

**MINUTES
DECATUR CITY COMMISSION**

Regular Meeting
January 16, 2024
City Hall: 7:30 p.m.

Mayor Garrett called the Regular Meeting of the Decatur City Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. on Monday January 16, 2024.

PRESENT: Mayor Garrett, Mayor pro tem Powers, and Commissioners Dusenbury, Mayer¹, and Walsh; and City Manager Arnold.

MINUTES of the Organizational Meeting of January 2, 2024 as amended and the Executive Session of January 4, 2024, were approved on a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Walsh; and, all voting “aye.”

PROCLAMATION.

Mayor Garrett recognized January 16, 2024 as National Day of Racial Healing in the City of Decatur.

PRESENTATIONS.

Mayor Garrett recognized Arborist Kay Evanovich for being named as the 2023 Arborist of the Year by the Georgia Arborist Association.

City Manager Arnold introduced several new employees, including Naturalist Allison Ericson, Planning & Zoning Manager Kc Krzic, Planner Nahom Taye and Operations Analyst Langston Leake.

City Manager Arnold stated the quarterly financial report had been rescheduled to the February 5, 2024 meeting.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS.

Planning & Zoning Manager Kc Krzic stated Flippo Civil Design, on behalf of St. Thomas More Catholic Church, had requested an amendment to a previously approved comprehensive site development plan to construct new classroom and worship buildings for the existing church and private school located at 618 West Ponce de Leon Avenue. Ms. Krzic stated the Planning Commission recommended approval with conditions, including 1.) the property shall be developed substantially similar according to the comprehensive site development plan; 2.) the proposed future worship building shall not exceed a height of 40 feet, and front and side street setbacks shall not be reduced less than the current setbacks of the existing buildings on the property; 3.) the proposed loop drive on West Ponce de Leon Avenue shall be designed so that no westbound traffic can enter the driveway entrance near the West Trinity Place intersection; 4.) the one-way loop driveway on West Ponce de Leon Avenue shall be maintained to require

¹ Consistent with the requirements set forth in O.C.G.A. §50-14-1 (g), Commissioner Mayer attended the meeting virtually.

exiting traffic to make a right turn only to avoid traffic impacts to Pinetree Drive; 5.) no school traffic shall be allowed from West Ponce de Leon Avenue; 6.) site improvements shall maintain curbing and sidewalks with planting strip along West Ponce de Leon Avenue, including dedicated parallel parking lane with 20 spaces adjacent to the sidewalk; 7.) on-site parking requirements shall be reduced to 120 spaces; 8.) school enrollment shall not exceed 516 students; and, 9.) construction parking shall be designated on-site or shall be provided in a designated off-site location on a nearby property through an agreement to ensure vehicular traffic flow and mitigate disruption to the surrounding neighborhoods. Ms. Krzic introduced Hank Houser, architect with Flippo Civil Design and Houser Walker Architecture.

Mr. Houser stated the proposed plan included a new worship center and a new school building and that construction of the new school building was on the immediate horizon. Mr. Houser stated that while a new school building be constructed, it would be transferring classrooms currently located in church space to a new school space so the number of classrooms would not be increased. He reiterated that school enrollment would not increase because of the new construction but would remain the same. He noted that the plan called for minor parking changes to the site but that the number of spaces remained the same.

Mayor Garrett opened the meeting for a public hearing. Hearing no comments, the public hearing was closed.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, Mr. Houser stated the height of the building would be 40 feet not 45 feet.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, Mr. Houser stated the parking would move along West Ponce de Leon Avenue so it would be widened.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, Mr. Houser stated it would be the same number of parking spaces but placed in one location rather than spread out over the site.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, Mr. Houser stated school drop-off would remain on West Trinity Place.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Mr. Houser stated they had not looked into having a barrier on West Ponce de Leon Avenue to prohibit left turns into the school.

Father Bob Hussey, St. Thomas More Catholic Church, stated he had not heard a recommendation for a barrier to prohibit left turns from West Ponce de Leon Avenue but was open to that consideration.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Arborist Evanovich stated the dawn redwoods referenced in the plan were not invasive species and that some of the trees were already removed based on the tree removal permit.

