

Meeting Minutes of The Mayor and City Council

September 7, 2021 at 7:00PM

A meeting of the Thomaston Mayor and City Council was held on Tuesday, September 7, 2021, at 7:00 pm on the main floor of the Thomaston-Upson Government Complex, in the City-County meeting room. This meeting was open to the public as well as live-streamed on The Thomason City YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCR1F8V1o6j-67nNYbOysNwg>).

Mayor J.D. Stallings called the meeting to order and was in attendance with Councilmembers Don Greathouse, Jeff Middlebrooks, Ryan Tucker, Doug Head, and Lakeitha Reeves. Others in attendance included: Russell Thompson, City Manager; Deann Wheeler, City Attorney; Renee Harris, Fire Chief; Trey Gavin, City Engineer; Lonnie Joyce, Finance Director; Taylor Smith, Economic Development Coordinator; Mike Richardson, Police Chief; and Oasis Nichols, Deputy City Clerk.

Mayor Stallings asked Councilmember Head to lead the meeting with a prayer, followed by the pledge of allegiance.

A. Call Meeting to Order / Invocation / Pledge of Allegiance

B. Approval of Minutes for August 13, 2021 (Work Session) Meeting and August 17, 2021 (Regular) Meeting - A motion was made by Councilmember Reeves, seconded by Councilmember Head to approve the August 13, 2021 work session meeting minutes and to approve the August 17, 2021 regular meeting minutes with two additions to be made. The first addition was to add the reason why the topic of "approval of community development rent rates" was moved up on the order of the agenda. The topic was moved due to the attendance of Ms. Reeves' constituents wanting to hear that topic first and leave the meeting. The second addition to the August 17, 2021 meeting minutes was to include the consensus of the public that

was in attendance during the meeting that their rent rates went up \$25.00 every 5 years. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously.

C. Adoption of Agenda – City Manager, Russell Thompson asked that the topic “discussion / authorization of 2021 TSPLOST paving improvement bid award” be moved up to number one so the city engineer could discuss and leave the meeting. Mr. Thompson also asked “authorization of zoning modification for ordinance number 1158 defining major streets” be tabled due to a public hearing needing to be held prior to presenting the ordinance to City Council. He asked that topic #6 “Discussion / Authorization of Moratorium Resolution” and topic #7 “adoption of alcohol ordinance” be switched due to topic #7 being dependent upon the approval topic #6. A motion was made by Councilmember Middlebrooks, seconded by Councilmember Head to adopt the agenda with these changes. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously.

D. City Attorney’s Report – None.

E. City Clerk’s Report – A few date reminders were given including: A community and or town hall meeting will be held September 8 2021 at 6:00pm in the City-County meeting room regarding the permitting process, code enforcement, and property maintenance.

F. City Engineer’s Report – Mr. Trey Gavin stated that he is looking for additional grants for the city’s utility projects. This grant money would be a part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) money. The final round of the ARP funds divvied out is more of a competitive procurement process. The scope of work for these projects is still being worked on but Mr. Gavin stated the city could see a sizable grant portion of these ARP funds. Mr. Gavin gave an update on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) projects, stating they are slowly moving forward. The projects include: the waste water plant upgrades, rehabilitation, and the main

pipeline that services most of Town branch. Rocks have been a major issue regarding the pipelines and money has been budgeted for these rock issues; however, the problems the rocks are creating have been a daily discussion. The next round of sidewalk improvements is currently being worked on as well. Councilmember Head asked Mr. Gavin what the ballpark figure was for all of the city infrastructure grants and between Mr. Thompson and Mr. Gavin the consensus was between five and seven million dollars.

Mr. Thompson clarified the two topics # 10 "acceptance of police truck bids: (2018 Ford F150 4x4, midnight blue STX package with black cloth interior. VIN: 1FTEW1EP7JFE57368) & (2018 Ford F150 4x4, silver, XL package with gray vinyl interior. VIN: 1FTEW1EP3JFC03463)" and topic #11 "authorization of expenditure for Hannahs Mill Road reservoir fencing" be acknowledged by The Mayor and City Council as well as amend the agenda to reflect these two additional topics. A motion was made by Councilmember Head, seconded by Reeves. Councilmember Reeves to amend the agenda and accept these two additional topics as #10 and #11. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously.

