

The City Council of the City of Harlem, Georgia met for a Quarterly Work Session on Friday, February 16, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. with Mayor Roxanne Whitaker presiding.

Present: COUNCIL: Mayor Roxanne Whitaker, Mayor Pro tem Gregg Stokes, Councilmember Daniel Bellavance, Councilmember Al Reeves, and Councilmember John Thigpen; STAFF: City Manager Debra Moore, City Clerk Leona Holley, and City Attorney Adam Nelson.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Whitaker at 8:43 a.m.

The Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance was given and led by City Attorney Nelson.

**Executive Session:** Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to go into Executive Session; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. Executive Session opened at 8:44 a.m.

Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to come out of Executive Session; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Thigpen. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. Executive Session closed at 9:31 a.m.

City Attorney Nelson reported that there was one real estate matter discussed and no final action was taken.

Mayor Pro tem Stokes made the motion to authorize the Mayor to sign the Affidavit acknowledging this report; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Reeves. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

**Historic Preservation Commission:**

- **Term Limit Discussion:** City Manager Moore explained at the January Council meeting an ordinance was brought before Council for a first reading regarding amending the wordage for the term limits of office for HPC (Historic Preservation Commission). The ordinance currently in place now states the members are appointed for three-year terms and may not serve more than two consecutive terms. Members of the Commission requested the Council to review and consider amending the terms of office. City Attorney Nelson explained state law does not say what the term length should be. If the Council wanted to make the change from the three-year term limit to a one-year term once the schedule came around the terms would begin in January; at the January Council meeting, there would be a vote to reappoint the member or to replace members. A one-year term gives the Council the flexibility to evaluate periodically to make sure everything is still working with the Commission. Another option instead of appointing a member each year, under Georgia law if someone is appointed or elected, generally they serve in that position until the next person takes the office. City Manager Moore explained HPC must hold at least six meetings a year and the members are required to attend at least four meetings. Councilmember Bellavance questioned if this would be for all the Commissions; City Attorney Nelson replied this

DISCUSSION ITEMS (cont'd):

**Historic Preservation Commission (cont'd):**

- **Term Limit Discussion (cont'd):** amendment is only for the HPC Board, but if Council wanted to think about making a change to other Commissions it could be looked at.
- **Mission Statement:** City Manager Moore provided Council with a copy of the Mission Statement that HPC voted on and would like to have put in place. City Manager Moore asked Council what their direction is for the HPC. The consensus of Council is for the Mission Statement to read "The mission of the Harlem Historical Preservation Commission is to protect, enhance, perpetuate, and utilize the city's historic resources for the benefit of present and future generations."

There was some discussion on the HPC Members asking to visit the property on W. Milledgeville Road where O'Reilly's is looking to develop. Councilmember Thigpen stated the Members would like to go inside to see if there is anything that could be saved or reclaimed and do an inventory of everything of historical value. City Manager Moore explained her interpretation of the ordinance is the HPC members should be looking at the outside of the building not the inside. City Attorney Nelson explained if a building is being demolished inside the HPC District there are set of factors to be looked at. A Certificate of Appropriateness request would go through the HPC process. City Attorney Nelson stated normally he would tell the HPC not to go inside a building, but if there are some historic values inside the building that could be reclaimed the government official, or owner should consider it; historic properties only have historic value if they have been maintained. City Attorney Nelson explained if someone is going to demo a house, there needs to be records showing why it was or was not demoed, a record of the historic value, and a record of the house been remodeled or repaired overtime. Even though HPC really should not go inside a house it helps with record keeping purposes to differentiate why it was or was not demolished. City Manager Moore commented in the Comprehensive Plan one of the top wants or needs from the public was for an auto part store.

