

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE THOMASTON MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

A virtual meeting of the Thomaston Mayor and City Council was held on Tuesday, March 16, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in the city-county meeting room of the Thomaston-Upson Government Complex.

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; Trey Gavin, City Engineer; Chief Mike Richardson; Lonnie Joyce, Finance Director, Oasis Nichols and Kyle McGee.

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

Mayor Stallings presented the minutes of March 2, 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 Head – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes
All votes were aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Adoption of Agenda – Mayor Stallings presented the agenda for approval. Mr. Thompson requested an additional item be added to the agenda – “Approval of Authorization of Purchase of a Backhoe.

A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Reeves, to approve the agenda as presented and to amend the agenda by adding “Approval of Authorization of Purchase of a Backhoe”.

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

City Engineer’s Report.

1. Mr. Trey Gavin gave an updated to Council regarding the cost in materials for the sewer improvement project. He noted that the price of pvc pipe has gone up tremendously due to the snowstorm in Texas with the loss of power and due to COVID. He noted that the contractor cannot produce the materials within the same contract. He noted that the last quote the price for pvc pipe was over \$275,000. Mr. Gavin noted that the first option is to sit on the project until the prices come down, second option is to pay the difference of the materials and allow this in contingency and final option is go with a different pipe that is

called ADS. He noted that ADS is used for sanitary sewer, stormwater, etc. He noted that the contractor is familiar working with the material.

Mr. Thompson noted based on the City Engineer's recommendation to proceed with the different product instead of PVC pipe change to ADS pipe and submit to USDA for their approval. He noted that this would be a change order to the materials of the contract. He noted that no action is needed by Council.

City Manager's Report.

Mr. Thompson asked Council to go into a brief executive session to discuss personnel, pending and/or potential litigation. A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Greathouse, to close the open meeting and go into executive session to discuss personnel, pending and/or potential litigation.

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

Council closed the open meeting and went into an executive session at 7:18 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilmember Greathouse, seconded by Councilmember Reeves, to close the executive session and return to the open meeting.

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

Council closed the executive session and returned to the open meeting at 7:31 p.m.

1. Approval of Confirmation of Appointment of City Clerk – Mr. Thompson introduced Ms. Oasis Nichols for the position of Deputy City Clerk. A motion was made by Councilmember Greathouse, seconded by Councilmember Reeves, to approve the appointment of Ms. Oasis Nichols as Deputy City Clerk.

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

2. Approval of Confirmation of Public Works Director – Mr. Thomaston introduced Mr. Kyle McGee for the position of Public Works Director. A motion was made by Councilmember Greathouse, seconded by Councilmember Tucker, to approve the confirmation of the employment of Mr. Kyle McGee as the Public Works Director.

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

3. Approval of Guidelines and Appointments to the Community Relations Committee – Mayor Stallings noted that Council submitted names to the City Manager for consideration of being appointed to the committee. Councilmember Greathouse nominated Sheila Hall; Councilmember Middlebrooks nominated Rev. James McGill; Councilmember Reeves nominated Priscilla McCoy; Councilmember Head nominated Pastor Greg Smith; and Councilmember Tucker nominated Jack Grubb.

A motion was made by Councilmember Reeves, seconded by Councilmember Head, to appoint the following names to serve on the Community Relations Committee – Sheila Hall, Rev. James McGill, Priscilla McCoy, Pastor Greg Smith and Jack Grubb.

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

4. Approval of Tax Anticipation Notes (TANS) for USDA Interim Financing - Mr. Thompson noted that USDA will not issue the loan until you have interim-financing of the note that you are borrowing in as a grant or loan. He noted the amount is \$1,954,000.00. Mr. Joyce noted that USDA will pay off the lending institution and the City will make payment. He noted that the local financial institution that submitted the lowest interest rate quote is from West Central Georgia Bank in the amount of 0.780%. Mr. Thompson stated that it is staff's recommendation to approve the low interest rate from West Central Georgia Bank.

A motion was made Councilmember Head, seconded by Councilmember Reeves, to approve the Tax Anticipation Notes (TANS) in the amount of \$1,954,000 at the interest rate of 0.780% from West Central Georgia Bank.

