

**MINUTES
DECATUR CITY COMMISSION**

Regular Meeting
February 5, 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 February 5, 2024.

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

ABSENT: Commissioner Walsh.

MINUTES of the Regular Meeting of January 16, 2024 and the Annual Retreat of January 4-5, 2024, were approved on a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Dusenbury; and, all voting present voting “aye.”

PROCLAMATION.

Mayor Garrett read a proclamation that recognized February as Black History Month.

PRESENTATIONS.

DeKalb Municipal Association (DMA) Managing Director Bill Floyd made a presentation providing updates on the activities of the DMA. Mr. Floyd explained that DMA was an organization comprising the twelve cities in DeKalb County and that its purpose was to promote relationships and cooperation between the member cities, between member cities and DeKalb County, and between member cities and the state government. Mr. Floyd noted that the next quarterly membership meeting would take place on Monday, February 12th at the State Capitol with the DeKalb County legislative delegation. Mr. Floyd explained that DMA had a policy council comprised of mayors from each member city which met monthly to discuss policy issues relevant to member cities, and he encouraged the City Commissioners to attend quarterly membership meetings or policy council meetings. Mr. Floyd further detailed the current priorities of DMA including the educational committee, a future CEO forum to discuss issues with qualified DeKalb County CEO candidates, an annexation committee group and transit initiatives.

Mayor Garrett added that the DMA Policy Committee selected one mayor to represent DeKalb at the Atlanta Regional Commission Board and MARTA Board.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Mr. Floyd stated that he would provide the City Commission with a schedule of the quarterly meetings for 2024.

Finance Director Russ Madison provided the quarterly financial report for the second quarter of FY 2023-2024. Mr. Madison reported that revenues collected were at 52% remaining, slightly short compared to FY 2022-2023, perhaps due to more conservative previous revenue projections during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Madison reported that expenditures were at 58% remaining, very similar to the prior year. He stated the property tax rate was at 97.2% collected - higher than the prior year's 92.8%. Mr. Madison reported that both overall revenues and overall expenditures increased year over year due to the inclusion of the Children and Youth Services (CYS) Fund in the

General Fund since it had merged with the Active Living division to create the Parks & Recreation department.

Mr. Madison reported that there was a net gain of ten new business licenses, and a net loss of 56 employees due largely to the departure of a mid-size employer, Waveguide. Business tax and fee revenues decreased by 3%, but Mr. Madison noted that the number of walk-in business applicants seemed to be increasing.

In response to a question from City Manager Arnold, Mr. Madison explained that the “professional taxes” category included professions with state-issued licenses such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants apart from real estate agents.

Mr. Madison noted that recreation fees comprised a larger percentage of revenues than in prior fiscal years due to the inclusion of CYS Fund in the General Fund. Mr. Madison stated that Recreation Service Fee revenues were on track for a shortfall. Mr. Madison noted that Parks & Recreation staff members were monitoring the issue carefully and were optimistic that revenues would pick up due to increased program activity in the latter half of the year.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Mr. Madison explained that the “Other Taxes” category was disproportionately high due to the timing of the arrival of the State Insurance Premium Tax revenue during Q2.

Mr. Madison stated that expenditures changed very little from the previous quarter due to very few changes in payroll expenses. Mr. Madison reported that every department spent within expectations through FY 2024 Q2 and were on-track to meet expectations with their expenditures.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Mr. Madison noted that while collections from property tax appeals remained steady, property tax appeals also increased significantly. Mr. Madison noted that property value appeals could impact revenues in the future, and that staff would continue to monitor the situation.

Mayor Garrett stated that DeKalb County hoped to have the appeals completed by May.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE LICENSES.

City Manager Arnold presented an alcoholic beverage license application for the retail sale for consumption on premises of beer, wine and spirituous liquors to Pyoung Koh and Michael Koh for MK Koh, LLC dba D92 Korean BBQ Decatur, 225 E. Trinity Place. City Manager Arnold stated that a new license was needed due to a change in restaurant ownership. City Manager Arnold stated that the approval of the license was recommended.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Mayer; and, all present voting “aye,” the license was approved.

