

MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
THOMASTON MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

A virtual meeting of the Thomaston Mayor and City Council was held on Tuesday, February 2, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in the city-county meeting room of the Thomaston-Upson Government Complex.

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA CITY OF THOMASTON YOUTUBE PAGE

LINK: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRIF8V1o6j-67nNYbOysNwg>

Mayor J. D. Stallings presided at the meeting with Councilmembers Don Greathouse, Doug Head, Jeff Middlebrooks, Lakeitha Reeves and Ryan Tucker. Others attending were Russell Thompson, City Manager; DeAnn Wheeler, City Attorney and Chief Mike Richardson.

Mayor Stallings opened the meeting with prayer and followed with the pledge of allegiance.

Mayor Stallings presented the minutes of January 19, 2021, for approval. A motion was made by Councilmember Greathouse, seconded by Councilmember Middlebrooks, to approve the minutes as written.

Those voting: Councilmember Greathouse – yes, Councilmember Middlebrooks – yes, Councilmember Reeves – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes, Councilmember Head – yes
All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Adoption of Agenda – Mayor Stallings presented the agenda for approval. Mr. Thompson asked that Item 8. Authorization of Award of Sidewalk Project be tabled due to not being ready to proceed with the notice of award. A motion was made by Councilmember Greathouse, seconded by Councilmember Reeves to table this item.

Those voting: Councilmember Greathouse – yes, Councilmember Middlebrooks – yes, Councilmember Reeves – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes, Councilmember Head – yes
All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Kyle Fletcher, Executive Director, Thomaston-Upson Industrial Development Authority – Ms. Fletcher updated Council on the recent Board retreat held by the IDA. She noted that the retreat was facilitated by the Carl Vinson Institute in December and discussed challenges and opportunities. She noted that she was given the task to list what the authority has done over a ten-year period. She noted that IDA issued over \$209 million dollars in revenue bonds and Interfor recently received \$115 million dollar bond. Ms. Fletcher noted that the IDA was created in 1964.

She noted that the following industries and businesses located within the last ten years: AAdvantage Relocation, Metal Works, Inman Solar, Golden Star, Solutions Pest and Lawn, Crown Technology, Super Moss, Ranew's Companies, Planet Fitness, Dunkin', Chic Fil-A, and McLeRoy recently purchased land on Hwy 19 N to building a Holiday Inn Express.

Ms. Fletcher noted that the IDA became debt free and appreciate the assistance of the City for participating with the County in a five-year agreement that hopefully will be extended in 2022.

She noted that they paid off all their debt and asked the city and county to continue paying the \$245,000 of debt service. She noted that this will assist in building the incentive pool which is critical as we try to be competitive in the recruitment and retention of industries.

She noted that the IDA created a work force development task force committee to address issues with the present and future workforce. The committee is composed of school representatives, local industry leaders, Southern Crescent, Three Rivers Regional Commission and a wide range of work sections.

Ms. Fletcher noted that COVID has been a challenge in not being able to meet with state project managers in person. In early 2020 decided that virtual tours of the Industrial Park were going to be needed and requested the services of Bruce Dunaway to make a drone video of our Central Georgia Business and Technology Park. The feedback from the video has been positive and provides an in-depth virtual look at the park and is available on the IDA web site.

The IDA has worked with Windstream/Kinetic to get fiber bored under the rail in the Business and Technology Park. Windstream paid for the permitting which was around \$20,000.

Ms. Fletcher noted that the IDA will continue to work with the city and county on the sewer capacity in the Business Park. She noted that the board retreat created objectives/goals for the next 6 – 12 - 18 month-period that we want to accomplish: communication and education, sewer infrastructure at the Technology Park, potential Technology Park developer, understanding fiber infrastructure around the county, continue business recruitment efforts, Brownfield work, identify industry incentives, workforce development and long-term funding.

Ms. Fletcher noted that a RFQ was sent out for Brownfield work and this grant would include the city, Yatesville and the county. The grant is for \$600,000. She noted that once we determine the company, we will come back to Council on what will be needed. She noted understanding fiber, rural broadband community, which it is another initiative that would include the city, Yatesville, and County working together.

She noted that the IDA Board is on board with increasing sewer capacity in the park and will move forward with asking for a guarantee of 150,000 gpd (roughly \$1.5 million). She noted that if this is done, it is essential that the current agreement to pay \$245,000 per year to be extended to IDA.

City Manager's Report.

1. Approval of Appointments to City Committees: Historic Preservation Commission and Thomaston Tree Board – No action was taken.
2. Approval of IT Agreement (Information Technology) – Mr. Thompson presented the IT (Information Technology) Agreement between the City and County for IT services. He noted that the Council authorized the execution of the agreement prior to the end of December with a CPI adjustment, however, the County never executed the agreement and requested an increase of \$4,000 annually for a total new contract agreement in the amount of \$68,000 payable quarterly installments of \$17,000. Mr. Thompson noted that it is staff's recommendation to authorize the execution of the agreement.

A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Greathouse, to approve the execution of the IT agreement, Information Technology, services with an increase of \$4,000 annually for a total amount of \$68,000.

