

Council Work Session

May 19, 2020

Mayor Harley called meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Invocation given by Councilman Armijo.

Pledge of Allegiance led by City Attorney Tydings.

Welcome extended to all by Mayor Harley.

Present were Mayor John R. Harley, Councilman Cameron Andrews, Councilman Justin Wright, Councilman J. Micheal Evans, Councilman Edward Armijo and City Attorney Rebecca Tydings.

Adoption of Minutes: Motion made by Councilman Wright to adopt as written; seconded by Councilman Evans. Motion carried. Unanimous

- April 7, 2020

Old Business

None

New Business

IT Specialist Job Description: Councilman Armijo read summary of job description. Motion made by Councilman Armijo to approve as written; seconded by Councilman Wright.

Councilman Evans stated this is something that Mayor and Council have talked about for a long time; very good and important decision. Good description, a lot of help and money that is invested in this position, which will be very beneficial to the city. Mayor agrees that it is necessary. Motion carried. Unanimous.

Discussion – GMA Bricks and Mortar/Financing for Construction of Fire Station: Councilman Evans stated we have been talking about a Fire Station for quite a while. Recognized Chief Jones in case Mayor and Council have questions during discussion. The city is looking at project costs, financing, and ways of trying to get what is needed at the best value. When building a facility like this, part of the consideration is taking care of the citizens and what we need to serve the city as it grows. Councilman Evans asked Chief Jones when the bay area was built. Chief Jones confirmed that the bay was built in 2003.

Councilman Wright stated currently there are 3 fire trucks and 2 trucks in the bay area correct? There is not enough space to house the equipment. Chief Jones confirmed. Councilman Wright expressed concern over the cost of the project and timing. The original budget was 2 million, now almost 6 million. There are budget cuts for next fiscal year, have to cut 1/2 million from budget. Is it good to borrow money, putting a lot of eggs in our basket, not sure of amount of SPLOST revenues city will receive due to current economy? To move forward now would be like buying a house in the housing market, construction cost is high, is it wise, it's not emergent, question is it prudent to consider waiting. The problem is that we know if we borrow the money, if we see revenue decline, in order to balance budget while still making payments on the

building, would we have to cut city services or raise taxes. Do not know if this is wise financial management or fiscally responsible. See what the economy does, do not have any guarantee, seeking feedback from Mayor and Council.

Councilman Andrews inquired about payment schedule, architect fees that we paid and amount that would be left to finance project; estimated fees 4.96 million. Agrees with Councilman Wright. We have done exceptional with all buildings, but stated that he is struggling with the 6 million Fire Station. Had shared concerns with Mayor Harley earlier this week, maybe going back looking at the drawings, we have a significant investment already in architectural fees. We have been very careful with spending.

Councilman Wright asked if it prudent to move forward, but have peace of mind to be able to pay off without drastic measures (raise taxes, cut services).

Councilman Armijo stated he wanted to let the public know we are not working out of a vacuum. The city has a city accountant, whom looks at all projects, the city stays afloat and is prudent. The Fire Station has been in discussion for some time. We have crunched numbers, to find ways to do project. This is a public safety building facility; we are not building it because we want another one that is new. It needs to be built and the city accountant has given us a clear break down. It is easy to throw fear out to the citizens re: cutting services and raising taxes. Is there no intention about doing this, trying to do this, same push back each year, we as might as well say we are not going to do project? If we keep on wavering and not moving forward, the project will continue to cost more, we need to make a decision for our public safety, Fire Department and city. Telling you straight up the costs are not going to get better but continue to grow, we can continue to build other things around the city (park), but public safety is important. We are working out of a sub-standard facility. The Chief has been trying to get this done, we owe it to the city we need to move forward.

Councilman Wright asked Chief Jones in what ways are your ability to provide adequate services. Chief Jones stated our service level has not dropped and it won't drop, we have got to do what we have to do. Councilman Wright stated he agrees with Councilman Armijo re: City Accountant Harrison, she does a great job and asked Mrs. Harrison if she had any concerns about project. Mrs. Harrison stated, can I say with 100% what 2018 SPLOST numbers will be, would concern me if 2018 SPLOST funds are not there as anticipated. Councilman Wright asked Mrs. Harrison what would be the alternative. Mrs. Harrison stated there are other alternatives and ability to finance balance of project over extended period.

Councilman Armijo there are different ways to prepare. City Accountant Harrison stated if we continue with the current plan for project, she has spoken with BB&T, price will not go down, and one good thing is that the city does not have debt. Councilman Evans stated based on current financial state, he thinks the city could move forward.

Councilman Wright stressed we do need this Fire Station, plans are excellent. He is just speaking out of an abundance out of caution about the debt we take on at this time, revenues are uncertain at this time due to the current economical state. Councilman Evans agrees the economic climate is uncertain and inquired about the recent SPLOST payment the city received. Mrs. Harrison reported it was in the amount of \$ 62,000 and will inform Mayor and Council when she receives the next SPLOST.