City Manager Arnold presented an alcoholic beverage license application for the retail sale in original package of wine and for the retail sale for consumption on premises of beer, wine and spirituous liquors to Kristin Radcliffe and Mary Tveit for The Reading Room, LLC, doing business as The Reading Room, 429 Church Street. City Manager Arnold noted that The Reading Room was a new business on the site of a former business, Java Monkey. City Manager Arnold stated that the application had been approved by the Police Department and all fees had been paid.

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

Special Events Coordinator Jackie Moore presented a request for a temporary alcoholic beverage license for sale of wine at the 2024 Oakhurst Wine Crawl on Saturday March 9th from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Mayer; and, all present voting “aye,” the temporary license was approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ACTION ITEMS.

Mayor Garrett opened the meeting for public comment. Hearing none, the public comment portion of the meeting was closed.

CONTRACT FOR SERVICES WITH DECATUR ARTS ALLIANCE.

City Manager Arnold presented a recommendation to execute a service contract with the Decatur Arts Alliance (DAA) in the amount of a \$12,000 grant. City Manager Arnold noted that the City and DAA had worked closely together on various initiatives and events, including the Strategic Plan, special events throughout the year and public art in the city. City Manager Arnold also noted that the DAA could provide services and expertise that City staff were not currently equipped to provide.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Mayer; and, all present voting “aye,” the contract for services was approved.

ROAD SAFETY – ELECTRIC ROAD SIGNS

City Manager Arnold presented a recommendation to approve the purchase of three SpeedAlert 24 Radar portable, electronic variable message road signs and trailers from All Traffic Solutions in an amount not to exceed \$18,800 per unit, for a total of \$56,400. City Manager Arnold noted that these signs had features such as remote message programming, speed limit feedback and traffic counting. City Manager Arnold added that the accompanying trailers could be used to support the City’s flock cameras as an alternative to utility pole locations. She reiterated that these signs would be one of several tools used in the City to improve pedestrian and traffic safety. City Manager Arnold noted that the signs would arrive within four to six weeks of ordering.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, City Manager Arnold stated that staff were still in the process of developing vehicle stickers for a “pace car” program and that details would be forthcoming.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, City Manager Arnold confirmed that the road messaging signs were portable and could be utilized at multiple locations.

City Manager Arnold thanked the City of Brookhaven’s staff for allowing Decatur staff to have hands-on experience with their road signs to inform Decatur’s purchase.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, City Manager Arnold confirmed that the Police Department would be strategically placing the road signs.

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

SPLOST ELECTION RESULT RESOLUTION

City Manager Arnold presented Resolution R-24-02 declaring the results of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) Election held on November 7, 2023. City Manager Arnold reminded the City Commission that the election was held to determine the imposition of the SPLOST, the continued suspension of Homestead Option Sales Tax (HOST) and the imposition of the Equalized Homestead Option Sales tax (EHOST). She stated that the majority of voters in the City of Decatur and DeKalb County voted in affirmative. City Manager Arnold noted that the SPLOST results were excluded from a previously-approved set of 2023 Election results for City Commission, School Board and homestead exemptions while staff continued to work on the language of the SPLOST Election’s resolution. City Manager Arnold recommended the approval of Resolution R-24-02.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Mayer; and, all present voting “aye,” Resolution R-24-02 was adopted.

PATROL VEHICLE WEAPONS SAFES

Police Chief Scott Richards presented a recommendation for the purchase of thirty-three SUV patrol vehicle weapon safes from Vapensystems, Inc. in the amount of \$66,000. Chief Richards stated that the safes would be used to secure the patrol rifles issued to officers with take-home vehicles. He explained that issued rifles were currently stored in patrol vehicle weapon racks, where they were visible and potentially vulnerable to theft when patrol vehicles were left unattended. He stated that the proposed weapon safes would secure the weapons out of sight and noted that officers would be required to store their rifles in the vehicle’s safe at the end of their shift. Chief Richards stated that each safe had a fingerprint-activated programmable keypad which allowed rapid access. He noted that each safe could accommodate one rifle, one shotgun and additional equipment. Chief Richards stated that the department planned to purchase 33 safes at the price of \$1,800 each, with an additional \$200 installation fee per unit, for a combined cost of \$66,000.

