



CITY OF THOMSON
PUBLIC HEARING AND CITY COUNCIL MEETING
AUGUST 12, 2021

6:00PM

Thomson-McDuffie Government Center

Present:

Kenneth Usry, Mayor
Alton Belton, Councilmember
Keryl Corley, Councilmember
Elaine Johnson, Councilmember
John Smalley, Councilmember
Scott Whittle, Councilmember
John Waller, City Administrator
Lucretia Ferguson, City Clerk
Jimmy Plunkett, City Attorney

Also Present:

Chief Courtney Gale, TPD
Assistant Chief E J Bess, TPD
Chase Beggs, Planning & Zoning Dir.
Tammy Haire, Finance Director
Yetonia Hutchinson
Nora Douglas
Elizabeth Brown
Shanda Grant, HR Director
Saralyn Dunaway
Nathaniel Usry
Wayne Parham, McDuffie Progress

PUBLIC HEARING

At 6:00pm, Mayor Usry welcomed all to the Public Hearing concerning the Planning and Zoning Board's recommendation, with conditions, on a setback variance at 406 Pecan Alley.

Planning and Zoning Director Beggs presented the recommendation. Ms. Maggie Jones was issued a stop work order in June of 2021 after a reported addition was found with no permit. The addition also brought the residence within six to ten feet of the right-of-way of the dead end street. The Planning Board made the recommendation to approve the variance to the front setback with the following conditions:

1. Ms. Jones apply and be approved for necessary permits.
2. Ms. Jones pay the penalty fees for building without permits.
3. Ms. Jones comply with the Building Official's orders for bringing the addition into compliance with all applicable building codes.

The P&Z Board recommends approving the variance with the three conditions. The vote was 4-Yays and 0-Nays (2 members were absent) at the Planning & Zoning Board's meeting.

CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:

There being no questions, comments, or other concerns, Mayor Usry closed the public meeting at 6:03pm.

COUNCIL MEETING

At 6:03pm, Mayor Usry called the regularly scheduled City Council meeting to order. Councilmember John Smalley gave the invocation, followed by the pledge of allegiance to the United States flag.

CITIZEN INPUT:

Edward J. Bess of the Thomson Police Department, spoke to the Council and attendees thanking them for the opportunities that he has been given as a member of the TPD.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The motion was made by Councilmember Johnson and seconded by Councilmember Smalley to approve the agenda as written. A vote of 5-0 in favor was taken.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

City Council Meeting, July 8, 2021—A motion was made by councilmember Belton and seconded by Councilmember Smalley to approve the minutes as written. A vote of 5-0 was taken to approve them.

BUSINESS:

a. Toni Hutchinson-Twenty Year Service Award:

Mayor Usry presented her with a certificate and honorarium and thanked her for all that she does for the City.

b. Planning Board Recommendation re: 406 Pecan Alley:

P&Z Director Beggs recapped the Board’s recommendation to approve the variance to the front setback with three conditions.

- 1. Ms. Jones apply and be approved for necessary permits.
- 2. Ms. Jones pay the penalty fees for building without permits.
- 3. Ms. Jones comply with the Building Official’s orders for bringing the addition into compliance with all applicable building codes.

Councilmember Belton noted that Pecan Alley is a dead end street and asked if there was room for the setback. Beggs replied that the rule is twenty-five feet in the city and that Ms. Jones will be fine in this case, but it would be preferable if homeowners did not add on toward city streets. Councilmember Johnson asked how much the penalty would be. Beggs said that would be two times the permit fee plus \$200. A motion was made to accept the Board’s recommendation to approve the setback variance with the stated conditions by Councilmember Belton. A second was given by Councilmember Corley, and a vote of 5-0 passed the motion.

c. Mid-year Amendments to the 2021 Budget:

CA Waller spoke on the following five funds that were affected by the Mid-Year Amendments.

General Fund	\$35,000.00
Water Fund	\$967,300.00
Gas Fund	\$10,400.00
Solid Waste Fund	\$9,310.00
Maintenance Fund	\$3,350.00

A motion was made to approve the Mid-Year Budget Amendments as presented by Councilmember Whittle and seconded by Councilmember Belton. A vote of 5-0 approved the motion.

d. Ordinance 579-Second Reading-Establishing a Street Light District for Oak Grove Subdivision:

Street lights are already installed. This establishes that the developer will pay each lot's energy billing until sold, at which time the homeowner will have the \$60 yearly fee added to their tax bill. A motion to approve the ordinance was made by Councilmember Smalley and seconded by Councilmember Corley. A vote of 5-0 approved the motion.

