

COUNCIL PRESENT: Danny Dunagan, Sam Couvillon, George Wangemann, Ruth Bruner, Zack Thompson  
COUNCIL ABSENT: Barbara Brooks  
STAFF PRESENT: Bryan Lackey, Angela Sheppard, Linda MacGregor, Rusty Ligon, Jeremy Perry, Chris Rotalsky, Horace Gee, Jarrett Nash, Don Dye, Myron Bennett, Amy Bennett, Jill Graham, Denise Jordan

## **INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW**

City Manager Bryan Lackey opened by thanking staff for preparing for this meeting. The topics of discussion will include infrastructure and economic development with the intent of receiving direction on how to plan for the future.

## **STORY BOARD DISCUSSIONS**

City Manager Lackey stated today's discussions will focus on five story boards created through the Geographic Information System (GIS).

### **Story Board 1: Downtown/Midtown**

Assistant City Manager Angela Sheppard introduced the area known as "The Moat" noting there's a desire to connect downtown to other areas of the City. Streetscaping work on Washington and Bradford is in the design stages. Streetscaping plans include meeting with the downtown merchants. Some activity was expected to occur in 2019. There was discussion about the landscaping design, crosswalks and the median.

Water Resources Director Linda MacGregor discussed water/sewer construction in this area noting there would be coordination with the new developments and with downtown businesses. Water and sewer facilities in these areas have capacity but this is an older part of the system. The department is taking advantage of the opportunity to replace old pipes in conjunction with the streetscaping efforts. It was noted there may be some street closures.

Public Works Director Chris Rotalsky stated thermoplastic crosswalks in the Main Street and Jesse Jewell Parkway area were delayed until the utility work is completed.

Community Development Director Rusty Ligon discussed the history of architectural guidelines for the downtown area before asking if there was any desire to change to a downtown historic district or to modify/strengthen the guidelines.

After a brief discussion, there was consensus to change to the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) to grant the Community Development Director more authority over the design approval process.

Mr. Ligon commented on the desire for more outdoor opportunities in this area and presented the idea of removing parallel parking spaces from around the square noting a safety barrier would be incorporated into the design if there was a desire to proceed.

There was consensus to explore this option further with suggestions to consider a phased in approach, a bike lane and safety measures. There was also a suggestion to include this concept in the streetscaping design underway for Washington and Bradford Streets.

City Manager Bryan Lackey stated this change, if implemented, would occur after the addition of the new parking deck.

There was a brief discussion about the farmers market and whether downtown was the best location for it.

There was a brief conversation about downtown parking with a notation that the two top levels of the Hall County parking deck are rarely used.

Mr. Rotalsky provided an update on streetscaping in the Moat area. He specifically addressed what's in progress, what has been completed and what's planned for the long-term vision.

Mr. Lackey commented on Greenville Takeaways in regards to parking and plazas, specifically suggesting parking at the Turner, Wood and Smith site and a pedestrian plaza on Brenau Avenue. He stated this concept was a few years away after the parking deck is available. This led to a brief conversation about how to manage solid waste in a plaza type setting and strategic positioning of retail storefronts. The alleyways of Spring and Washington, Brenau and Washington and Main to Brenau were also discussed as future plaza options.

There was discussion about reopening Kenyon Plaza for one-way north bound traffic.

Mrs. Sheppard discussed improvements to the midtown area noting many public investments have occurred while the underlying zoning of the majority of the midtown area remains light-industrial and heavy-industrial. She asked if the governing body was content with the overlay district and its restrictions or, if there was a desire to change the zoning to reflect all of the public and private redevelopment efforts with a grandfather clause for existing businesses.

Mr. Ligon shared information about a performance zoning concept.

It was noted the old jail site has been renamed the Midtown City Block. Ms. MacGregor discussed the plan for a pond to handle watershed/drainage in this area. There was some discussion about other areas within midtown yielding the following:

- A skate park concept for the midtown greenway area.
- Reopening Davis Street to connect to the Georgia Chair project.
- HOME funds could be spent on a project in the midtown area.

Mr. Ligon provided an update on the Highlands to Islands Trail noting the need to acquire right-of-way on nine tracts.

### **Story Board 2: Highway 129 South, East Gainesville**

Community Development Director Rusty Ligon stated a study was underway to determine how to move south to connect with the Highlands to Islands Trail. He shared an idea that could be a future SPLOST project.

