December 14, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Scott Martin called the regular meeting of the Lawrenceville Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. on December 14, 2021.

ROLL CALL

Roll was called. Present: Mayor Scott Martin; Council Members H. B. Brockwell, Jr., Dora Hardy, Robert F. Pecht, III, Alice Talbert, Teya Whitehead and Anne Williams.

Absent: Council Member Joyce Bland.

Planning Commission Members Present: Cynthia Pecht, Timothy Puryear and Teya Whitehead.

Planning Commission Members participating by phone: John Miller and Cherrill Robertson.

Also present: Town Attorney, W. C. Outten, Jr., Town Manager, Everette Gibson, Town Clerk, Wanda Johnson, Police Chief, John Stith, Brian Glover, Kimberly Martin, Leonard Rose, Alfreda J. Reynolds, Mike Dotti, Chris Stephenson, Keith Clarke, citizens and the press.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Police Chief John Stith led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Brockwell, seconded by Mrs. Talbert and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on November 9, 2021, as received, suspend the reading and file.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Mr. Brockwell and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to approve the agenda as presented.

JOINT PUBLIC HEARING – LAWRENCEVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Rezoning Application – County of Brunswick – 100 Athletic Field Road – Application #2021-1

Cynthia Pecht opened the public hearing. Mr. Gibson presented an overview of the application regarding the property at 100 Athletic Field Road, Tax Map #52-49. It is currently zoned Public Open Space and serves as the Brunswick County Conference Center, housing the DMV Select and the J.S. Russell/SPC Museum. The applicant is requesting that zoning be changed to Business General. The applicant proposes to rent out office space to prospective businesses and use as a business incubator, in addition to the current uses.

Ms. Williams expressed concern about a jurisdiction opening up building spaces to public rental.

Ms. Reynolds, Director of Economic Development for the County of Brunswick, stated they are making an effort to work collaboratively for development opportunities. The building has empty office spaces and they want to be ready when business comes. Potential businesses would be vetted by the County so that it falls in line with the vision of the County Board of Supervisors. Parking spaces would be addressed in the lease agreement. This property does include the former football field. Also, an operating business would need a Town business license.

Chris Stephenson, representing SPC4Life, stated it seems this would be a conflict with any private organization seeking to do the same thing. SPC4Life just purchased the Bank of America building and now it seems they will be in competition with the County. He stated he is opposed to the rezoning. He said they had offered to purchase the Brunswick County Conference Center and they were told it would be used for government use. He said they are still interested in purchasing the conference center, if the county is interested in selling.

Ms. Pecht advised, if there were no additional public comments, the planning commission would adjourn to the next room and return with a recommendation. Mayor Martin closed the public hearing.

RECOGNITION OF CITIZENS

Leonard Rose shared information and flyers about his church.

Anne Williams addressed Town Council, as a citizen, for the public record. She still wants information on how the funds were spent for the Turntable Park project. Ms. Williams said an ordinance is needed for public parking spaces for private citizens. She stated the downtown use of space needs to be addressed. The Clarke Smith building needs to be addressed. The 313 High Street project needs signage. That property is being prepared for garden space for the spring. Mr. Martin reminded Ms. Williams she can always contact him or any of the town personnel with any questions or concerns.

Chris Stephenson said he was just hearing of the rezoning request. SPC4Life just purchased the former Bank of America building for $350,000 only to find out they are in competition with the County. Mr. Stephenson was advised that the public hearing on the rezoning was closed.