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

5. Approval of Purchase of a Backhoe – Mr. Thompson noted that the Street Department requested the purchase of a backhoe. Mr. Joyce noted that the quote of \$93,205 from Yancey Bros. Company for the purchase of a backhoe loader. Mr. Thompson noted that it is staff's recommendation to purchase the caterpillar backhoe in the amount of \$93,205.

A motion was made by Councilmember Greathouse, seconded by Councilmember Middlebrooks, to approve the purchase of a Caterpillar Backhoe Loader from Yancy Bros. Company in the amount of \$93,205.

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

6. Approval and Authorization of Bond Ordinance – Mr. Thompson noted that Council is asked to approve and authorize the execution of the bond ordinance that will be used for USDA project. The bond ordinance will be for 40 years at 2.375% interest rate. He noted that this will be used to pay the TANS. Mr. Thompson stated that it is staff's recommendation to approve the Bond Ordinance.

A motion was made by Councilmember Head, seconded by Councilmember Reeves, to approve the Bond Ordinance for the USDA project (sewer improvements).

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

7. Approval of Amendment to the Cemetery Ordinance – Section 30-3, iii, Horizontal Markers – Mr. Thompson presented the amendment to the cemetery ordinance that would amend the ordinance to allow non veteran markers and veteran markers at Southview Cemetery in Section E, lots 111-257; Section F lots 1-156; Section G lots 59-230; and Section H lots 1-172.

A motion was made by Councilmember Greathouse, seconded by Councilmember Middlebrooks, to approve the amendment to the cemetery ordinance, Section 30-3, iii, to allow non veteran markers and veteran markers.

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

8. Approval of Amendment to Schedule of Service Charges – Mr. Thompson noted that the resolution of service charges was approved earlier this year with the budget but noted some changes that were needed. He noted utility connection deposit for property owners \$40; utility reconnection charge for after hours \$50; meter reread \$50; demand water charge monthly \$500 and hydrant water meter deposit \$700. He stated that it is staff's recommendation to approve the amendment to service charges.

A motion was made by Councilmember Head, seconded by Councilmember Tucker, to approve the amendment to the schedule of service charges – utility connection for property owners \$40; utility reconnection charge for after hours \$50; meter reread \$50; demand water charge month \$500 and hydrant water meter deposit \$700.

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

9. Moratorium Discussion – Self-Storage Facilities – Mr. Thompson stated that he had received a request from Allen Harris that recently opened the climate control storage facility on Center Street. He noted that the property was rezoned in 2020. He noted that due to the moratorium, Mr. Harris is requesting that he be allowed to add to the building. Mr. Thompson noted that the current moratorium prohibits new permits for self-storage facilities.

Ms. Wheeler noted that subsection Q – “Where a landowner makes a substantial change in position by expenditures and reliance on the probability of the issuance of a building permit, based upon an existing zoning ordinance and the assurances of zoning officials, he acquires vested rights and is entitled to have the permit issued despite a change in the zoning ordinance which would otherwise preclude the issuance of a permit.” Ms. Wheeler noted that he would have to have a building permit and under the moratorium you cannot issue a permit.

There was discussion regarding the request, but no action was taken.

10. Authorization to Execute Contract for Zoning Rewrite – Mr. Thompson presented the contract agreement from Mr. William Johnston for the rewrite to the sign and zoning ordinance. He noted that Mr. Johnston is working on the rewrite of the sign ordinance that will assist with the master downtown plan. He noted to include the zoning ordinance rewrite the fee not to exceed is \$65,000. Mr. Thompson noted that the original zoning ordinance was established in 1967. He noted that it is staff’s recommendation to approve the agreement on the rewrite of the zoning ordinance and not to exceed \$65,000.

