

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

Mayor Couvillon called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM and served as the presiding officer.

CITY VISION/MISSION/CITY MANAGER’S OFFICE

City Manager Bryan Lackey stated departments will present accomplishments, challenges and initiatives throughout the day then commented on strategic priorities being the foundation of budget procedures. He reviewed the vision, mission and values before discussing the goal development process. Mr. Lackey stated ideas were obtained from a recent Director’s retreat to update the strategic priorities. He proposed making the following changes:

Current	Proposed
Economic Development	Economic Opportunities/Development
Infrastructure Improvements	Spirit of Community
Internal Operations	Stewardship
Quality of Life	Culture of Safety
Leisure Services	Regional Destination

Mr. Lackey summarized action items for each priority.

- Economic Opportunities/Development: Strategic Infrastructure Investments, Educational Advancement, Business Support & Investment Encouragement, Persistent Redevelopment/Revitalization, Facilitated Innovation and Trendsetter City
- Spirit of Community: Inclusion (embrace being a cultural melting pot), Highlands to Islands Trail System, Expand Branding, Protection of Neighborhoods, Pride in Aesthetics (natural beauty and arts), Entertainment District and Complete Community (walkability, affordability and accessibility)
- Culture of Safety: Innovative Policing, Responsiveness, Community Buy-In, Communication/Education/Outreach and Community Trust Building
- Stewardship: Strategic Resource Investments, Employer of Choice (focus on employee/career development), Innovative Actions for Efficiency and Effectiveness and Remove Barriers to Enable Prosperity & Upward Mobility
- Regional Destination: Regional Leadership, Improve Lake Access & Trails, Promote Resources, Provide Housing choices, Diverse Industries, Mobility Options, and Hospitality with “year-round adventure”

There was no opposition to making these changes.

Council Comments:

- *It was stated the Mule Camp location change offered a very successful event.*
- *There was an inquiry about the alcoholic beverage license ordinance.*
- *There was a request for elected officials to receive talking points to address business items under discussion in the community.*
- *There was a compliment about the trees and lights on Bradford.*

Assistant City Manager Angela Sheppard, City Clerk Denise Jordan and Public Relations Manager Christina Santee presented the following:

Accomplishments

- The Athens Street 129 Study is complete
- The new website was launched one year ago
- The bicentennial celebration occurred last year
- A video series (Explain the Vote) was launched
- The Station was established as an advance voting location
- The Courtroom audio/video upgrades are complete

Challenges/Opportunities

- 85 Business Park
- Westside Tax Allocation District
- Parkhill Corridor Plan
- Highlands to Islands Trail Network
- Lake Lanier Olympic Park Boathouse
- Workforce/Supply Chain

Initiatives

- Sidewalks
- Housing
- Solid Waste
- Wrapping Up Downtown
- Courtroom millwork & document camera
- Agenda Management Software
- Code Rewrite Project
- Redistricting

Council Questions/Comments:

- *There was an inquiry about the delayed reporting of the 2021 election results.*
- *The election videos were very timely considering the COVID pandemic and statewide distrust of the voting process in general.*
- *There was a report of water damage in the courtroom.*

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Chief Financial Officer Jeremy Perry presented the following:

Financial update

- Explained the General Fund Property Tax Revenue declines since 2019
- Reported significant increases in Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) in 2021 and 2022
- Some revenues sources are trending back to pre-pandemic collections
- Business license revenues reached an all-time high
- CARES Act funds created the 2021 spike in general fund operating revenues
- Explained there are individual fund balances for the general fund, fire fund and police fund lumped into one total which can be misleading

Accomplishments

- Gainesville is one of 8 cities preparing three budget books and a recipient of the Georgia Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Triple Crown Award
- Upgraded bond rating

Challenges & Opportunities

- Grant administration
- Maximizing investment revenue during record lows

- Governmental partnerships to offer Accela, online software for business license
- GASB 87

Council Questions/Comments:

- *There was an inquiry about the impact of gas prices to the budget.*

City Manager Bryan Lackey commented on LOST discussions noting a joint meeting will be required to adopt documents.

