

**MINUTES
DECATUR CITY COMMISSION**

Regular Meeting
February 20, 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 Tuesday February 20, 2024.

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

MINUTES of the Regular Meeting of February 5, 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 but Commissioner Walsh voting “aye.” Commissioner Walsh abstained because she was not present at the February 5, 2024 meeting.

PROCLAMATION.

Mayor Garrett recognized February 20, 2024 as Government Communicators Day. Mayor Garrett recognized the City’s Equity and Engagement staff and thanked them for the work they provide to the community.

PRESENTATION.

Beecatur’s Peter Helfrich presented an update on Beecatur’s 2023 projects and community education initiatives. Mr. Helfrich noted the miner bees that nested in front of Decatur High School received a lot of attention last spring, but Beecatur was able to raise awareness and assure the community they were friendly bees.

In response a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Mr. Helfrich stated there were no results of the pesticide spray study since it would take some time to get the data.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ACTION ITEMS.

Mayor Garrett opened the meeting for public comment.

John Leake, 255 West Parkwood Road, stated his support of the removal of slip lanes. He added that Scott Boulevard could not be calmed but that the City should continue looking for other ways to make all roadways safer for pedestrians. He encouraged the City to explore ways to make safe lateral connections across Scott Boulevard.

Christie Reed, 172 Garland Avenue, stated that the proposal for the South McDonough Street traffic calming proposal was premature and needed more public engagement as well as more data.

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

Patricia Liscio, 1019 South Candler Drive, expressed her support for the South McDonough Street traffic calming proposal. She added though the plan was not perfect she appreciated the City's prioritization of pedestrian safety in the area.

Jon Smibert, 946 South McDonough Street, spoke in support of the South McDonough Street traffic calming plan. He added some concerns about the speed bumps and curb.

Sandro Gisler, 211 Missionary Drive, expressed appreciation for the traffic calming measures that were on the agenda as a member of Calm Decatur.

Wayne Salter, 826 South McDonough Street, spoke in support of the South McDonough Street traffic calming proposal and added that the need was real.

Kate Colussy- Estes, 927 South Candler Drive, spoke in support of the South McDonough Street traffic calming proposal as there was a need but added the removal of the slip lane was not necessary.

George Hughes, 936 South McDonough Street, expressed his support for the South McDonough Street traffic calming proposal as it was necessary but wanted to see if the speed limit could be reduced.

Matt Aemmer, 9 Oakhurst Common Drive, expressed support for the South McDonough Street traffic calming proposal but was worried about the turn radius for larger vehicles at Garland Avenue.

Leah Humphries, 1021 South McDonough Street, spoke in support of the South McDonough Street traffic calming proposal but was worried about residents trying to get out of their driveways should the chicanes be placed in the locations indicated on the drawings.

DISBURSEMENT OF OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS.

Fire Captain Gary Menard recommended authorizing the City Manager to expend up to \$5,000 of opioid settlement funds for qualified prevention services for youth and families with the Decatur Prevention Initiative (DPI), a local non-profit organization. Captain Menard stated the funding was being disbursed in phases, with the first use for the purchase of Narcan for the City Schools of Decatur, city buildings and local businesses. He stated the disbursement of the Narcan was paired with training on how to use it. He added that CPR training is being offered because some who may be overdosing may also need CPR. He stated that the funds would be used for community education to spread awareness.

DPI Executive Director Terri Moore stated the funds would be used to spread awareness to teenagers and their families. She stated opioids were now being slipped into more than just illicit drugs.

In response to a question from Commissioner Walsh, Ms. Moore stated the Good Samaritan Law was taught at trainings.

Captain Menard noted the Fire Department had introduced implicit bias training to better respond to overdose calls.

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

SOUTH MCDONOUGH TRAFFIC CALMING PLAN.

Assistant City Manager Cara Scharer recommended approval of a traffic calming plan on South McDonough Street at the College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center, as a result of a community-driven petition process. Ms. Scharer stated South McDonough Street from Garland Avenue to Pharr Road had been approved for resurfacing as part of the City’s 2023 LMIG program. She added Phase 1 included the signing and marking of the new roadway configuration including new crosswalks, the future locations of all bulb outs and chicanes, closure of the Garland Avenue slip lane and the repair of existing sidewalks including the addition of ADA access ramps at crosswalks. She stated the first phase of the recommended concept would be implemented via pavement paint, new signage, and temporary tactical urbanism elements such as rubber speed bumps, flexposts and hardened centerlines. She noted two additional speed tables between Lenore Street and Pharr Road would also be installed. She added a budget proposal would be developed for permanent thermoplastic pavement markings and installation of a more robust pedestrian crossing signal at the Garland Avenue intersection. She stated a detailed design process would commence to implement more permanent structures such as the chicanes, bulb outs and reconstruction of the triangular island at the Garland Avenue intersection.

In response to questions from Mayor Garrett, Ms. Scharer stated the recommendation was for temporary traffic calming measures in phase 1 and a second request would come forward for the surveying and engineering design needed for more permanent structures in phase 2.

Kevin Bacon, a representative from Toole Design, stated Phase 1 included striping, and painted locations for chicanes and bulb outs. He added in Phase 2 the traffic guidance features would become permanent features.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Mr. Bacon stated the materials would be similar to those used along West Howard Avenue where the city limits abutted the City of Atlanta.

In response to a question from Mayor pro tem Powers, Mr. Bacon stated the placement of the chicanes were changed following conversations with residents and there could be further adjustments prior to the final design and installation.