Councilman Wright wanted to state publicly that his intention is not to create fear, we make the best choices as going forward.

Councilman Armijo stated he is a strong advocate for public safety. Having what we need to go out and protect our city is very important.

Councilman Andrews stated the city has invested \$ 210,000 in the project and we are committed, but we need to be reasonable.

Councilman Evans stated we are here tonight for discussion. Councilman Andrews agrees and that the comments are realistic. There is a lot to consider, we need a Fire Station that is centrally located. Chief Jones agrees times have changed in the last few months, does not envy the decision Mayor and Council have to make, know they all are supportive of the Fire Station. Appreciates each of them and knows they will make the right decision based on the expertise and make the right decision.

Discussion LIHTC Scoring Methodology: Councilman Andrews recognized Director of Economic Development Hogan. Mrs. Hogan provided a copy for Mayor and Council of the LIHTC (low income housing guide). Councilman Wright mentioned that the housing team does not award point, the housing team is to make a recommendation, and it is up to Mayor and Council to make that decision. Mayor Harley stated that there is only one GICH point allowed each year. Councilman Evans looking at the guide a scoring system, there are 50 points based on all the categories. Councilman Wright stated that is if you have multiple projects throughout the year. Mayor Harley read over all categories. Councilman Armijo inquired if this is the same matrix that the city worked with Middle Georgia Regional Commission on. Mrs. Holly Warton, Government Services Specialist Holly MGRC was also in attendance and confirmed that this is the same matrix she worked with the city on.

Councilman Armijo asked if we were going to have a meeting about the (2) different developments. Mrs. Hogan confirmed that this is the plan. Mayor Harley stated at the June 2nd meeting this will be on the agenda, physical public presence will not be allowed due to COVID19 concerns, however, there will be Facebook Live participation via social media access to answer questions that are submitted in advance or during meeting via live feed. Councilman Armijo asked to see the questions from the community and answers provided to citizens. Mrs. Hogan confirmed she will provide information and also post questions and post answers by noon on social media-web page. Councilman Wright recommended that any questions that come in live feed during meeting, those will be addressed later. Councilman Andrews encouraged Mayor and Council to review documents provided and also read your email. There is going to be a virtual video presentation from the developers, we need to be ready to make a decision. Mrs. Hogan reported the community will also be able to see these documents on the city web page under news and development www.centervillega.org as a pdf and provide feedback via google form.

Point of Information 2020 Census: Mayor Harley Centerville is doing well, the city needs everyone counted, this is a way that the city can get additional federal funds. Mayor recognized Director of Economic Development Hogan.

Mrs. Hogan stated in Houston County and more specifically Centerville. Houston County had a 2010 Census total response rate of 74% and it is important in the 2020 Census to ensure we have a higher response rate. A higher response rate ensures the funding and representation for our area is representative of our current population. In order to ensure an accurate and complete count, the Houston County Complete Count Committee was convened by Chairman Stalnaker in July 2019. Anyone in our community interested in being a part of Census 2020, from Churches to Nonprofits to our Library system, are encouraged to attend.

The Complete Count Committee has accomplished many incredible tasks such as a Unified Social Media Strategy, Collaborative Videos (2.5 min/30s/15s), Messaging Suggestions for Businesses, Define Hard to Reach Populations, Census Activity Calendar for 2020, Message during Public Meetings, Employee Notifications, and our Census Day Events April 1, 2020.

As of May 18, 2020, Houston County's self-response rate was at 63.2% versus 2010's rate of 66.2% self-response rate. This is an incredible feat considering we have had to ensure all our campaigns in the community are social distance friendly during the Public Health Emergency. With this pivot though, Centerville has posted 25 times for a total audience of 22,336. Nationally, the self-response timing for Census 2020 has been extended to October 31, 2020. All the jurisdictions in Houston County including the board of commissioners, three cities, and the school system are working together closely to ensure everyone responds to the census this year.

I have appreciated being the representative for Centerville to help ensure this effort was successful. Thank you all so much.

Approval – Separation Agreement: Councilman Wright made motion to approve agreement; seconded by Councilman Andrews. Motion carried.

Comments from Council

Post 1 Councilman Andrews, wanted to let the governing body know that he enjoyed the discussion at the meeting tonight.

Post 2 Councilman Wright, remind everyone to vote.

Post 3 Councilman Evans, encouraged everyone in Centerville to get counted by completing census, important to provide what we need for our citizens.

Post 4 Councilman Armijo, thanked everyone that came out to our Police Department during Police Officer week. This week is Pubic Works time to thank them and all the great work they do, great group of folks. Mayor Harley concurred with statements. Appreciate them all. All that have worked Thanked the citizens of Centerville, we have some great citizens here, appreciate everyone.

Mayor Harley adjourned meeting at 5:57pm.

Mayor John R. Harley

Attest by City Clerk Krista Bedingfield

Date