**Code Section 108.96 Accessory Buildings, Structures, and Uses-Possible Amendment:** City Manager Moore stated recently a variance request went before the Planning Commission for a home located on N. Fairview Drive. The request was for an accessory structure to be behind the home and for a garage to be added as a detached accessory structure. The Planning Commission made the recommendation for approval. When this went before Council, a statement was made stating the garage would be attached to the main structure. There was discussion at the Council meeting on the type of building materials that would be used and if the materials needed to be the same as the main structure or be different. City Manager Moore provided the following timeline of amendments for Ordinance for Sec. 108-96 – Accessory Buildings, Structures, and Uses item (7):

1. **2006:** it reads "Permanent accessory buildings must be constructed of the same building material as the principal structure."
2. **2009:** It was amended to read "Accessory structures must be constructed of the same building material as the principal structure except as provided in this subsection. The roofing materials shall be constructed of the same materials as the roof of the main structure. In the case of the main structure being brick, the accessory building siding can be wood or vinyl that matches the trim of the main structure."

DISCUSSION ITEMS (cont'd):

**Code Section 108.96 Accessory Buildings, Structures, and Uses-Possible Amendment (cont'd):**

3. **2012:** It was amended to read "Accessory building may be constructed of any type of material, provided that such structures are hidden from plain view. For example, such structures may be behind the primary building so as to obscure it from plan view from a publicly traveled road, or it may be obscured by either a fence or vegetation. If the building is not hidden from plain view, it shall maintain a facade of fiber-cement siding, wood siding, wood-textured vinyl siding, brick/brick veneer, rock, stone, cast-stone, stucco or synthetic stucco, or finished/baked enamel aluminum/metal siding that establishes a horizontal pattern. For buildings not obscured from view the roofing materials shall be constructed of the same materials as the roof of the primary structure." This is what is currently in place.

City Manager Moore commented she did not find anything in the ordinance that states if an addition is being made to the house it must be the exact material as the house. The city does not regulate the materials for an addition/attachment to the house. City Manager Moore suggested amending Sec. 108-96 Accessory buildings, structures, and uses to read the following:

(7) Accessory buildings may be constructed of any type of material, provided that such structures are hidden from plain view. For example, such structure may be behind the primary building so as to obscure it from plain view from a publicly traveled road, or it may be obscured by either a fence or vegetation. ~~If the building is not hidden from plain view, it shall maintain a facade of fiber cement siding, wood siding, wood textured vinyl siding, brick/brick veneer, rock, stone, cast stone, stucco or synthetic stucco, or finished/baked enamel aluminum/metal siding that establishes a horizontal pattern.~~ **For buildings not obscured from view, the siding materials shall also be constructed of the same materials as the siding of the primary structure.** For buildings not obscured from view, the roofing materials shall be constructed of the same materials as the roof of the primary structure.

City Attorney Nelson explained if this proposal were adopted logically the original material would be what you would require them to follow. We might want to address in the proposed amendment whether the materials need to be of the original building or give the option of choosing the materials listed. The consensus of the Council is to leave the current ordinance in place at this time.

**Personnel Policy Revision: Holiday Pay Hours, Classification Addition:** City Manager Moore is proposing to amend the personnel policy for the holiday pay hours and a classification addition. She explained currently the Police Department is paid 12 hours if they are off on holiday and the Fire Department is paid 8 hours if they are off on holiday. City Manager Moore is proposing the following personnel policy revision for holiday pay hours, classification addition:

"Those employees who are required to work on the holiday shall be paid 1 (one) hour of holiday straight time in addition to their regular pay for every hour worked on the holiday. Public Safety Employees (Police and Fire) who work shifts shall observe the approved holidays on the actual calendar holiday. Public Safety Employees (Police and Fire) who work shifts and are not scheduled to work on the actual calendar holiday shall receive pay equal to 8 hours of regular pay

DISCUSSION ITEMS (cont'd):

**Personnel Policy Revision: Holiday Pay Hours, Classification Addition (cont'd):** all other Public Safety Employees (Police and Fire) who work a Monday-Friday schedule shall observe the approved holidays on the observed calendar holiday."

City Manager Moore explained the city has the standard categories for PTO rate of accrual. For full-time employees the PTO rate of accrual is: Administrative employee 80 hour pay period (2080 Base Annual Hours), Police is 86 hours pay period (2236 Base Annual Hours), and Fire 106-hour pay period (2756 Base Annual Hours) pay periods. Prior management made an agreement for the full-time fire department employee to work Monday-Friday, 96 hours pay period. The employees fell under the normal Fire Department accrual rate of 2756, this is the base annual rate for Shift Firefighters. City Manager Moore explained there is nothing in the personnel policy showing the 96-hour (2496 Base Annual Hours) rate for this position and she is proposing a Fire Department-Non-Shift Firefighter annual accrual rate, 2496 base annual accrual hours. There was some discussion on the 96-hour employee regular hours, and overtime.