Those voting: Councilmember Greathouse – yes, Councilmember Middlebrooks – yes, Councilmember Reeves – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes, Councilmember Head – yes
All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Compact Track Loader – Mr. Thompson presented the purchase of a compact track loader which is a skid steer from Yancey for the sewer department to replace an older piece of equipment. The contract amount is State pricing in the amount of \$75,556 and the item is appropriated in the 2021 budget. Staff's recommendation is to authorize the expenditure.

A motion was made by Councilmember Head, seconded by Councilmember Middlebrooks, to approve the purchase of a compact track loader (skid steer) from Yancey in the amount of \$75,556.

Those voting: Councilmember Greathouse – yes, Councilmember Middlebrooks – yes, Councilmember Reeves – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes, Councilmember Head – yes
All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of 2021 F350 Pickup Truck – Mr. Thompson presented the authorization of the purchase of a 2021 F350 Pickup Truck with State pricing in the amount of \$47,200 from Thomaston Ford. The vehicle is allocated in the 2021 budget. Staff's recommendation is to approve the purchase of the F350 Pickup Truck.

A motion was made by Councilmember Head, seconded by Councilmember Reeves, to approve the purchase of Ford F350 Pickup Truck in the amount of \$47,200 from Thomaston Ford.

Those voting: Councilmember Greathouse – yes, Councilmember Middlebrooks – yes, Councilmember Reeves – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes, Councilmember Head – yes
All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of Downtown Master Plan/Downtown Market Analysis – Mr. Thompson presented the Downtown Master Plan/Downtown Market Analysis scope of work. He noted that WLA Studio was presented the award by Council at a previous meeting. He noted that the downtown redevelopment plan for downtown specifically in the geographic boundary of the Downtown Development Authority district. Mr. Thompson noted that the DDA met with WLA to discuss their scope. He noted that the budgeted amount is \$30,000 and the scope from WLA is \$69,090. He noted that you get a market ability plan and

redeveloped tools including portions of park scape, landscape and architectural of what your downtown to assist with for your downtown to grow. He noted that one of the state programs that has been active and feel that Thomaston would benefit from is considered the Rural Zone designation. It is a competitive process and the State awards only ten (10) cities a year and the benefits include tax credits for developers, property owners and employers. He noted that to be eligible for the rural zone they require a market analysis and a master plan that serves as your road map. He noted that it is staff's recommendation to authorize the execution of the scope of work, WLA Studios, in the amount of \$69,090. Mr. Thompson noted that Council will be asked in the future to make a budget amendment to allocate the additional funds.

A motion was made by Councilmember Head, seconded by Councilmember Greathouse, to approve the execution of the scope of work, WLA Studios, in the amount of \$69,090 for the development of a downtown master plan/downtown market analysis.

Those voting: Councilmember Greathouse – yes, Councilmember Middlebrooks – yes, Councilmember Reeves – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes, Councilmember Head – yes
All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Authorization for Purchase of Furniture – Mr. Thompson noted the purchase of various pieces of furniture for City Hall offices as well as the conference room. He noted that due to COVID there was travel expense not used. He noted that the amount of the furniture is \$33,539.25. He noted that it is staff's recommendation to authorize the expenditure of \$33,539.25 from National Business Furniture and funds will come from the travel expense that was not used.

A motion was made by Councilmember Reeves, seconded by Councilmember Middlebrooks, to approve the purchase of furniture for the City Hall offices from National Business Furniture in the amount of \$33,539.25.

Those voting: Councilmember Greathouse – yes, Councilmember Middlebrooks – yes, Councilmember Reeves – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes, Councilmember Head – yes
All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Creation of a New Community Relations Committee – Mr. Thompson noted that the committee would hear various issues surrounding any interactions with the general public. He noted that some of the things discussed regarding the Government Complex. He noted that Council will have to set the number of participants and set up coordination/informational sessions to get started.

Councilmember Middlebrooks noted that it was discussed that every board member would appoint someone to the committee. Councilmember Head noted seven members to assist to break a tie and this committee would submit any ideas to Council. Mr. Thompson noted that this would be an advisory board for Council.

Councilmember Tucker noted his concerns having seven or more members it would be hard to bring everybody together to a consensus. Mayor Stallings noted that members could be voted from each Council district and one at-large. Mr. Thompson noted that five members would be a good number and if Council perhaps could set the nomination and confirmation process receive a super majority of the vote. Mayor Stallings noted that a five-member committee each person would have to receive four votes from each Councilmember to be on the committee.

A motion was made by Councilmember Middlebrooks, seconded by Councilmember Head, to create a new Community Relations Committee consisting of five members (City residents) with the stipulation that each member would have to receive at least four votes from each Councilmember.