LAWRENCEVILLE EDA – BUTLER PROPERTY

Mr. Gibson reported he had emailed Town Council members a copy of an offer from a potential buyer for the Butler property. The information was also forwarded to Mr. Outten for review. The offer is $50,000 for the Butler property to include buildings. The property has been shown six times by Ms. Reynolds and Mr. Gibson. Ms. Williams questioned the appraised value of the property. Mr. Gibson reported a 2015 appraisal of the property was just under $300,000. Ms. Williams said it was in the best interest of the citizens to reject the low offer and seek grant funds to make repairs. She said we have staff now who can do research for grants. Mr. Brockwell said the building had been considered for use as the town maintenance shop but the Town did not have the money to take care of issues with the building. It is also in a wetlands area. Mr. Martin commented that the purchaser would be responsible for the property “as is” and the abatement of any issues. The Town would have to transfer the deed to the Lawrenceville EDA for sale as the Town cannot sell, lease or rent property. The sale of the building would put it back on tax records and create jobs. Mr. Pecht said the market value is what somebody is willing to pay for it. The property has sat there for years and efforts have been made to sell it. If there is a chance for it to be developed and the property fits the use of the entity, they will hire people, take all risks inherent to the property, and then it would not be the same as giving $250,000 away. Ms. Reynolds shared the prospect wants to remain anonymous at this time. The building needs roof work and there is asbestos. The prospect is aware of the issues and is willing to purchase the property “as is”. This would be a plant that would package, process and ship product out of the county. She said we can’t look back. We have to move forward and repurpose vacant buildings for new businesses. Mr. Gibson said the recommendation is for Town Council to deed the property to the LEDA and approve the sale price of $50,000.

On motion by Mr. Brockwell, seconded by Ms. Hardy and carried, Town Council voted to deed the Butler property to the LEDA and approved the sale price of $50,000. Ms. Williams voted nay.

MAYOR’S REPORT

Mayor Martin reported there have been a lot of activities in December. He thanked Kimberly Martin for her help in the first annual tree lighting and decorating the Peebles building windows. The first storefront decorating contest had 12 participants. The Christmas parade was held December 3. Mayor Martin attended the LVFD Christmas banquet. It was catered by Kevin Pair. Bob Williams was Firefighter of the Year and he answered the most calls for the year. James Wesson is out recovering from knee surgery. The employee Christmas luncheon will be held tomorrow at noon.

REPORT OF TOWN ATTORNEY

Mr. Outten reported that the General Assembly passed a law that all local elections must be held on the first Tuesday in November beginning in 2022. This means that our town election must be moved from the first Tuesday in May to the first Tuesday in November. Mr. Outten has drafted a resolution he recommends for adoption to move the election. On a motion by Mr. Brockwell, seconded by Mrs. Talbert and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to adopt the resolution as presented to move the town election from May to the first Tuesday in November beginning in 2022. Motion: Mr. Brockwell. Second: Mrs. Talbert. Roll call vote: Mrs. Bland, absent; Mr. Brockwell, aye; Ms. Hardy, aye; Mr. Pecht, aye; Mrs. Talbert, aye; Ms. Whitehead, aye; Ms. Williams, aye. Current council members will hold over until the new election.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

CONSIDERATION OF ACCOUNTS

Mrs. Johnson reported the bills total $111,251.98. On a motion by Mrs. Talbert, seconded by Mr. Brockwell and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to pay the bills in the amount of $111,251.98 and post to the proper accounts.

REZONING APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION

Ms. Pecht reported that the Lawrenceville Planning Commission recommends that Town Council approve the rezoning request for 100 Athletic Field Road. They further recommended that should the rezoning to Business General be granted, that if the bowling alley is put back in use, a special exception use permit would be required. A motion was made by Mr. Brockwell to approve the rezoning request. A second was made by Mr. Pecht for the point of discussion. Town Council discussion followed. Mr. Outten advised that the joint public hearing was held and the planning commission has made its recommendation to the council. Council does not have to take action tonight. Mr. Pecht withdrew his second. The motion then died for lack of a second.

On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Ms. Hardy and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to table the rezoning decision until the town council meeting in January.

REPORT OF TOWN MANAGER

VDH GRANTS

Mr. Gibson reported he participated in a Zoom meeting with Mr. Proctor, Dr. Mac Bugg, Mr. Lynch and Mrs. Martin. The group discussed disinfection byproduct funding for the water system and for all the Town’s water needs which are projected to cost $2.4 – 2.5 million. VDH offers funding to offset costs. Also, the Dental Association offers full funding to upgrade the fluoride system.

WASTEWATER PLANT

Mr. Reynolds, with DEQ, and Dr. Bugg will work on funding opportunities for the WWTP. The project is already engineered.

BUSINESS STOREFRONT DECORATING CONTEST

Twelve businesses participated in the first storefront decorating contest. The first-place winner was Citizen’s Insurance, Pam Allen, and the second-place winner was Anointed Creations, Monica Stith. Certificates of Participation were presented to each entity. Mrs. Martin shared a PowerPoint presentation showing pictures of the decorated windows.

TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY

The tree lighting was fantastic. Mr. Gibson thanked everyone, including the street crew, the LVFD and the LPD.

VDOT SIDEWALK PROJECTS 11869 AND 11870

Projects 11869 and 11870 have been approved for engineering by VDOT. Project 11869 creates pedestrian access that connects directly to the trail. Project #11870 connects South Street.

STRATEGIC MARKETING COMMITTEE

Mr. Gibson met with Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Dotti, Mrs. Martin and Ms. Laverne Dillard to discuss future marketing plans for targeted buildings within the Town limits. They will continue to meet to create a plan to market target properties in partnerships with the Town, County and IDA. They will generate an agreement or MOU between the Town, County and IDA identifying purchase prices for Town properties. A part of the future agreement will be a needs list relating to water/wastewater project requests.

SMALL BUSINESS RECOVERY ASSISTANCE PROJECT

The last meeting was held today. During this time, 31 businesses in Lawrenceville and Brunswick County received approximately $261,000 from COVID relief funds.

The Town is still registered as an Enterprise Zone.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr. Pecht reported the financial report is in the packet and we are running according to schedule. The general fund balance shown does include COVID relief funds and also funds for the purchase of the fire truck. Mr. Pecht commented Mrs. Johnson and staff have done an excellent job this year getting items out for the audit in early October. Mrs. Johnson was told today that we hope to have a draft of the audit by Christmas.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

The fire department responded to 31 calls in November. Of the 31, 5 were in the town limits and 26 were outside the town limits. Also, 22 were in the LVFD First Due area, with 9 being mutual aid to other agencies. Approximately 132 man hours were expended. Mr. Gibson reported the new tanker is in and it has been lettered. It is not officially in service at this time, as more manufacturer training is required. The ladder truck is in the final stages of being refitted. It will probably be delivered in January. Mr. Pecht commented that we are very fortunate to have such a strong fire department in town. Mayor Martin said more members are needed.

PERSONNEL

Mr. Brockwell reported there will be a new regular report next month showing positions open to be filled.

POLICE

The report is in the packet. All positions have been filled in the police department. Chief Stith reported Officer Capps will graduate tomorrow from the Central Virginia Justice Academy. Chad Clary has been hired as a police officer and will attend academy orientation on December 30, 2021. He will start the academy on January 4, 2022. Chief Stith commented that he stands at the meetings and listens and knows Council is met with tough, tough decisions. He hears togetherness and unity between the County and Town, new businesses, progress. He said he knows the job is hard, stay the course.

PROPERTY & EQUIPMENT

Mr. Brockwell commented it is nice to have a meeting and see things being done. The consultant brought up how to determine what to sell and how to get it ready. That was basically done in the discussions we had tonight. The consultant we talked to did not think their particular company would bring to the table what we needed in the property end. The recommendations are being implemented now.

STREETS, LIGHTS & CEMETERY

Mayor Martin commented that everything is looking good.

TOWN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Brockwell reported on the strategic plan meeting. Please ask Mr. Gibson for the recommendations from that meeting if you do not already have them. The SPDC Town and County project lists are in the packet. Please take time to review them. When you involve the SPDC, you pay approximately 20% for administrative costs. Identifying water and sewer needs are part of working together.

WATER/WASTEWATER

Mr. Brockwell reported we are looking into available grant funds to maximize our dollars. There will not be a committee meeting after the meeting.

HOUSING CODE ENFORCEMENT

There was no report.

PARKS/RECREATION

There was no report.

WELLNESS

Ms. Whitehead provided information on the Massey Cancer Center Community Seed Grant. Please contact Ms. Whitehead if you have any questions. In order to have a productive community, you have to have a healthy community.

FARMER’S MARKET

Ms. Whitehead recognized Ms. Williams for her hard work, dedication and efforts for the Farmer’s Market.

LAWRENCEVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION

A vote on the rezoning request was tabled until the January meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Employee Christmas Luncheon – December 15, 2021

Ms. Williams reported on the community garden at 313 High Street. There will not be vegetables. There will be plants and perennials. Several people have already started working on plots. We have commitments from various vendors.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before Council, a motion was made by Mrs. Talbert, seconded by Ms. Hardy and carried by all ayes to adjourn the meeting.

Scott E. Martin, Mayor

Wanda Johnson, Clerk