Director of Water Resources Linda MacGregor commented on the outdoor utility storage yard maintained by her department. During discussion, it was noted this facility was not part of a master plan and there is a better use for this property. Vacating the area for a facility that makes sense was proposed.

Public Works Director Chris Rotalsky commented on the Alta Vista Complex noting it was not a master plan. The department had been utilizing available space when there was a need to grow.

There was discussion about a proposed new site and facilities that could jointly serve the Department of Water Resources and the Public Works Department.

There was discussion about the school board seeking a new place for buses with a comment that the Alta Vista Complex may be an option for a lease agreement if the Public Works Department relocates.

**RECESS: 12:00 PM**  
**RECONVENE: 1:10 PM**

### **Story Board 2: Highway 129 South, East Gainesville (continued)**

Director of Water Resources Linda MacGregor stated 16,000 acres of property was bought at Allen Creek years ago for land application purposes. The property is no longer needed. There are plans to move public and private facilities to this area with innovative storm management and with opportunities for creating a trail with water features. This business park project would include creation of a new road, i.e., a main entrance from Highway 129. A strategic team has been created to design and permit the area for development.

City Manager Bryan Lackey stated the City Attorney is working on the right-of-way access.

There was discussion about signage and the recent fire in this area. There was also discussion about the potential for a fire station in this area as a long-term vision.

- There was consensus to explore these options further.

Community Development Director Rusty Ligon commented on creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century business park in this area and felt it was a good idea to consider creating a gateway taskforce with representation from Hall County to secure help from code enforcement.

- There was consensus to create a partnership with Hall County and to proceed with the task force.

Mrs. MacGregor discussed sewer infrastructure in the area. She proposed adding another pump station at the southern area of the business park to serve surrounding businesses as well as new developments.

- There was consensus to create a partnership with Hall County.

Mr. Lackey stated Hall County wants to use federal funds for an affordable housing redevelopment project across from Harrison Square. They need sewer service for the development. Staff is willing to discuss this for incorporation into the master plan.

- There was consensus to proceed.

### **Story Board 3: Jesse Jewell/Limestone/New Holland**

City Manager Bryan Lackey commented on changes in this area, notably the construction of Lanier Tech, which prompts the need to start thinking about transportation improvements and

whether the City should be part of that process. He asked if there should be partnerships to create connectivity that funnels people in a different direction.

- It was suggested that the city delay action for a while and allow the State take the lead.

There was discussion about the Shawshank property, a Planned Unit Development project with new homes, townhomes and apartments that has the ability to walk to recreational areas. Some corridor improvements would be needed. A Gateway Taskforce could be helpful.

There was discussion about sewer service in this area indicating a portion of the area could be easily connected to existing sewer. A plan was needed to provide additional sewer service if needed to address future development.

Community Development Director Rusty Ligon discussed the Limestone Creek Project, a 75-acre mixed use project fronting on Limestone Parkway with commercial property, town houses, apartments and single family lots.

City Manager Lackey commented on a harbor town concept noting Lake Lanier Olympic Park (LLOP) may be an option for implementation. There was discussion about a private development with a hotel and/or restaurant adjacent to the LLOP. It was noted a pump station would need to support this idea.

**RECESS: 2:40 PM**  
**RECONVENE: 2:44 PM**

#### **Story Board 4: Thompson Bridge/Park Hill/Oak Tree/Green Street/Riverside/City Park**

Public Works Director Chris Rotalsky discussed roundabouts at the northern and southern portions of Green Street. There was a desire for GDOT to take the lead on the roundabouts which would allow the city to move forward with a divided roadway with stormwater and utilities in the center median and improvements to sidewalks that offer better safety. The next step was securing a higher ranking on the Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization Project list.

Mr. Rotalsky commented on the Oak Tree Drive Project indicating the design would be completed in the fall of 2019. This is a state route and the city will rely on state funding. The concept includes a signal at the intersection of Thompson Bridge and Oak Tree Drive to keep traffic moving. The intersection will meter traffic. He reported discussion about a T-intersection at Longstreet Café. There will be a public input component in the design process. GDOT has agreed to handle the right-of-way acquisition. Construction is expected to begin in 2021.

Mr. Rotalsky commented on the city park roundabout at the Prior, Glenwood and Memorial Drive intersection. This would be the first one in the city. Rochester and Associations is working on the design. There will be a need to relocate some utilities; and, there will be a minor stormwater improvement component. The estimated cost for the roundabout is \$350,000. There will also be some beautification efforts and pedestrian connectivity.