Those voting: Councilmember Greathouse – yes, Councilmember Middlebrooks – yes, Councilmember Reeves – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes, Councilmember Head – yes
All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Authorization Award Sidewalk Project – There no action taken.
9. Authorization of Demolition of the Water Department Office Building – Center Street – Mr. Thompson noted that the water department office building located on Center Street adjacent to the Water Plant is being considered to be demolished to locate the backwash tank. He presented a resolution that was drafted by the City Attorney that is in compliance with the City Charter as to the proper means for the disposition of real property. He noted that he had received an email today from a citizen, Alison Uphold, that represents TULL and she had concerns regarding the historic nature of the building, with regards to the architecture stucco. He noted that she asked that the City Council table this matter until TULL can commission a study on the property. Mr. Thompson presented a copy of the referendum from the 2016 SPLOST which specifically states under the City of Thomaston projects demolition and preparation of site and construction of backwash tank for the City water plant. He noted that the office personnel were relocated from the of the building to the renovated building at the department complex on Veterans Drive. The utilities have been cut and have received quotations for the demo.

Mr. Thompson noted that the backwash tank has to be in the general proximity to the plant and we are boarded by the railroad on the east and Highway 19 on the west and Paige Holloway on the north side. He noted that the engineers are currently designing the tank. Councilmember Tucker noted that Ms. Uphold had contacted him, but this incomplete could affect the quality of the water system. Mr. Thompson noted that it is an alum removal process for the water treatment facility. He noted that this is the discharge which is an EPD issue. He noted that this is a SPLOST project. He noted that the roof is falling in on the

building which is \$30,000 to \$40,000 to repair. He noted that it is not located within the historic district. The demolition quote is \$9,000.

Mr. Thompson noted that it is staff's recommendation to allow TULL thirty (30) days to present findings back to the City Council for consideration.

A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember head, to allow TULL thirty (30) days or prior to the March 2, 2021, Council meeting to present their findings of the Water Department office building to the City Council for consideration.

Those voting: Councilmember Greathouse – yes, Councilmember Middlebrooks – yes, Councilmember Reeves – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes, Councilmember Head – yes
All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

10. Discussion of Potential Action or Authorization for the Passive Use of Lake Thomaston –
Mr. Thompson noted that he had a meeting with Heart and Soul sub-committee and one of the top 10 requests from local citizens was to have a pedestrian connectivity for bicycling, walking, running, etc. layout that would incorporate the entire City. He noted that they spent quiet of bit of time utilizing sewer rights-of-way, transmission line easements to build this walking track around Thomaston. He noted that it would be a multi-phase approach that would encompass federal and state grants and multiple years to facilitate. He noted that the consensus from the group was to open up Lake Thomaston as part of the first phase since it is already paved with an eight (8') foot wide walk way that includes a mile and half loop. Mr. Thompson noted that this would allow people to walk or run and bring their dogs. He noted that he wanted to share this with Council and asked if agreed we would apply for a TAP (Transportation Alternative Program) funding through the Georgia Department of Transportation of which it pays up to one-million-dollar minimum project. He noted that the goal would be to connect the biking, golf cart trail or whatever between the Generation Park and the reservoir. Mr. Thompson noted that we are asking for now is just the authority to make improvements for parking egress and ingress off of County Road to minimize some of the traffic. He noted that the biggest concerns would be liability and we would not allow fishing at this time or access on the water, but general walking leisure activity, and dogs would have access. He noted that trash may be a problem, but we would have a plan for that. Mr. Thompson recommended security cameras.

Mayor Stallings noted that we always hear from IDA to have quality of life stuff and this would be something to offer residents. Ms. Fletcher noted that there is no fencing on the back side of the property. Mr. Thompson noted that signage will be required, little bit of parking and we are not talking about the project that Council killed with an amphitheater we are just talking about passive use such as walking, jogging, and bring your dog, trash patrol, video surveillance and signage. Mr. Thompson noted that there would be no more liability than you would at the Generation Park. Chief Richardson noted that cameras would be great, but you will need to put some type of fencing along the side of the Lake Side Plant to separate the property. Mr. Thompson would like to bring back a plan for

Council to consider. Councilmember Middlebrooks noted that his constituents were concerned about the traffic coming in on Second Avenue, but after speaking with Russell the parking would be on County Road that should eliminate the problem. Mr. Thompson noted that we would look at it and have the engineer have to tell us the best transition.

Mr. Thompson noted that citizens have been calling about their electric rates. He noted that we are taking the calls and everybody on a case-by-case basis. He noted that we have checked 20 to 30 bills and most of the readings are correct and we did have some isolated issues but working with the customers. He noted that we had a cold spell and we have seen the usage is higher than before on some of the bills. The rate impact is still the \$1.56 per 1,000 kwh. He noted that he has suspended the reread fee for this month.

Mr. Thompson requested an executive session to discuss personnel.

Councilmember Greathouse noted that he represents District 4 and thinking ahead for a Bi-Centennial Celebration. He noted that Thomaston and Upson County held the sesquicentennial celebration in April 1975. He noted that the Bi-centennial will be here in four years, April 2025, which gives us plenty of time to set pre-planning and engaged the City and County, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, Historical Society and others such as Churches, schools, volunteer organizations, civic clubs. We need something to feel good about ourselves. Let's feel good about living in Thomaston and Upson County.

A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Greathouse, to go into executive session to discuss personnel. All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Council closed the open meeting and went into executive session.

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilmember Reeves, seconded by Councilmember Tucker, to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail Hammock
City Clerk