A motion was made by Councilmember Middlebrook, seconded by Councilmember Head, to approve the agreement with William Johnston on the rewrite of the zoning ordinance and not to exceed \$65,000

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

11. Approval of Authorization to Proceed with Flock Camera System – Chief Mike Richardson gave an update on the red speed school zone area. He noted that Pastor Greg Smith, Crossing Guard, pleaded with him that more lights and signage were needed in this area due to speeding. He noted that when the system was put in place the first day there were over 2,000 violations. He noted that the cameras come on at 7:00 a.m. shut off at 4:15 p.m. (only when kids are in school) Monday through Friday. The other times are 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (30 mph, 41 mph triggers citation); 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (45 mph, 46 mph triggers citation) and 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. (30 mph, 41 mph triggers citation).

Chief Richardson noted that RedSpeed is issued a school calendar so they will be aware of when the school is not open. He noted that there are several steps before a citation is issued. He noted that it takes an average of 2 to 3 days after violation is submitted for review and it takes 1 to 2 days to validate the violation and then it is sent back to Red Speed and then it is 2 to 3 days for final review and then mailed. There is a total of 7 to 10 days before you receive the notice. He noted that the cost is around \$75.00 and there are no points assessed to your license and the owner of the vehicle is the only one that is cited. You will receive three notices before any action is taken. He noted that after the third request the State places a hold on your registration of your vehicle and when you apply for a new tag you will have to pay the fine with the tag fee. He noted that the camera equipment is checked every 24 hours for any problems. Chief Richardson noted that we are averaging over 500 a month and out of the 2400 violations we have had only 1% request a hearing. He noted that the school zone sign is 50 yards, second sign school photo enforcement and 3rd sign flashing with 30 mph. He noted that 45 is normal speed limit when school is not in session. Chief Richardson noted that he spoke to Pastor Smith and he has seen a drastic change in the vehicles.

Chief Richardson noted that the three (3) signs; the first sign is a neon yellow “school zone area”, second sign is the neon yellow and white sign “school zone phot enforcement”; third sign is the large sign with flashing yellow lights with 30 mph when flashing that states school zone. He noted that all three signs were in place prior to the program beginning November of 2020.

Councilmember Middlebrooks noted concerns he had received from citizens as though they were being taking advantage of. He noted that it is like a trap. Chief Richardson noted that the RedSpeed zone was properly advertised on facebook. Councilmember Middlebrooks noted that the time should only be during the morning and afternoon and not until 8:00 p.m.

Chief Richardson noted that the money received from the citations are being used to purchase equipment and software. He noted that we have LRP’s camera system for over a decade and the cameras are installed on the back of three vehicles. He noted that when a vehicle passes the police cruiser will read the tag. Chief Richardson noted that the flock camera system can be placed on utility poles in different areas of the city to notify all police

cruisers of stolen vehicles, outstanding warrants or no insurance. He noted that the flock camera system includes 10 cameras for \$25,000.00 and includes an implementation fee of \$250 for each camera at \$2500 for a total of \$27,500. Chief Richardson stated that the funds for the camera system will come from the citations issued from RedSpeed.

After discussion, Mr. Thompson recommended to proceed with a draft of the proposal for the flock camera system and bring back to Council for consideration

A motion was made by Councilmember Greathouse, seconded by Councilmember Head, to authorize to proceed with a draft of the Flock Camera System and bring back to Council for consideration.

Those voting: Councilmember Greathouse – yes, Councilmember Middlebrooks – no, Councilmember Reeves – yes, Councilmember Head – yes, Councilmember Tucker – yes
The motion carried with 4 to 1 vote.

12. Discussion of Alcohol License Suspension Hearings – Mr. Thompson stated that the penalty for selling alcohol to underage is 90 days suspension but with due process can request a hearing. The hearing has to be advertised 15 days prior to the hearing. Mr. Thompson noted that we received two businesses that were late to turn in their request for a hearing and if Council would allow to grant a hearing. He noted that the current ordinance was adopted in 2001 and requires for the Mayor and City Council to conduct the hearing. Ms. Wheeler noted that Council can change the ordinance and hire an administrative judge but we need to be consistent.

There was discussion concerning the Mayor and City Council to conduct the hearing and the number of days for suspension. Tentative dates for hearings by the Mayor and City Council are Friday, April 16th or Wednesday, April 21st and Friday, April 23rd.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Councilmember Greathouse, seconded by Councilmember Middlebrooks, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail Hammock
City Clerk