- There was an inquiry as to whether the Parks and Recreation Agency could provide some financial assistance.

Community Development Director Rusty Ligon commented on the Civic Center, City Park, Green Street Pool Area, Ronny Green Parkway area. The thought was to work with the citizens to create a neighborhood plan for this area.

Mr. Rotalsky discussed the next phase of designing improvements for Oak Tree Drive is to continue further north on Park Hill Drive as well as address inbound traffic. This phase could begin as the Oak Tree Drive Project is coming to closure. GDOT has begun discussion on how to improve the intersection at Enota and Park Hill Drive.

Assistant City Manager Angela Sheppard expressed the need for establishing a funding source for improvements in the Parkhill Drive area. She called attention to the Atlanta Botanical Gardens and Laurel Park noting they are regional draws to this area.

**RECESS: 3:27 PM**  
**RECONVENE: 4:02 PM**

#### **Story Board 5: Browns Bridge/Dawsonville Highway/McEver**

Community Development Director Rusty Ligon stated the city did a master plan for the downtown area that included Rock Creek Greenway, Longwood Park and a marina concept. This led to a comparison of the area to the Falls Park on the Reedy in Greenville, SC. Staff felt the natural amenities at Longwood Park are under-utilized and could be expanded. The lake is the end of the Highlands to the Islands Trail and should be something special. There was a request for thoughts on investing more into this park.

- There were suggestions to improve both ends of the park, to consider adding a small amphitheater, to offer boat/canoe rentals and to consider a raised boardwalk.
- There was a question about the tennis courts in regards to whether they would/should be relocated in the long-term.

The next topic of discussion was the Blue Ridge Shopping Center. City Manager Bryan Lackey suggested expanding the existing Tax Allocation District (TAD) at Lakeshore Mall to incorporate additional areas in need of redevelopment.

- There was a suggestion to provide a new access road from Browns Bridge Road to Shallowford Road.

Public Works Director Chris Rotalsky discussed adding sidewalks to Shallowford Road. A design plan is under way for this corridor with anticipated completion by early summer and construction in the fall. In conjunction with this project, staff is looking to make an intersection upgrade at Skelton and Shallowford to address ADA standards as well as to add fiber. The anticipated cost is \$150,000.

- There was a request for a sidewalk extension on Dawsonville Highway from Little & Davenport Funeral Home to Washington Avenue to provide additional connectivity.
- There was request for a sidewalk from Wessell Road to Dixon Drive to provide connectivity to the parks.

Director of Water Resources Linda MacGregor called attention to possible future stormwater ponds. She proposed that the city invest in storm water improvements if this area undergoes major renovation.

Mr. Lackey commented on the proposed connector to Green Hill Circle. Staff is continuing to work on the Intelligent Traffic System (ITS) capabilities.

City Manager Lackey reported the Ahaluna development is back underway and commented on the components. The developer is expected to help with some of the intersection improvements along Dawsonville Highway but the city will also bear some responsibility. The city will need to figure out how to pay its portion of the intersection improvements and how to address the fire station (Fire Station 5).

- There was a suggestion to revisit the impact fee ordinance.
- There was consensus for the governing body to visit Greenville to better understand ideas that have been presented.
- There was a request for a list of the capital projects with some basic information.
- There was a brief discussion on whether to address island annexations.
- There was concern that the crosswalk near Turner, Wood & Smith is confusing/distracting.

Mr. Lackey stated the city is growing and thriving. He was grateful that the organization understands the importance of investing in the community. There was a brief discussion about the potential for future SPLOST and T-SPLOST funds to help with these projects. Mr. Lackey closed by stating tomorrow's discussion will focus on how to plan for the projects that have been discussed.

**RECESS: 5:03 PM**

**RECONVENE: Saturday, March 10, 2018, 8:30 AM**

NOTE: Jill Graham did not return.

### **Opening Comments**

Mayor Dunagan felt the retreat was going well and suggested creating a priority list.

### **Fiscal Year 2019 Millage Rate Discussion**

Chief Financial Services Officer Jeremy Perry compared the new structure of the Hall County and the City of Gainesville tax bill information. There was discussion about the logic for the Fire and Parks & Recreation tax districts and how this proposed change was beneficial. The ten year trend showed the millage rate remaining level. Mr. Perry discussed a graph of operating revenues and expenditures over the last six years noting the gap between the two represents funding for capital projects. This year's gap is extremely small.