**Executive Session:** Councilmember Reeves made the motion to go into Executive Session; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilmember Thigpen. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. Executive Session opened at 10:50 a.m.

Councilmember Reeves made the motion to come out of Executive Session; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative. Executive Session closed at 11:11 a.m.

City Attorney Nelson reported there was one personnel matter discussed and that no final action was taken.

Councilmember Thigpen made the motion to authorize the Mayor to sign the Affidavit affirming this report; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mayor Pro tem Stokes. The motion carried with Councilmembers Bellavance, Reeves, Stokes, and Thigpen voting in the affirmative.

**Civic Center – Rezoning Discussion:** City Manager Moore reported the Mayor requested to discuss having the Civic Center at 375 N. Louisville Street rezoned. Currently the property is zoned R-1A and Mayor Whitaker is asking for consideration to rezone the property to B-1, for the downtown business district. The rezoning would allow the property to be promoted as commercial property. The rezoning would go to the Planning Commission in April. Mayor Whitaker stated currently there are eight people interested in the property. City Manager Moore stated the appraisal for the property came in at \$259,000.00.

**Garbage Service Contract Renewal – Coastal Waste & Recycling:** City Manager Moore stated the current contract with Coastal Waste is a 5-year contract with an option for a 2-year renewal. Notification of non-renewal is to be made 90 days before the current contract ends. On January 10<sup>th</sup> City Manager Moore received notification from Coastal Waste that they will not be able to renew for an additional 2 years given the current rates. In the letter it states they are interested in still serving the city but cannot continue to do so under the same terms and conditions set forth in the current contract. Coastal sent in a preliminary

DISCUSSION ITEMS (cont'd):

**Garbage Service Contract Renewal – Coastal Waste & Recycling (cont'd):** proposal. To continue with the services, we currently have there would be an approximately 95% increase due to costs going up. One preliminary offer was if the city agreed to move recycling to the day of garbage, they would give a \$3.00 per cart discount. There was some discussion on the preliminary proposal for a 5-year renewal or an 8-year renewal, discussion given on bulk waste and recycling. A decision on the contract will need to be made before October 1, 2024. Councilmember Reeves commented he would like to do an RFP (Request for Proposal) bid to show the citizens we are trying to find the best rate and service.

Broke for lunch at 11:46 a.m.; resumed at 12:30 p.m. Councilmember Reeves left the meeting at 12:00 p.m. for a personal matter.

**Harlem City Park – Proposed Policies, Fee Schedule, etc.; Upgrades:** Discussion was given on a new sign for the Walking Trail. City Manager Moore presented Council with a copy of the sign design from Nelson Signs.

City Manager Moore presented the proposed Policies and Procedures for the Harlem City Park. The information provided is based on the policies, procedures, and fee schedule that Columbia County has in place. The Mayor asked for a waiver for the park; City Attorney Nelson stated he has a waiver that he will send to City Manager Moore to review. Discussion was given on rental of the ballfields, pavilion, tennis court, and basketball court as well as using the park for events, and tournaments. Councilmembers are receiving calls on how to schedule the fields, issues with the fence at the ballfield, and maintaining of the fields. City Manager Moore explained we are in the process of creating the procedures for the rental of the fields now. Public Works Director Octavius Beard has been working with the county on gathering information on the maintenance of the fields and has spoken with a company for the fertilizing of the fields and has scheduled this. Mr. Beard is scheduled to attend training on parks in March. Councilmember Bellavance suggested contracting the maintenance of the park out. City Manager Moore stated next Wednesday there is a meeting scheduled with Johnson, Laschober & Associates (JLA) to discuss park improvements. City Manager Moore has given them some preliminary information based on prior discussions at quarterly council meetings. She mentioned removal of the green building, installing a water feature, and jumping bad. There has been a request for a batting cage in a building with nets, swings, and tennis courts. The playground equipment that is in the park now will have to be upgraded to ADA compatible. There is funding of \$582,000.00 from SPLOST for improvements to the park. City Manager Moore will ask JLA to do a rendition of a Pavilion with tables for the Walking Trail as well. The funds for the Walking Trail would come out of the ARP fund, not the SPLOST fund.