G. City Manager's Report –

1. Discussion / Authorization of 2021 TSPLOST Paving Improvement Bid Award – Mr. Thompson went over the ESG Engineering, Inc. recommended bid awardee. Out of five bids the lowest bidder was Quality Construction by McLeRoy with a bid of \$1,295,704.25. Mr. Thompson asked Mr. Gavin to inform Mayor and Council about the contract details and any resolutions regarding some past issues with roads being left unpaved for too long and milling problems throughout the last paving project. Mr. Gavin mentioned that the contract references The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) specs as the engineering standards and has a detailed scope of work. He stated the contract has strict timelines and requirements regarding when road paving must be completed and when the road milling must also be done. The contract addresses many of the past complaints that were made throughout the last paving project. A few extra issues that have

been addressed were the contractor's methods to getting the manholes smoothed out, the Police Department helping with traffic and flagging, as well as addressing the concern that McLeRoy should not be selected as the low bidder for this project. Mr. Gavin stated that he solicited various contractors throughout the greater Thomaston area for this project. McLeRoy and Coggins Construction are the two local companies; however, Coggins does not offer paving services. The project is specifically laid out, the new contract provisions have been agreed upon by McLeRoy, and McLeRoy has also been put on notice that this project "needs" to run smoothly. Mr. Gavin's recommend accepting the lowest bid by McLeRoy for this paving improvement project. A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Greathouse to accept the lowest bid from Quality Construction by McLeRoy with a bid amount of \$1,295,704.25. Mayor Stallings asked the timeframe on this project and Mr. Gavin stated McLeRoy should be able to begin work in three to four weeks once all appropriate documentation has been completed. There will be a pre-construction meeting scheduled prior to the work being started. Mr. Thompson also mentioned a new EPA rule regarding lead. Stating that the entire city's water system must be tested within three years and the water taps containing lead will have to be replaced. Mr. Thompson and Mr. Gavin are currently working on a plan to mitigate this by replacing these taps containing lead throughout this current paving project. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously. Mr. Gavin left the meeting at 7:25pm after this topic was discussed and voted on.

2. Approval of Community Development Rent Rates – Mr. Thompson explained that Ms. Patricia Allen, The Executive Director of The Housing Authority came and briefed Council at the last City Council meeting regarding the HUD rental rates. This topic was tabled at the August 17, 2021 meeting. The recommendation made was to fill any newly vacant units at the 80% fair market value rate as well as slowly phasing in the fair market value rate for all current unit tenants over the period of one or two years. Councilmember Reeves did not agree that the unit was worth the fair market value rental rate of roughly \$536.00 per month. Councilmember Tucker mentioned he has no comparison for the unit he viewed that morning but he would like to pull data and

gather information on the tenants in order to set the low to moderate rental rate parameters. He would like a set process and to have a clear method behind setting the rent rates.

Councilmember Head got clarification that Councilmember Reeves did not feel as though the unit was worth roughly \$536.00 a month even after small renovations were made. Mr. Taylor Smith briefly explained how the HUD rental rates worked in Louisiana and how the qualifying process helped screen the tenants. A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Head to approve the HUD 80% fair market value rental rate only for this one specific vacant unit to \$536.00 per month. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. Councilmember Reeves voted no and all other votes were yes.

3. Authorization of Cabinet Expenditure for Community Development – Mr. Thompson stated the per unit price of \$8,160.00 to replace the cabinets in nine units comes to a total of \$73,440.00 to be paid to HillTop Woodshop. A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Reeves to approve this community development expenditure. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously.

4. Discussion of Fire Department Pumper Truck Purchase – Mr. Thompson deferred to Fire Chief, Renee Harris and the Finance Director, Lonnie Joyce to discuss this topic. Chief Harris discussed the various reasons why a pumper truck is needed and Mr. Joyce spoke regarding a few payment options for the truck. A few options mentioned were to possibly use The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) funds (Depending on the final state rules and designations for the use of ARP funds.) or a Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) lease with low interest rates. Staff's recommendation is to issue a commitment letter to negotiate financing terms to purchase the Pierce Enforcer (PUC Pumper #35483) from Ten-8 but to bring back before City Council prior to the letter's expiration date a permanent financing plan. A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Head to approve this recommendation. Those voting

include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously.

Councilmember Head asked Fire Chief Harris how prepared the fire department is to help respond to emergencies with an increase number of calls due to Covid-19. Chief Harris stated that there would be some training required before they would be able to respond to certain medical calls and have the staff needed to push certain medications but currently her staff is trained and able to sustain a patient until an ambulance arrives on the scene. She also mentioned the possibility of contracting out for ambulance services to be provided. Councilmember Middlebrooks left the meeting at 8:10pm and returned at 8:15pm.