Recess: 9:55 AM
Reconvene: 11:26 AM

FIRE

Fire Chief Brandon Ellis announced today is the department's 146th anniversary before presenting the following:

Accomplishments

- New replacement pumpers
- New preemption devices at intersections
- Maintained ISO rating

Goals

- Additional preemption devices
- Partner with the schools to develop future firefighters

Challenges/Opportunities

- Response volume increased by 16%
- Personnel shortages
- Replace the "code enforcement" mentality with safety education
- At least 24 months to get a new fire truck
- Increase community outreach

Strategic Plans

- Replace Rescue Truck 25
- Proposed location for Fire Station 5
- Tailored training to meet recruitment needs

Opportunities

- Eastward expansion (I-985/Old Cornelia Highway)
- Establish a Gainesville Public Safety Training Complex with options for regional training
- Fire boat policies and procedures

Council Questions/Comments:

- *There were several questions related to the Rescue Truck.*
- *There was an inquiry about the status of preemption devices on ambulances.*
- *There was an inquiry about partnering with Hall County for water rescue.*
- *There were general operations and personnel inquiries considering recent retirements.*
- *There was a request to continue recognizing outstanding service.*
- *There was an inquiry about the mutual aid agreement.*

COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER

Community Service Center Director Phillippa Lewis Moss presented the following:

Accomplishments

- Statistics sharing the success of WeGo
- Launch of WeGo customer service programs and special events services
- Resume service
- The Community Service Center served as a vaccination site

Challenges/Opportunities

- WeGo demand is greater than supply
- Wait time of 12-24 months to receive transit vehicles due to supply chain issues

Initiatives

- Move toward zero emission public transit via electric and/or battery-operated vehicles
- Downtown and neighborhood trolley service
- Outreach and collaboration focused on inclusion and mental health

Council Questions/Comments:

- *Expressed gratitude for the customer service program.*
- *Discussed the trolley's hours of operation with a request for it to expand beyond the northeastern quadrant.*

GOLF

Director of Golf Rodger Hogan presented the following:

Accomplishments

- Completed the golf course renovation in 22 weeks
- New golf carts
- The golf course rating did not change
- Awarded a contract to host the 2022 NCAA Division II Women's Golf Championships
- Lease agreement for the Chattahoochee Grill
- The renovation was funded by the sale of six lots. Five additional lots are under contract.

Challenges/Opportunities

- Increase range tee square footage
- Increase the range net height
- Parking
- Personnel
- Supply chain for range balls
- Covering the greens to protect the grass
- GPS devices are not working properly

Initiatives

- Rate increase
- Internal Junior Golf League
- New yardage book
- New software
- Locker room renovation
- Update the website flyover video
- New beverage cart

Council Questions/Comments:

- *Pleased the Chattahoochee Grill is doing well and becoming an area amenity.*
- *There was confirmation that the supply chain issue would not affect the upcoming tournament.*
- *There was a desire to increase the fees to \$55 weekdays, \$65 weekends and \$1600 weekdays annually.*

NOTE: Council Member Clay left the room at 12:45 PM.

TOURISM/CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Robyn Lynch expressed appreciation for allowing the team to offer events before everyone reopened then presented the following:

Accomplishments

- Launched the Main Street Money Program
- Increase in social media followers
- Popularity of the Downtown Get Around
- Hotel/Motel tax revenue expected to reach a new all-time high
- Rebranded Explore Gainesville
- New Visitors Guide
- New conferences/events
- The Sports Alliance and its partnership with the University of North Georgia
- The Sports Planning Guide
- Marketing plan for sports events
- Volunteer database

Challenges/Opportunities

- Downtown parking and construction
- Shortage of hotel rooms
- Finding a niche for events held at Lake Lanier Olympic Park
- Loss of events due to the COVID pandemic

Initiatives

- Online business portal
- Empty building initiative
- Façade grants
- Connect with downtown business owners to promote the area
- Add music and replace the planters in the downtown area
- Mobile Visitor's Center
- Sports Fest
- City Hall Renovation Project to create conference, meeting and special event space
- Transition Green Street Park to offer entertainment, play areas, food truck parking and more

NOTE: Council Member Clay returned at 1:38 PM.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Administrative Services Director Janeann Allison presented the following pertaining to Human Resources:

Accomplishments

- Successful implementation of Paycom software
- Employee Appreciation Event
- Online Open Enrollment by 90% of employees

Challenges

- Recruitment and retention

Initiatives

- Hire a Recruitment Manager
- Employee Referral Program
- Evaluate the feasibility of offering sign on bonuses
- Establish career ladders
- Improve employee communication
- Onsite vendor presentations