City Manager Lackey expressed a concern about employee retention noting this extends beyond public safety employees.

### **FY2019 Capital Improvement Plan**

Assistant City Manager Angela Sheppard discussed the FY2019 capital requests that would be funded by the general fund in the following categories: transportation, quality of life, internal operations and equipment needs. There was an extensive conversation about surplus and replacement vehicles.

Mrs. Sheppard briefly discussed the budget team process to streamline the request list. The FY2019 capital projects funding request totals \$8,361,000. Available funding is \$3,496,741 which leaves a \$4,864,259 deficit. Mrs. Sheppard indicated the options for closing the gap included (1)

finding other funding sources, (2) reducing project funding, (3) planning projects over several budget years, (4) cutting projects, (5) leasing equipment and/or (6) cutting equipment.

### **Future Capital Improvements**

Assistant City Manager Angela Sheppard graphically presented the changes in the economy compared to very few changes in city operations (from 2010 to 2017) in regards to population, housing units, demand for services and assets to meet demand. She presented capital spending projections from 2010 to 2020. Mrs. Sheppard also discussed some of the capital projects for FY20 and beyond.

### **Council Comments**

- There's no need to visit Greenville if not ready to move forward with some of the projects.
- The fire fee will have an impact on the budget.

**RECESS: 9:54 AM**  
**RECONVENE: 10:16 AM**

### **Department of Water Resources**

Director of Water Resources Linda MacGregor commented on investments creating resilience and stated the investment in emergency generators most likely kept the city from experiencing outages and spills during Hurricane Irma. The taste and odor issue is an example of not being as resilient as we want to be. The department is continuing testing and treatment as well as studying long term tools to be more resilient in the future.

Mrs. MacGregor discussed positioning the utility for the future by creating a world class utility, maintaining the \$600 million assets by investing in annual maintenance/replacements, monitoring litigation and addressing policy issues.

There was discussion about ensuring financial stability with a notation that there will be modest revenue growth due to the conservation mindset. The management strategy will be to implement projects that control operating costs. She mentioned some variables that impact financial conditions before stating the department has a solid financial position and can address some unknowns.

Mrs. MacGregor discussed a graph showing revenue trends. She discussed the assumptions used in the financing model and applied some hypothetical situations. The department can handle these scenarios; however, additional review would be required if impacts occur beyond these thresholds.

Mrs. MacGregor stated there are three debt instruments that will be paid off by 2029. She did not anticipate the need for any new debt. The only reason to explore new debt is to address a large capital project or if GEFA offered a very good deal.

Mrs. MacGregor reported the largest components to operating expenses are people, power and chemicals. The department was optimizing spare parts and making energy efficient improvements.

Mrs. MacGregor commented on the different types of capital projects noting 90 projects are underway and briefly reviewed some projects (see summary below). It was noted stormwater projects are funded through Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds.

**Water/Sewer Capital Projects**

<i>Type Project</i>	<i>Projects Underway</i>	<i>FY 2019 CIP</i>	<i>Total</i>
Treatment Plants	\$ 8.7	\$ 13.5	\$ 22.2
Distribution and Collection	\$ 2.2	\$ 16.5	\$ 18.7
DOT Projects	\$ 4.1	\$ 1.2	\$ 5.3
Other	<u>\$ 1.2</u>	<u>\$ 5.7</u>	<u>\$ 6.9</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 16.3</b> Million	<b>\$ 36.9</b> Million	<b>\$ 53.1</b> Million

Mrs. MacGregor discussed developing a world class workforce through a work-based learning program, intern/apprentice options, expanded recruitment efforts and employee retention. She stated the department has experienced challenges attracting personnel. The budget includes funds for four part-time interns and they are entertaining the thought of a second chance program through a third party agency.

**Council Comments**

- There was a desire to consider relaxing annexation requirements for sewer connections.
- There was an inquiry about pooling equipment/vehicles for multi-departmental use.
- There was interest in exploring options for leasing equipment.
- There was an inquiry about the differential rate with some desire to consider a decrease as a proactive goodwill effort.

**ADJOURNMENT: 11:53 AM**

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C. Danny Dunagan, Jr., Mayor

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Denise O. Jordan, City Clerk