Mayor Garrett stated Arborist Evanovich had been working with Georgia Power to make sure the tree trimming was less harmful to the trees that were located near power lines.

In response to a question from Mayor pro tem Powers, Mr. Houser the storm water retention area would be under the recreational field and would be sufficient for the additions made to the property.

In response to a question from Commissioner Walsh, Mr. Houser stated there was not capacity with the current transformers. He added there were two transformers that served the campus currently and noted the additional transformer would be on the hillside, screened with a brick enclosure, trees and shrubbery.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Mr. Houser stated the number of parking spaces on campus did not change with the plan amendments. He added there was an existing agreement for off-site parking between St. Thomas More Catholic Church and the Decatur Post Office.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Dusenbury; and, all voting “aye,” Ordinance O-24-Z-01 was adopted with conditions as recommended.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ACTION ITEMS.

Mayor Garrett opened the meeting for public comment.

John Leake, 255 West Parkwood Road, requested the Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) recommendations be investigated further to account for the actual cost and prerequisites as listed in the grant materials. Mr. Leake added that the roads to be worked on should not be heavily trafficked and not experiencing construction projects.

Hearing no further comments, the public comment portion of the meeting was closed.

CONTRACT FOR LIFEGUARD MANAGEMENT SERVICES.

Facilities and Operations Manager Kim Whatley recommended approval of an agreement with United Pools, LLC for lifeguard management services for the City’s aquatics facilities for a two-year period with an annual cost of \$576,940. Ms. Whatley stated scheduled adjustments were made to each pool schedule to meet Parks and Recreation’s budget constraints. She added each pool would be closed one-day per week but would be available for private rentals. She stated Oakhurst Indoor Pool would also be closed from 1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

In response to a question from City Manager Arnold, Ms. Whatley stated there was a budgeted amount for pool facility services and to remain within that budget, staff shifted the pools’ schedules stay within the current budgeted amount.

In response to a question from City Manager Arnold, Ms. Whatley stated the rental revenue would make up the difference in the budgeted amount and the cost of the contract with United Pools, LLC.

In response to a question from City Manager Arnold, Ms. Whatley stated that if the rental revenues did not produce the difference, then the contract would be updated.

In response to a question from Mayor pro tem Powers, Ms. Whatley stated the proposed amount maintaining the current schedule with no closures would increase the contract amount to \$697,780.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Ms. Whatley stated staff looked at where the closures would have the least amount of impact on the community.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, Ms. Whatley stated that information about the pool schedule had been taken off the City's website but would be announced soon.

In response to a question from Commissioner Walsh, Ms. Whatley stated that for the area, the pricing and revenue model were competitive.

In response to a question from Commissioner Walsh, Ms. Whatley stated predicting the weather during the summer months could be difficult and that closures did impact the usage of the pools. She added there were typically a minimal number of closures due to contaminations.

Commissioner Walsh stated it was hard to have one planned closure with the possibility of additional closures in a week due to weather.

City Manager Arnold stated the City Commission could grant the City Manager authority to enter into an agreement with a not to exceed amount so there would be no planned pool closures.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Ms. Whatley stated the bid they chose was \$642,710 with a second-year amount of \$659,364, the second bid was in the amount of \$697,780, and the third bid was \$868,763.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Ms. Whatley stated that when school started in August, all the pools would go to weekends only other than Glenlake which would be open Mondays and Wednesday from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. She added Ebster Pool had hours during the week, but it was only for the swim team program.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Ms. Whatley stated Ebster Pool had a splash pad on the pool deck.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Ms. Whatley stated there were no stand-alone splash pads in the City.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Ms. Whatley stated it would cost about \$5 to \$10 million to construct a splash pad, depending on location and other elements.

Ms. Whatley introduced Brad Nassar from United Pools, LLC. Mr. Nassar stated a splash pad would cost about \$1-\$3 million to construct depending on land availability and utilities.

In response to a question from Commissioner Walsh, Ms. Whatley stated the limited hours in August were already accounted for in the recommendation.

Commissioner Walsh stated the pools in the City had specific users such as McKoy Pool being of value to smaller children. She added that the days that the pool would be closed would put a barrier for community members trying to use for recreation purposes.

In response to a question from Commissioner Mayer, Ms. Whatley stated the proposed schedule for the pools would affect the summer camp programs. She added there were other avenues for water fun in the event the pools were closed on a camp day.