In response to a question from Commissioner Walsh, Mr. Bacon stated the trial period was beneficial to see issues with turning; and he stated that the interim striping would help drivers with the turn and the permanent reconstruction of the island would allow for better turning, especially for larger vehicles.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Ms. Scharer stated speed limits could be changed but for them to be enforceable, any changes would have to be approved by the Georgia Department of Transportation.

In response to a question from Commissioner Mayer, Ms. Scharer stated the traffic calming tools had been extended past the original project area with the addition of two speed tables.

In response to a question from Commissioner Walsh, Ms. Scharer stated there would be a proposal for engineering design services that would include a dialogue with affected residents.

Mayor Garrett stated there were other traffic calming practices in the City that only allowed residents to turn right out of their driveways.

Mayor pro tem Powers stated the traffic calming measures would modify behavior to create safer streets.

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

REBUILDING AMERICAN INFRASTRUCTURE WITH SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY (RAISE) GRANT APPLICATION AND FUNDING MATCH.

Ms. Scharer recommended approval of an application to the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) planning grant for reconnecting Scott Boulevard with safe, active, equitable transportation infrastructure. She stated the project required a local match of \$1 million if selected. She stated the project helped reconnect the Decatur community by developing and implementing a complete street approach that reprioritized transportation in the Scott Boulevard corridor to allow for equity among pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. She noted the RAISE grant would fund a comprehensive, high-touch planning effort with a focus on public engagement and included the design and analysis of various concepts, environmental impacts, preliminary plans, and right-of-way plans prior to completion of final plans and right-of-way acquisition. She added potential changes to the Scott Boulevard corridor included a reduction in vehicle lanes, wider sidewalks, a multi-use path and storm water management.

In response to a question from Mayor pro tem Powers, Ms. Scharer confirmed this was a proposal for the submittal of the application, not an actual request for funding.

Ms. Scharer stated Mr. Leake’s comments about Scott Boulevard would receive additional research so the road could be better connected.

In response to a question from Mayor Garrett, Ms. Scharer clarified the difference between last year’s application and local match commitment and the proposed application and local match.

Commissioner Dusenbury stated that his employer had also applied for this grant but it would not serve as a conflict of interest.

Ms. Scharer stated that this grant was highly sought after but not often rewarded but it was worthwhile for the City to apply.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Walsh; and, all voting “aye,” the application and city funding match were approved as recommended.

TRAFFIC SIGNAL MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT.

Ms. Scharer recommended renewal of an annual agreement with KCI Technologies, Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$46,200 for monthly traffic signal inspections and monitoring at 34 key intersections in the City. She added the monthly inspection process included verifying the overall operation of the signal equipment including pedestrian devices and vehicular detection equipment, signal illumination and coordination with DeKalb County Traffic Signal Maintenance Division.

In response to a question from Mayor pro tem Powers, Ms. Scharer stated DeKalb County was responsible for operation and maintenance of all traffic signals.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Ms. Scharer stated some signals were triggered by cars and there were some traffic detection devices (loops) that were in need repair.

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

AUDIBLE PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS.

Ms. Scharer recommended an award of an agreement to Sunbelt Traffic, LLC in an amount not to exceed \$49,415 for installation of audible pedestrian crossing signals at five intersections in downtown Decatur. She noted in August 2022, the City of Decatur requested safety equipment from Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) that would communicate information at several downtown intersections about signal phases in non-visual formats for pedestrians with impaired vision.

In response to a question from Commissioner Dusenbury, Ms. Scharer stated staff was made aware of this from a visually impaired resident who had difficulty navigating the downtown area. She added that the bigger picture was these signals would allow the City to be more accessible for people of all abilities.

In response to a question from Commissioner Walsh, Ms. Scharer stated DeKalb County would be responsible for the maintenance of the signals. She noted other locations in the State that had audible signals such as around the State Capitol.

Mayor Garrett stated that she was happy to see this be implemented.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Powers; second by Commissioner Walsh; and, all voting “aye,” the agreement was authorized as presented.

REQUESTS AND PETITIONS.

Mayor Garrett opened the meeting for requests and petitions.

Derrick Blassingame, 203 Mason Avenue, made remarks regarding ongoing legal matters.

REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS.

Commissioner Mayer thanked everyone for their engagement.

Commissioner Dusenbury expressed appreciation for the work session presentation from the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB).

Commissioner Dusenbury referenced a bird protection program offered by Birds Georgia.

Commissioner Dusenbury thanked the City's communications team for all their hard work.

Commissioner Walsh stated that after Groundhog Day that spring was on its way.

Commissioner Walsh thanked Beecatur for its annual presentation.

Commissioner Walsh stated her thanks for the awareness about the use of opioids in the community.

Commissioner Walsh thanked Ms. Scharer for her time and work on the agenda items.

Mayor pro tem Powers stated the importance of community engagement.

Mayor pro tem Powers announced the groundbreaking ceremony of the Decatur Legacy Park track and field facility on February 21 at 2:00 p.m.

Mayor pro tem Powers reminded everyone about the Decatur Business Association's Black History Month program on February 27 at Ebster Gym.

Mayor Garrett stated she got to read to the fourth graders at Talley Street Upper Elementary School.

Mayor Garrett stated Senator Ossoff would host mobile office hours around constituent service areas such as Medicare benefits and passports at City Hall on February 28 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Mayor Garrett stated the City was hosting a missing middle "safari" on February 24, 2024.

Mayor Garrett thanked the ESB on the updates provided during the work session.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Meredith Roark
Chief of Staff (City Clerk)