5. Adoption of Alcohol License Ordinance and Fees – Mr. Thompson mentioned that the alcohol fees are included in the ordinance. He stated there are now sixteen alcohol license classes/ categories. He also stated the two bar licenses that will be issued within the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) area will not be effective until February 1, 2022. He mentioned there is a new security camera provision and anyone who will be renewing their alcohol license will have six months to bring their property to compliance. Mr. Thompson went over several more modifications within the ordinance and stated to council that it is easier to ease off rules and regulations than it would be to rein in and enforce more restrictions when it comes to the alcohol ordinance. Staff's recommendation is to adopt the alcohol ordinance and allow all current alcohol licensees twelve months to name a registered agent. A motion was made by Councilmember Middlebrooks, seconded by Councilmember Tucker to adopt the alcohol ordinance and its fees. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously.
6. Discussion / Authorization of Moratorium Resolution – Mr. Thompson stated that the provisions in the moratorium regarding alcohol licenses has been deleted for existing convenience stores and the entire moratorium has been lifted for self-storage units. A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Head to adopt the moratorium resolution.

Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously.

7. Purchase Authorization for Furniture and Fixtures in New Fire Station – Mr. Thompson stated that \$92,000.00 was budgeted for the fire station furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E). He then explained that the architect has recommended The City award the FF&E contract to Malones for the amount of \$82,682.61. Mr. Joyce also included the change orders and financial break down that was passed out to City Council. A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Reeves to authorize the FF&E contract to Malones. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously.
8. Acceptance of Police Truck Bids: (2018 Ford F150 4x4, midnight blue STX package with black cloth interior. VIN: 1FTEW1EP7JFE57368) & (2018 Ford F150 4x4, silver, XL package with gray vinyl interior. VIN: 1FTEW1EP3JFC03463) – Mr. Thompson discussed there were twenty-one bids total on the two police trucks and that the highest bidder on both trucks was Tidal Wave Auto. Staff's recommendation is to accept the highest bids on both vehicles and authorize any paperwork needed to be completed to transfer the titles. A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Middlebrooks to accept the highest bids on both police trucks and authorize any paperwork needed to be completed to transfer the titles. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously.
9. Authorization of expenditure for Hannahs Mill Road Reservoir Fencing – Mr. Thompson stated the adjacent lot has been bought by a developer and the old fencing is encroaching on private property. The lowest bid and or estimate to remove the old fence and replace a new one was \$28,080.00 from B&B Fence Company. Staff's recommendation is to accept this bid but not to exceed the amount of \$28,250.00. A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Head to accept the lowest bid. Those voting include: Councilmembers Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out

unanimously. Councilmember Greathouse had to abstain voting due to being related to the bidder.

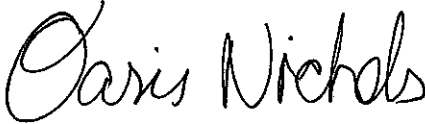
H. Other Business – Mr. Thompson reminded everyone about the Lakeside Park Ribbon Cutting on October 8, 2021 as well as a community and or town hall meeting to be held tomorrow September 8, 2021 at 6:00pm in the City-County meeting room. Councilmember Tucker also made a statement about the crime in Thomaston. An eighteen-month report was read aloud showing that crime statistics has increased in the city. Councilmember Tucker mentioned the addition of a crime suppression unit would have a positive impact and allow the Police Department to be more proactive instead of reactive. Mayor Stallings thanked everyone who reached out to his family and him in regards to the loss of his father.

I. Executive Session / Discussion/Potential Action - A motion was made by Councilmember Middlebrooks, seconded by Councilmember Middlebrooks. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. All votes were a yes and the vote was carried out unanimously to enter into executive session at 8:51pm regarding personnel and real estate. The executive session ended and the meeting was back open to the public at 9:53pm.

A motion was made by Councilmember Tucker, seconded by Councilmember Greathouse to approve the appropriation of \$225,000.00 for a four-member crime suppression unit for the Police Department as well as the appropriation of \$90,000.00 to hire two additional code enforcement staff. Those voting include: Councilmembers Greathouse, Middlebrooks, Tucker, Reeves, and Head. Councilmember Middlebrooks voted no and all votes were yes and the vote was passed.

J. Adjournment - A motion was made by Councilmember Head, seconded by Councilmember Middlebrooks to adjourn the meeting at 9:55pm. All votes were yes and the vote was carried out unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Oasis Nichols". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Oasis Nichols

Deputy City Clerk