

CITY OF LAGRANGE, GEORGIA
COUNCIL RETREAT

March 25-26, 2022

FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2022

Present: Mayor Jim Thornton; Council Members: Jim Arrington, Nathan Gaskin, Willie Edmondson and Mark Mitchell

Absent: Council Member Tom Gore

Also Present: City Manager Meg Kelsey; City Clerk Sue Olson; City Attorney Jeff Todd; Assistant City Manager Bill Bulloch; Visit LaGrange Director Kathy Tilley; Andrew Steever, H & W Exhibit Design Firm

The Mayor, Council and staff traveled to Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta, GA for a tour and overview of their operations. Neale Nickels, Senior Director of Capital Projects, reviewed the infrastructure of the organization and Mary Fernandez, Director of Special Events, Special Projects and Volunteers, reviewed the history of the cemetery and several of their residents.

After lunch, the Council reconvened their meeting at the Serenbe Hawthorne Conference room.

Andrew Steever reviewed with the Council conceptual plans for the Mulberry Street Cemetery. Mr. Steever showed the Council several images of the cemetery and signage that will be recommended. No action was taken.

Kathy Tilley updated the Council with information on hotel/motel tax dollars in the community and compared current numbers to the past two years. No action was taken.

There was no other business for March 25, 2022 and the meeting was adjourned.

SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2022

Present: Mayor Jim Thornton; Council Members: Jim Arrington, Nathan Gaskin, Willie Edmondson and Mark Mitchell

Absent: Council Member Tom Gore

Also Present: City Manager Meg Kelsey; City Clerk Sue Olson; City Attorney Jeff Todd; Assistant City Manager Bill Bulloch; Fire Chief John Brant; Parks Director Michael Coniglio; Lena Malcolm, Atomic Branding

Mayor Thornton and Ms. Kelsey discussed with the Council the needed renovations for the Griggs Center. Mayor Thornton explained that, for Phase I, the Callaway Foundation has committed \$2 Million, Troup County has committed \$2 Million and the City of LaGrange has committed \$1 Million. The contract will be ready to be signed on April 15, 2022, but there is a shortfall of \$800,000. The Callaway Foundation has agreed to an additional \$400,000 if the City will agree to another \$400,000, to make up the difference. No action was taken.

Fire Chief Brant presented information to the Council regarding staff challenges, saying he is not getting any applicants for his current openings. Chief Brant surveyed several surrounding cities and counties for salary information. He reviewed what the current pay is for firefighters, as well as other positions, and showed the difference in what the cities that he surveyed are paying. Chief Brant explained that if current salaries are increased, there should be minimal impact to the current budget due to turnover. The impact to the 2023 budget will be approximately \$300,000.

Chief Brant also reviewed information regarding Quick Response Vehicles (QRV). He is asking for two QRVs for the upcoming budget, stating that these vehicles will improve the response times to medical calls and reduce the wear and tear on the engine company trucks. The QRVs will respond to calls that are solely medical calls but, if available, could also respond to other emergency calls as well.

Chief Brant also discussed the possibility of leaving Fire Station 2 closed at its current location. This station was closed due to lack of personnel and calls have been transferred to Stations 1 and 5. Response times have basically not been affected. He introduced the idea of building a new Station 2 in the future on the south side of town, in the area of Whitesville/Hamilton Road, to decrease the response times to Great Wolf Lodge and the Pegasus Parkway area.

No action was taken on these recommendations.

Lena Malcolm with Atomic Brand Energy presented to the Council a new park branding idea, which will encompass all City owned parks. Ms. Malcolm showed the Council the new logo that her company had designed for the LaGrange Park System. Mayor Thornton asked that her company review the use of the word "System", and to see if they could come up with something different. No action was taken.

Parks Director Michael Coniglio updated the Council on construction and upgrades of parks around the city, as well as The Thread. No action was taken.

Ms. Kelsey updated the Council on current and proposed SPLOST projects. These projects include The Thread; park upgrades; gateway corridor enhancements; road and bridge improvements; utility relocation; regional storm water management initiatives; and public safety. No action was taken.

Council discussed the request from Legacy Ventures for the use or donation of the Cannon Street School building. Teara Harris, Deputy Chair, and Lenwood Coleman, Board Chair, came before the Council at its regular meeting on February 22, 2022 requesting the City to partner with them on the use of this building that the City owns. Ms. Kelsey has contacted other agencies, to include LaGrange Housing Authority, DASH, and New Ventures, none of which were interested in the use of the building. The Alpha-Multi Purpose Center did express some interest in the building. Ms. Kelsey and Mr. Todd are working to get a business plan from Legacy Ventures. No action was taken.

Ms. Kelsey reviewed with the Council current and upcoming GDOT projects within the city. Those projects include the Hamilton Road widening project, Hammett Road S Curve Phase One, Bypass from Hogansville Road to LaFayette Parkway Phase Two, Bypass Hammett Road to Hogansville Road Phase Three, and a reconstruction/rehabilitation and widening project for a 1.5 mile truck-only bypass between the interchange of I-85 and I-185. GDOT is also recommending a Comprehensive Planning Study for LaGrange and Troup County to identify and address transportation needs. The cost will be around \$200,000 - \$300,000, GDOT will ask for a 10% match from the City and the County. No action was taken.

Ms. Kelsey gave a financial update to the Council. No action was taken.

There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned.

Approved: _____

Date: _____