

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Danny Dunagan, Zack Thompson, George Wangemann, Sam Couvillon, Barbara Brooks, Juli Clay
STAFF PRESENT: Bryan Lackey, Angela Sheppard, Denise Jordan, Jeremy Perry, Kevin Hutchison, Christina Santee, Leslie Brock

City Manager Bryan Lackey presented housekeeping items.

CITY VISION/MISSION

City Manager Bryan Lackey summarized the 2020 retreats and the annual budget process. He also reviewed changes/updates to the five strategic priorities (quality of life, leisure services, economic development, infrastructure improvements and internal operations).

- Council Member Clay suggested updating the Downtown Master Plan priority.
- Council Member Couvillon expressed a desire to be kept informed on the Green Street Corridor Upgrades Project.

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

City Manager Bryan Lackey and staff provided an overview of the City Manager's Office accomplishments including but was not limited to completing, initiating and/or implementing the Green Street design, downtown projects (Solis, Renaissance and the parking deck); Administration Building renovations; the Park Hill Study; digital messaging; City of Ethics recertification; campaign finance software; city branding; hALL IN campaign; and the new website. The challenges/opportunities included but were not limited to the COVID-19 pandemic, the next phase of downtown and a plan for the old Fire Station #2. Initiatives for the upcoming year included the Athens Street Study, celebrating the City's 200th birthday, the Citizens Government Academy, updating the Municipal Courtroom and promoting economic development through Main Street.

- Council Member Brooks inquired about the logo displayed in Municipal Court.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Chief Financial Officer Jeremy Perry opened by stating revenue trends are back at the pre-pandemic level. He summarized several revenue categories, commented on the fund balance and noted the decreased total fund balance transfer to help other funds.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Chief Financial Officer Jeremy Perry stated departmental accomplishments included relocating operations to continue business, receipt of annual awards and receipt of CARES Act funding early in the process. Challenges included the desire to maximize investment revenues; increased tracking, reporting and auditing as grant funds increase; and check fraud. Initiatives included tracking leases, improving the City's bond status (currently Aa2) and new budget interactive software.

- Council Member Clay stated GMA is always complimenting economic development and navigation of the CARES Act funding.

RECESS: 9:44 AM

RECONVENE: 10:00 AM

FIRE

Chief Jerome Yarbrough stated the department has the best aerial fleet in the state. He also mentioned the new Fire Station #2 and preemption at intersections. Challenges include the increased call volume, traffic growth, technology communication, fiber optics and cyber awareness. Initiatives include planning for station 5, adding a certified technician for fleet services, personnel/competitive salaries, securing a fire/rescue boat, SPLOST funds to improve the training facility noting it may be time for the city to have its own training facility.

- Council Member Thompson inquired about the cost of preemption equipment noting their ability to improve response times.
- Council Member Brooks asked if the Police Department's Mental Health Clinician could make service referrals when warranted.
- Mayor Dunagan inquired about salary comparisons.
- Council discussed challenges related to ambulance services expressing a desire for public safety to be a county-wide priority and expressing a desire to reengage conversations with Hall County.

There was conversation about there being no Fire Rescue Boat on Lake Lanier.

GOLF

Chattahoochee Golf Course Director Rodger Hogan opened by stating the department had a very good year despite the COVID pandemic. Accomplishments include painting several areas, a feasibility study to determine if shifting holes would generate enough funds to purchase additional property, the effectiveness of the golf course website and redesigned scorecards. Challenges include overseeing the renovation of the golf course, recontouring existing greens and, in some areas, converting to new greens. Initiatives include continuing education to maintain the new greens, renewing and/or securing new tee marker advertising contracts, new scorecards after the renovation, social media during construction to stay connected with players, replacing the golf cart fleet, rerating the golf course and reversing the nines to offer a more challenging finish.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Director Janeann Allison discussed the department's role in navigating through the COVID pandemic. She proceeded with a report covering the Human Resources Division. Accomplishments included learning how to offer events with large crowds during a pandemic. There were challenges providing virtual engagement to employees. Opportunities included implementing the NEOGOV software solution using COVID funding. Initiatives included implementing a software solution that bundles existing solutions into one.

IT Manager Jonathan Reich addressed the Information Technology Division. Accomplishments included the data center relocation, upgrades throughout the city and additional firewalls for the internal network. Cyber security is the primary challenge and business continuity conversations present opportunities for improvement. Initiatives included cyber security testing for employees and providing technology that enables employees to work offsite.