Mrs. Allison presented the following pertaining to Municipal Court:

Accomplishments

- Implemented three new software solutions
- Shredded/Purged court files with closed dispositions

Challenges/Opportunities

- Implementing the High-Performance Project
- Maintaining revenue and identifying jail expense savings

Initiatives

- Maintaining positive controls

Chief Information Officer Jonathan Reich presented the following:

Accomplishments

- Hired a Security Administrator which enhanced IT efforts
- Implemented new backup protocols
- Maintained a low median time to mitigate vulnerabilities
- Maintained high security scores using a third-party tool

Challenges

- Cyber Security

Initiatives

- Training to make things better

PARKS & RECREATION

Director of Parks and Recreation Kate Mattison presented the following:

Accomplishments

- LED field lighting
- Longwood Park playground completion
- Engine 209 Park relocation
- Kayak vending machine at Longwood Park
- Midland Greenway lighting
- Disc Golf and restrooms at Wessell Park
- Construction drawings for The Coop are 90% complete
- Creativity to offer events during the COVID pandemic
- Programming for youth basketball, youth track and field and underground fit zone
- Wilshire Wonderland of Lights

Challenges/Opportunities

- Staffing
- Revenue below pre-COVID numbers
- Infrastructure
- Developing/continuing community partners
- Deferred maintenance
- 53 open projects

Initiatives

- Fair Street Park Upgrades
- Finalize the design for The Coop
- Continue greenway lighting
- Fitness Court in Midland Greenway
- Lanier Point Upgrades
- Midland Phase III
- Martha Hope Cabin parking
- Vehicles
- Proposed transitioning Holly Park to a lake destination with a recreation center
- Acquire an additional 240 acres for parks per the Master Plan
- Succession planning
- Proposed adding four new positions
- Live stream athletic events

Council Questions/Comments:

- *There was an inquiry about income from the Kayak vending machine.*
- *There were compliments about the boardwalk at the Engine 209 Park.*
- *Upon inquiry, there was discussion about Midland Park's handicap accessible playground.*
- *Upon inquiry, there was discussion about a potential partnership to build a stage on the Midland Greenway.*
- *A different turf was suggested for the multi-purpose field at The Coop.*
- *There was emphasis on the need for a recreation center with a request for suggestions regarding site options. The Westminster Church gym and Northlake Shopping Center were mentioned.*
- *The Corp of Engineers may not be open to changes at Holly Park.*
- *The historical value of Holly Park was discussed.*
- *Upon inquiry, it was noted the GA 100 Initiative provided \$75,000 and United Way provided \$25,000 toward establishing a mini pitch soccer field.*

POLICE

Chief Jay Parrish presented the following:

Accomplishments

- Burglaries decreased by 28%

- Social media outreach is very active and evolving
- Mental Health Clinician expansion
- Community outreach resumed
- Expanded training to include mental health and de-escalation

Challenges/Opportunities

- Vehicle replacement delays due to supply chain issues
- Upgrade IT infrastructure to prepare for Windows 2025
- Personnel in regards to workforce development that matches the city's demographics and competitive salaries

Initiatives

- Enhanced crime fighting technology
- East and West Precinct Models
- Career path staff development

City Manager Bryan Lackey presented ideas for addressing competing salaries.

Council Questions/Comments:

- *Council Member Brooks commented on the importance of keeping officers connected to the community.*
- *There was support for offering competitive salaries.*

OTHER DISCUSSION

Short Term Rentals

Mayor Couvillon commented on receiving a recommendation from staff and felt there would be questions that the Council can't answer.

Assistant City Manager Angela Sheppard stated the City Attorney recommended clarifying the code to eliminate future misunderstandings. Upon inquiry, she also shared a few details about Hall County's ordinance.

City Manager Bryan Lackey stated regardless of what happens at the upcoming hearing, the future of Airbnb's should be determined.

Council Member Clay felt it was important to clarify what is happening on March 1. She expressed a desire for equality and to evaluate this issue to develop a long-term plan. She also asked if there had been any comparison of short-term rentals to long-term rentals.

ADJOURNMENT: 4:22 PM

/dj

W. Samuel Couvillon, Mayor

Denise O. Jordan, City Clerk