e. Inter-Governmental Agreement re: Thomson-McDuffie County Land Bank Authority

Mayor Usry explained that this brings the joint Land Bank Authority by-laws and rules up to date with current laws. The Authority would be gifted excess governmental real estate for renovation and/or disposal. A motion to approve the updated agreement was made by Councilmember Smalley and seconded by Councilmember Whittle. A vote of 5-0 approved the motion.

f. Thomson-McDuffie County Land Bank Appointments:

Mayor Usry explained that James E. Wilson would become the fifth member of the Authority, as an at-large member. He would join City-appointed members John Smalley and Kathy Hawkins. A motion made by Councilmember Whittle to approve the appointments was seconded by Councilmember Johnson. A vote of 4-0 passed the motion, with Councilmember Smalley abstaining since he was being nominated.

g. Downtown Development Authority Appointees:

Mayor Usry presented the names of Don Powers as Staff and Jaye Jones, Jason Smith, Andy Knox, Jr., David Holt, Stephanie Ivery and Mary (Molly) McDowell as Board Members of the resurrected Downtown Development Authority. A motion was made by Councilmember Johnson and seconded by Councilmember Whittle to approve the seven appointees. A vote of 5-0 approved the motion.

h. Augusta Coating & Manufacturing Employment Incentive Program (EIP) Loan Request:

The Mayor explained that this company borrowed an equal amount from the Development Authority and City for a term of five years with a balloon payment at the end. Augusta Coating has requested that large payment be postponed for two years. They will make regular monthly payments of \$2828.10 on time to the City and Authority for twenty-four months with the balloon payment due to each on September 1, 2023. This would be an advantage to all parties. A motion was made by Councilmember Whittle and seconded by Councilmember Corley to approve the loan extension of two years with on time payments before the balloon amount is due. A vote of 5-0 approved the motion.

i. Activities Council One Day Alcohol License Application:

Mayor Usry spoke of the Activities Council application for a one day Alcohol License. There will be a free concert cohosted by the AC and Thomson-CVB on the night before the 27th Annual Blind Willie McTell Blues Festival. The AC would like to sell beer and wine at the event from 6:30pm until approximately 9:00 pm. A motion was made to approve the September 25, 2021 one day alcohol license request by Councilmember Whittle and seconded by Councilmember Johnson. A vote of 4-0 passed the motion, with Councilmember Smalley abstaining due to religious beliefs.

j. Activities Council Railroad Street Closing Request:

For the pre-Blind Willie concert, the Activities Council has asked that Railroad Street be closed, Main Street to Greenway Street, from 4:00pm until 11:00 pm. This would allow them time to set up before and clean up after the concert. A motion was made by Councilmember Johnson and seconded by Councilmember Corley to approve the request to close Railroad Street from Main to Greenway on September 25, 2021 for seven hours, 4:00pm until 11:00 pm. A vote of 5-0 in approval was taken.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Council: Councilmember Whittle has received several phone calls praising Code Enforcement Officer Jerry Pitman for how well he has been doing his job, especially in the area around the Ansley Drive Extension apartments. Several cars have been removed and there doesn't seem to be as much trash around the complex. Constituents are also very appreciative of Mr. Jim Choice who has been picking up trash with the front end loader. They are thankful for City having such a good employee.

City Administrator: CA Waller reported that the City's 2020 Tax Digest was \$127,405.72 (\$127 per mill). The current 2021 Digest is \$143,677.16 (\$143 per mill), a 12.77% difference. If the City, for 2021, stays with the current millage rate of 6.890 the taxes collected would be \$989,936.00, and if rolled back to 6.081 the taxes collected would be \$873,701.00. This led to a discussion of Columbia County and Grovetown moving to a minimum wage of \$15.00 per hour. If the City made the same move, it would cost an extra \$162,926.40 per year above the current \$2,536,435.20 payroll. Taxes only benefit the General Fund which would need an additional \$36,233.60 for payroll. The portion of the \$162,926.40 needed from the Solid Waste Fund, Water/Sewer Fund and Gas Fund would add up to \$126,692.80. Discussion was had on the amounts needed to raise compensation to \$14.00 and \$13.00 also. CA Waller brought up that current employees making \$15.00 or more would need to be considered also. This could possibly cost the City another \$250,000-\$300,000. Councilmember Corley asked about the large number of appeals that the Tax Assessor's Office had received.

There being no other business before the Council, a motion for adjournment was made by Councilmember Smalley and seconded by Councilmember Belton. A vote was taken in favor of the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 6:47pm. (5-0)

Respectfully submitted,


Lucretia W. Ferguson, City Clerk


Kenneth L. Usry, Mayor