Discussion was given on the three access areas from the cemetery to the park whether to close the access area or leave it in case it is needed as another way out of the park. The access areas are not part of the city's streets. The consensus of Council was to close the access areas.

DISCUSSION ITEMS (cont'd):

**Project Updates – Public Works Project and New City Park Project:** The following is an update for the project updates from Engineer John McClellan as of February 16, 2024:

- **Public Works Project:** The construction plans are coming together. They are 75% complete. The grading plan is primarily completed. With the building being on the hillside, there will be a good bit of dirt that will need to be disposed of. Working on the hydrology for the site drainage and detention pond. Once complete, the plans can be wrapped up and sent out for soil erosion approvals.
- **Multi-Purpose Park:** Surveying on the site is about 90% complete. They will plan to be back onsite in the next week or two to fill in any areas that require a two-man crew.

**Crosswalk Discussion – Flashing Beacons at Crosswalks:** Mayor Whitaker spoke with GDOT (Georgia Department of Transportation) District Engineer Corbett Reynolds regarding the flashing beacon lights at the crosswalks downtown and possibly adding flashing beacons at Hardee's and IGA on Highway 78. Mr. Reynolds stated he would put these items at the top of the list. City Manager Moore stated an email was sent in July to GDOT, regarding the flashing beacons; she received a response that they would look at this and get back to her. Discussion was given on the on-street parking, and crosswalks.

**Financial Review/Discussion:**

- **ARP/SLFRF Funds – December 31, 2024 Obligation Deadline:** City Manager Moore presented the ARP financial information on FYE 12/31/2023. The ARP funds must be obligated by 12/31/2024. Councilmember Bellavance commented that if the city starts picking up bulk waste, we need to think about purchasing a rolloff dumpster and truck, and if this could be purchased from the ARP funds.
- **Revolving Loan Fund – Out of Compliance – Return of Funding:** City Manager Moore explained the city received a loan from the CDBG/EIP program for the Department of Community Affairs. In 2009, funds were received for an economic development project for the financing of equipment purchased by Lucky Lady Pecans. The grant was a grant to help produce employment. San Saba purchased Lucky Lady Pecans and paid the loan off. The city requested to use some of the funds from the grant towards demolishing blighted property. One of the requirements from the Department of Community Affairs is to do a loan every five years and the city has not done another loan. For the city to be in compliance with the Department of Community Affairs the city will need to reimburse the Revolving Loan Fund. At the end of December, the balance was \$112,510.47.
- **Preliminary FYE 12/31/2023 Financial Report:** City Manager Moore presented the preliminary financial information on FYE 12/31/2023. She stated there are budget amendments that need to be made and entry for the property taxes.

DISCUSSION ITEMS (cont'd):

**Other:**

Discussion was given on employment applicant updates for the Police, Fire, Museum, and Public Works Departments.

City Manager Moore reported there was a recent accident that involved one of the Officers of the Police Department. Discussion was given on whether dashcams are needed for vehicles.

There was a discussion on the bereavement policy for the city. The city has bereavement leave for the employees to allow the employees to take the time off to attend funerals of immediate family members. There are times where a different situation may come up, that the city will have to look at the circumstances case by case for bereavement.

Mayor Whitaker gave a brief update on the state legislative. Mayor Whitaker commented that the Columbia County Consolidation Study is ready, but she has not received it yet.

Mayor Pro tem Stokes asked if there will be any update for the cities website; City Manager Moore responded recently Civicplus has acquired Municode, and they are going through a migration of the system for the website and there will be training on the new platform once this is complete.

With there being nothing further before Council, Mayor Whitaker closed the meeting at 2:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leona H. Holley  
City Clerk