City of Sparta, effective March 1, 2021.
4. We are working with several companies to get Workers Compensation Insurance & Commercial Property Insurance quotes. Applications for regarding Cyber Liability Insurance and Site Pollution Liability has been submitted, as suggested by GMA.
5. On March 2, GMA sent an email asking all cities to reply if they were in support of the legislation for the COVID 19 relief package, requesting a response by 4 pm from Mayor & Council. I immediately replied after speaking with the Mayor, that The City of Sparta was in support of the legislation for the relief package and requested that the use of the funds not be restricted.

Mayor's Report

1. GMA hosted a webinar for COVID 19 with an Immunologist from Emory, explaining the 3 vaccines available. The number of cases are decreasing and by the summer should see even more of a decrease. Also, every city will get an American Rescue Act check directly from the Federal government, unlike before when they were issued to the state and then the state issued them to the city.
2. The 2010 Ford Ranger pickup is paid off and we have received the title.

3. GRA has a rental assistance program available. Payments will be made directly to landlords. Funds are available through DCA.
4. Former City Clerk, Virginia Brown was made aware that we are missing minutes from 5 council meetings during her tenure her. Minutes missing are September, October, November, and December of 2019, January and April of 2020. These minutes were requested for the past fiscal year by the auditors to complete the audit.
5. Work Source Georgia has an upcoming Bittersweet Conference and we will share the details as we receive them. The company offers career counseling, job readiness, interview skills training, etc.
6. It has been suggested that reflectors be added to the curbs downtown Sparta to improve their visibility.
7. The City of Sparta was notified by the State Board of Elections that for the 2017 Election Areatha Hill and Maxine Evans had multiple counts of election violations that have been turned over to the State Attorney General for prosecution.
8. The City of Sparta is in need of a dependable single axle Dump Truck and will search for one.
9. The Historic Preservation Commission will hold a public meeting on March 23, 2021 at 6:00 pm in City Council Chambers regarding the City of Sparta's Historic Resource Survey.
10. We are continuing to work on the FY2021 Budget.
11. 29 leaks were reported in the City of Sparta, last month. Some of which were duplicate leaks but most have all been repaired. We are making progress-fixing the leaks, repairing waste water pumps, replacing pumps at each pumping station that only have one working pump.

Old Business

Nepotism Policy was tabled until next work session. Motioned by Mayor ProTem Clark and seconded by Councilman Ingram. Vote was unanimous.

Council's Meetings compensation was tabled until next work session. Motioned by Mayor ProTem Clark seconded by Councilman Roberts. Vote was unanimous.

Discussion of monetary support for Georgia Hi-Low Trail is asking City of Sparta for \$2,500 donation. Mayor ProTem Clark motioned to support donation for trail,

pending funds availability. Seconded by Councilman Ingram. Vote was unanimous.

New Business

Water tanks contract is up for renewal and we are negotiating with 2 companies for the new contract.

We are looking at updating the retirement plan for the City of Sparta and waiting for more information on a defined benefit plan. Currently the budgeted retirement plan is self-funded. The maximum benefit is \$300 per month and is contingent on City finances.

\$100 Background Check fee- No action was taken. Further research will be done to determine the process for other municipalities and their charge.

Historic Preservation Meeting will be Thursday, March 11, 2021 @ 5:30 PM

Mayor & Council Work Session will be Monday, April 5, 2021 @ 4:30 PM

Mayor & Council Regular Meeting will be April 13, 2021 @ 5:00 PM

City Hall will be closed April 2, 2021 to observe Good Friday.

Citizens' Input

Mandel Shai-questions about Covid 19 payment & DCA Rental Assistance Program

Dip Pollaty-Did get an agreement from Young Son, Sparta Beauty Supply Store, owner, to clean burnt remains from his building.

Charles Jackson-inquired about policy on procurement & a combined effort with Hancock County, City of Sparta & the community to develop a mentoring program offering on-the-job training for the youths.

Paula Dixon -inquired about returning to the meeting once executive session ends.

Martha Harris –from Hancock Animal Friends Concerned about fixing the Kennel- had a question about when & who would be installing the water line needed for the kennel to open. Ricky Griffin will be the contractor and is next in line to be

completed, hopefully later this month, weather permitting. Scheduled a meeting with Mayor Haywood on March 15 at 1 pm.

James Culver-stated that we should to stop blaming the past administration for their short comings of City business and focus on the future. Also, stated that according to "Roberts' Rule of Law"-Mayor ProTem can't make motions.

Mary Jackson-Asked if we could maybe cut back curbs/islands downtown before adding reflectors. She was advised that GDOT will have to approve whatever is done. Also, questioned what is the Hi-Low Trail. It was explained that it is a bike trail in the planning stages that will extend from Savannah to Athens.

Executive Session

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Clark to enter into executive session. Motion was seconded by Councilman Ingram. Vote was unanimous.

Regular Session

A motion was made by Councilman Roberts to return to regular session and seconded by Councilman Ingram. Vote was unanimous.

Councilman Roberts motioned to hire Amanda Akins as the Waste Water Supervisor. Councilman Ingram seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous.

Adjourn Meeting

A motion was made by Councilman Roberts to adjourn meeting and seconded by Councilman Ingram. Vote was unanimous.