In response to a question from Mayor pro tem Powers, Chief Richards stated that the safes did not have the ability to record and report which fingerprints were used to open the safe via its biometric keypad.

In response to a question from Commissioner Mayer, Chief Richards confirmed that internal policies and procedures would be updated to reflect that officers with take-home vehicles would be required to use the safes or risk penalty.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett regarding the cost of the safes, Chief Richards stated that there were a large range of prices for similar products and that staff chose this particular product for its quick-action biometric scanner, other safety features and the high-quality steel construction. Chief Richards suggested that the safes’ biometric scanners could hold the fingerprints of several officers so that it could be readily accessed by different officers during a critical incident.

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

REQUESTS AND PETITION.

There were no requests or petitions.

REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS.

Mayor Garrett read the agenda for the February 12, 2024 Zoning Board of Appeals meeting.

City Manager Arnold presented a recommendation for three appointments to the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB). She stated that these appointments, if approved, would fill the remaining vacancies on the ESB. City Manager noted that most of the ESB appointments were made in December 2023, but that staff continued to schedule interviews with applicants. She thanked Commissioners Dusenbury and Walsh for participating in the latest round of interviews.

Commissioner Dusenbury thanked all applicants and praised the prospective new appointees.

On a motion by Commissioner Dusenbury; second by Mayor pro tem Powers; and, all present voting “aye,” the following appointments were made to the Environmental Sustainability Board:

Kristy Bible	Appoint through December 31 st , 2025
Tony Harding	Appoint through December 31 st , 2025
Hunter Unrue	Appoint through December 31 st , 2025

Chief of Staff Meredith Roark stated that the National Community Survey invitations had been distributed to 3,000 randomly-selected Decatur residents, and noted that residents who had not been randomly selected would be able to participate via a website link that would be published at a later date. Ms. Roark also noted that Mayor Garrett had previously announced that the Decatur Youth Council would be hosting the “Fair on the Square” on March 16th, from 12:00-5:00 p.m., featuring performances by high school bands, food trucks, carnival games, and other entertainment. Ms. Roark also solicited participants for the “celebrity dunk tank” at the event.

Commissioner Mayer expressed thanks for the proclamation commemorating February as Black History Month.

Commissioner Mayer stated that the City Commissioners had gone to visit Oak Cottage Courts as a group during the work session, and that she was impressed and enthusiastic about the project and other efforts to create additional affordable housing opportunities in Decatur. Commissioner Mayer thanked the staff members and City Commissioners responsible for bringing the project to fruition.

Commissioner Dusenbury praised Oak Cottage Court’s design and expressed his joy that city employees and community members would be able to benefit from affordable housing options.

Mayor pro tem Powers praised the Oak Cottage Court development and expressed excitement for future strategic housing opportunities.

Mayor pro tem Powers expressed enthusiasm for commencement of construction on the track and field facility at Decatur Legacy Park.

Mayor Garrett complimented the Oak Cottage Court development and expressed excitement to use lessons from the pilot program for future housing initiatives.

Mayor Garrett noted there would be several Black History Month events occurring throughout February, including a Black History Month event hosted by the Decatur Business Association.

Mayor Garrett encouraged the public to download the Parks and Recreation newsletter to remain up-to-date on events and specifically praised the recent tree-planting event at Decatur Legacy Park hosted by Trees Atlanta.

Mayor Garrett reminded the public that the north side entrance and parking lot of the East Lake MARTA station would be closed due to construction from February 13th through August 24th.

Mayor Garrett announced that the unveiling of the John Lewis sculpture would take place at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 24th in front of the Old Courthouse.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Meredith Roark
Chief of Staff (City Clerk)