Mrs. Allison also addressed the Municipal Court Division calling attention to recent Clearance Rate Excellence Awards. Other accomplishments included navigating cases through the pandemic. A video of Municipal Court Judge Hammond Law complimented the staff on an excellent job adjusting procedures without removing the ability for citizens to appear in person in a safe environment. Initiatives included planning for the future and building public trust with any future changes.

RECESS: 11:24 AM

RECONVENE: 11:31 AM

TOURISM

Tourism Director Robyn Lynch stated COVID pandemic limitations associated with holding events drastically impacted the department. The Main Street Division held some events and launched the Main Street Money Program. There were challenges related to the cancellation of downtown events and the loss of ten small downtown businesses. Initiatives included expanding outdoor dining in the Historic Square and improving building appearances.

The Convention and Visitors Bureau Division (CVB) implemented funding guidelines and the Greater Gainesville Sports Alliance created a Sports Planning Guide. The CVB was challenged by decreased hotel/motel tax revenues. Fortunately, Gainesville's decrease was not as much as other communities across the state and nation due to medical field and construction workers. Initiatives included updating the CVB website to market tourism and attractions.

Improvements were made at Lake Lanier Olympic Park (LLOP) and some events occurred with pandemic related adjustments. Flooding presented a challenge. Initiatives included renovation projects and continued involvement by the LLOP Foundation.

- Mayor Dunagan inquired about securing businesses in vacant downtown buildings.

RECESS: 11:55 PM

RECONVENE: 12:54 PM

NOTES: Council Member Wangemann joined the meeting. Council Member Clay left the meeting.

COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER

Community Service Center Director Phillippa Lewis Moss reported Hall County had a 99.99% response rate on the census count which means the community will receive all allocated dollars. She provided an update about the WeGo transportation system and its monitoring capabilities. She also noted receipt of generous donations for the senior nutrition programs. Challenges centered around the COVID pandemic. Initiatives included a mobile meals app to automate meal delivery, securing an Age-Friendly Community Designation from AARP and expanding WeGo throughout Hall County.

- Council Member Wangemann asked how many people were receiving meals and how many people were on the waiting list.

POLICE

Chief Jay Parrish shared success stories related to the addition of the Mental Health Clinician. He also commented on the purchase of property for a “North Precinct”, the reduction in major crimes, roadway motor vehicle accidents and policing during a pandemic. One of the biggest challenges involved police accountability as it refers to the transference of situations seen in the media; growth traffic; workforce development, i.e., making the demographics of the department match the those of the community; and fleet maintenance. Initiatives included continuing social media campaigns and implementing two Police Tax Districts. City Manager Bryan Lackey indicated the millage rate would remain the same with the implementation of the proposed tax districts and noted the department would essentially manage three separate budgets.

- Council Member Couvillon asked about funding for the Mental Health Clinician.
- Council Member Wangemann inquired about the number of sworn officers.

NOTE: Council Member Clay returned to the meeting.

RECESS: 1:36 PM
RECONVENE: 1:47 PM

PARKS AND RECREATION

Director Kate Mattison distributed a FY2020 Annual Report flyer then discussed accomplishments which included capital projects (skate park, city park renovations, acquisition of property for The Coop and new park signage); 2030 Parks; Greenways and Open Spaces Master Plan; accreditation; and inaugural track and field as well as basketball programs. Funding is the biggest challenge for the department primarily due to the (1) increased maintenance needs for existing parks/facilities, (2) operational insecurities with future parks/facilities, (3) inability to expand programs/services and (4) need for capital investment. It was noted the millage rate had not changed since 2002 despite the community’s growth. Initiatives included but were not limited to FY2021 SPLOST Projects (Civic Center renovation, Midland WYE and Midland Greenway Phase II); LED field lighting at Lanier Point; playground at Longwood Park; scorer stands at Candler fields; Master Plan recommended amenities (greenway lighting, disc golf course at Wessell Park and restrooms at Riverside Park); and The Coop. There was a brief discussion about the Agency’s mutual partnership with the City School System noting they need each other. There is an opportunity for the Agency to get involved in travel ball. A millage increase from .75 to .896 is needed to meet benchmarks within the Master Plan.

- Council Member Thompson asked how revenue has changed in comparison to the 60% population growth since 2002.
- Mayor Dunagan inquired about uses for the Parks & Recreation Impact Fees.

ADJOURNMENT: 2:48 PM

/dj

C. Danny Dunagan, Jr., Mayor

Denise O. Jordan, City Clerk