

Minutes



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION April 13, 2022, 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM

City Council Work Session: GMRC Meeting Room, Gainesville, GA

Call to Order: The April 13, 2022, Work Session was called to order by Mayor Keith Turman at 9:00 AM

Attendance: Mayor Keith Turman, Mayor Pro-Tem Lee Strickland, Jason Phillips, David Pressley, Kenneth Roach, Wayne Braswell, Matt Fields, Interim City Manager Gary Fesperman, and City Clerk Sharleen Ayers

Discussion:

Gary Fesperman opened the meeting with a Case Study of Hoschton as an example of a city that made some uninformed decisions and choices on building, zoning, infrastructure and planned growth.

A. City of Royston:

1. **City of Royston 2021 Retreat recap:** Mr. Fesperman skimmed the minutes of the 2021 retreat as a review of prior year discussions.
2. **Financial Recap:** Finance Officer Sharleen Ayers gave a quick recap of the cities current finances including current financial position, cash balances, and debt services.
3. **Code of Ordinances**
 - a. **Update & Re-Codification:** Mr. Fesperman discussed with council the importance of keeping up with current codification of city ordinances. Royston's ordinances have not been codified since 2016. This is of utmost importance. Special attention needs to be paid to building codes, Inspections, Subdivision regulations, etc. Growth in Royston will likely come from within through blight and substandard housing being purchased by developers. Affordable housing will be an issue with the job creation occurring to the south of us. These employees will funnel into the surrounding cities and the codes need to be updated to regulate and manage future commercial and residential growth. Council must be Proactive not Reactive.
 - b. **Walkable Communities:** Mr. Fesperman pointed out that walkable communities are the Hot button topic among many developers. They are looking to In-Fill Development using infrastructure already in place and adding affordable housing and retail/dining parcels in a single area. These will be

subject to purchase by rental companies so the council should look at an ordinance for short term rentals such as Airbnb. Subdivision regulations need to be updated and ready for these types of developments.

4. **DDA/Mainstreet/Planning and Zoning:** Mr. Fesperman reviewed with council the differences between a Mainstreet Program and a Downtown Development Authority. He recommended the city consider contracting a planner and building inspections. He mentioned that Mr. Crump had discussed the Historical Preservation commission, currently defunct, being restarted. He suggested that be put on hold as the DDA needed to become more active. The council mentioned they had previously discussed re-branding and they needed to investigate that again soon.

5. **Water/Sewer:**

- a. **Capital Projects:** Need to look at a system analysis and capital projects planning.
 - i. Engineering firm to perform a cost analysis to determine the costs to produce 1,000 gallons of water and get it to the end user.
 - ii. The city needs a SCADA system on all the Lift Stations and the Water Intakes.
 - iii. Security of the Water and Wastewater Plants needs to be upgraded.
 - iv. The City can use some SPLOST funds to help finance these purchases.
 - v. Preventative Maintenance needs to be a priority for the city. May consider using ARPA funds to help with this.
- b. **User Fees:** There have been no increases in water and sewer user fees since 2019, and most of the municipal wholesale water rates have not changed since the original agreements from 2009. Water systems rely on the user fees to maintain and operate the system. The city must keep up with the cost of their systems. This is a business, and it needs to function like a business. Cities cannot provide services to the level of citizen needs if they do not keep rates at a sufficient level. Royston needs a rate study including a cost analysis for User, Tap, and Wholesale rates.
- c. **Tap Fees:** Cities should use their tap fees to pay for upgrades and expansions to the water and sewer systems. Currently our tap fees are barely enough to cover the cost of the meters and supplies to install a tap; and in some instances, do not cover the cost for the installation.

6. **Street Department:**

- a. **Street Assessment Study:** Mr. Fesperman recommended the city have a street assessment performed, including taking core samples to find out the condition of all the city streets, arterial as well as collector streets. He commented that the cities sidewalks are old and smaller than the current standard being built. He pointed out that most cities are now building 5 ft sidewalks rather than 3 ft. Pedestrian and Cart paths and connectivity are the latest uses, and the city should also look at the current cart ordinance for updating.

7. **Recreation Department:**

- a. **Amphitheater:** Mr. Fesperman asked if the council had considered what would be the end use of the amphitheater being built? He recommended that council work on a Vision and Plan for the park. We need to decide who will have oversight of the new amphitheater and determine a schedule of fees for maintenance and operational costs. It is still under construction and will possibly be the fall before completion due to construction delays from contractors and suppliers. He suggested the council consider setting up a 501C-3 Non-Profit to oversee the use of the park.
8. **2023 Budget Process:** Mr. Fesperman will be meeting with department heads in the coming weeks and recommending they have their budget numbers ready by mid-May. A pay scale adjustment is under consideration, so he asked that they fill in their budgets for everything except salaries and benefits.
9. **Gas:** The Gas Department is considering capacity increases but needs a system analysis first to determine how much pressure the lines can handle. This is estimated to cost around \$50,000 and needs to be performed sooner rather than later.
10. **City Manager Recruitment Update:** Mr. Fesperman told the council that GMA currently lists 17 other cities or counties looking for management. This is a competitive market, and the city may need to adjust their expectations and consider hiring a recruitment company to help in their search.
11. **Goal Setting:** Mr. Fesperman discussed setting some short-term goals with the council. He recommended they come up with 1-, 2-, and 5-year goals.
 - a. **1-year goals:** Should include Code Update, Fee Updates, DDA activity, Water equipment and security, Departmental system analyses, Amphitheater completion.
 - b. **2-year goals:** Should include Water System Upgrades, Gas system relocation of lines on Hwy 17 (DOT project), Wastewater EPD compliance.

Adjourn: Mayor Turman made a motion to adjourn the work session at 4:00 PM. Lee Strickland seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

Sharleen Ayers, City Clerk

Mayor Keith Turman

(SEAL)

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