Mayor Garrett stated there was some desire to authorize the City Manager to work with the Parks and Recreation Department to modify the contract to limit the closures.

Commissioner Dusenbury stated the City had four pools for 25,000 people. He added this was a high level of service and no splash pads. He stated it might be beneficial to look into as a future recreation amenity.

In response to a question from City Manager Arnold, Ms. Whatley stated the \$697,780 did include Oakhurst indoor pool being open.

Mayor pro tem Powers stated with the recent reorganization of the department and the implementation of the new fee structure, it would not be desirable to reduce service levels. He added he liked the idea of authorizing the City Manager to enter into an agreement that avoided the pool closures.

Mayor Garrett expressed her appreciation to the Parks & Recreation Department staff for bringing a proposal forward that included options.

Mayor Garrett stated she wanted more knowledge of the usage of the indoor pool in the summer.

On a motion by Commissioner Walsh; second by Mayor pro tem Powers; and, all voting "aye," the award of a contract to United Pools, LLC for lifeguard management services in an amount not to exceed \$700,000, contingent upon elimination of scheduled pool closures, was approved.

CONTRACT FOR MAINTENANCE MANAGEMENT OF AQUATICS FACILITIES.

Ms. Whatley recommended approval of a contract with United Pools, LLC for maintenance management of the City's aquatic facilities in an amount not to exceed \$63,600. She stated United Pools, LLC's preventative maintenance plan demonstrated a structured approach, highlighting clear priorities such as preventative maintenance, planned inspections and created a strategy for equipment replacement for future budget planning. She added this agreement would cover all types of visits, including daily, monthly, annual maintenance, and addressing any issues promptly.

In response to a question from Mayor pro tem Powers, Ms. Whatley stated the cost would stay the same even though the scheduled pool closures would be eliminated.

In response to a question from Commissioner Walsh, Ms. Whatley stated the cost did not include the cost of purchasing pool chemicals.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Ms. Whatley stated that the pool usage could be studied.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, Ms. Whatley stated they could study resident usage versus non-resident usage.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Dusenbury; and, all voting “aye,” the contract was approved as recommended.

LOCAL MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT GRANT (LMIG) RECOMMENDATIONS.

Deputy City Manager David Junger recommended approval of a 2024 local street resurfacing project. Mr. Junger stated this project would be partially funded by the Georgia Department of Transportation's (GDOT) Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) program. He noted the City's prioritization of streets was based on the city-wide pavement assessment and GDOT's Road Surface Management Pavement Condition Evaluations System (PACES). He stated that based on the LMIG grant formula used by GDOT, the City would receive \$222,216.44 in 2024. He stated based on current conditions, the cost estimate for milling, patching, repairing and resurfacing the proposed streets, as well as sidewalk repairs, was \$3,708,943. He added the City's share was expected to be approximately \$3,486,727 which exceeded the required local match of 30%. He stated if the recommendation was approved, the City's portion would be requested in the FY 2024-25 City budget.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, Mr. Junger stated the LMIG funding was based on centerline miles. He added the construction on Talley Street should be finished by the time this project came about.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, Mr. Junger stated the funds could be used for several things, but the City chose to put them toward street and sidewalk repairs.

In response to a question from Mayor pro tem Powers, Mr. Junger stated that he had not had the opportunity to meet with the City's civil engineer to see if there could be partnerships with DeKalb County to leverage County purchasing contracts.

City Manager Arnold stated there could be a conversation, but she had concerns about the priority of streets in Decatur if DeKalb County had paving all over the county.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Walsh; and, all voting “aye,” the street list was approved as recommended.

PUBLIC WORKS ANNEX FURNITURE CONTRACT.

Mr. Junger recommended establishment of a project budget of \$45,000 and award of a contract in the amount of \$40,268.20 with CWC, LLC for furniture at the Public Works Annex. He stated the proposal included furniture for six open workspaces, storage and common worktable and related office chairs. He noted the workspaces would be pre-wired for power and data connections. He added the contract included delivery and installation of all furniture.

In response to a question from City Manager Arnold, Mr. Junger stated the employees who would be in the annex had not been determined.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, Mr. Junger stated there was still an area for records storage in the annex.

On a motion by Commissioner Dusenbury; second by Mayor pro tem Powers; and, all voting “aye,” the project budget and award of contract were approved as recommended.

REQUESTS AND PETITIONS.

There were no requests or petitions.

REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS.

On a motion by Commissioner Walsh; second by Mayor pro tem Powers; and, all voting “aye,” Resolution R-24-01 confirming the Executive Session of January 4, 2024 was adopted.

Chief of Staff Meredith Roark stated the 2024 edition of the National Community Survey would be released. She stated beginning in February the survey invitation be sent to 3,000 randomly selected households. She added at the end of February there would be an open participation portion of the survey for those who were not randomly selected but would like to participate.

Arborist Evanovich stated the dawn redwood tree was a fossil tree in Georgia. She added that it was on track to become extinct but luckily was saved and now could be repopulated.

Arborist Evanovich stated the City received its’ approvals for Tree City USA and Tree City of the World in 2024.

City Manager Arnold reported on pedestrian and traffic safety initiatives in the City. She identified short term measures that the City would take to address road safety including the purchase of portable, electronic messaging signs that could be placed along city roadways. City Manager Arnold recommended implementing a Pace Car Program where all city vehicles have a Pace Car decal and employees drive at or just below the speed limit to set the pace for all cars behind them. She identified other road safety measures that are forthcoming or under study including school zone speed enforcement cameras, prohibition of right turns on red, audible crosswalk signals, new sidewalks and more. City Manager Arnold shared information about a longer term project, the Safe Streets For All (SS4A) planning process, that is just getting started after being awarded a \$200,000 grant through the Federal Highway Administration. This process will engage the whole community in the development of traffic safety measures.

Commissioner Mayer thanked City Manager Arnold for the update on pedestrian and street safety efforts.

Commissioner Mayer congratulated Arborist Evanovich for being named as the 2023 Arborist of the Year.

Commissioner Dusenbury congratulated Arborist Evanovich on her award.

Commissioner Dusenbury thanked City Manager Arnold for the report. He stated the pace car program was a great way to make some movement on the situation. He added pedestrian safety was a concern of the Downtown Decatur Neighbors group. He noted pedestrian scrambles at some intersections could be a great addition to the City. He stated the City’s crossing guards were the gold standard.

Commissioner Dusenbury stated another concern of the Downtown Decatur Neighbors was the absence of a downtown grocery store.

Commissioner Dusenbury welcomed the new employees.

Commissioner Walsh welcomed the new employees.

Commissioner Walsh thanked City Manager Arnold for the report. She added that it had built some civic trust with residents.

Commissioner Walsh congratulated Arborist Evanovich on her award.

Commissioner Walsh stated she was thankful for another clean audit opinion.

Commissioner Walsh thanked the Planning Commission for its work on agenda items before coming to the City Commission.

Commissioner Walsh expressed her appreciation for the dialogue and shift for the service of the pools for the community.

Mayor pro tem Powers welcomed the new employees.

Mayor pro tem Powers highlighted the Martin Luther King Jr. Service Project. He thanked all the volunteers for their work and time.

Mayor pro tem Powers stated there was a freeze warning. He gave some housewarming tips for keep from freezing.

Mayor pro tem Powers thanked Harold Buckley and Mike Travis for their service on the Planning Commission.

Mayor pro tem Powers noted the State of the City address would be given by Mayor Garrett on January 23 at 5:30 p.m. during the January Decatur Business Association meeting at the Chapel on Sycamore.

Mayor pro tem Powers thanked City Manager Arnold for the report on traffic and pedestrian safety. He stated the City took pride in being walkable and did not want people to fear walking in the City.

Mayor Garrett stated she was recently at Decatur Legacy Park for a tour and Trees Atlanta was there planting 200 seedling trees.

Mayor Garrett highlighted the Martin Luther King Jr. Service Project. She thanked all the volunteers for their work. She stated a representative from the project would give a report on the project's impact at a later City Commission meeting. She added that her husband had recommended that a front yard tree program element be added the service project's offerings.

Mayor Garrett invited everyone to the State of the City on January 23 at 5:30 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Meredith Roark
Chief of Staff (City Clerk)