

REGULAR MEETING – CAIRO MAYOR & COUNCIL – FEBRUARY 12, 2024

The February 12, 2024, Regular Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers with Mayor Booker T. Gainor, IV presiding. Present were Councilmembers Demario Bryden, James H. Douglas, Timothy Gurley, Annette Higdon, and Charles Renaud. Staff Members in attendance were City Manager Julian Brown, City Clerk Dana W. Barfield, and City Attorney Tom Lehman. Cairo Messenger Reporter Mesha Wind was also in attendance.

INVOCATION: The Invocation was given by Mayor Booker T. Gainor, IV.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Motion to approve the agenda was made by Councilman Renaud, seconded by Councilwoman Higdon, and passed unanimously by all Council Members.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Regular Meeting – January 22, 2023. Motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilman Douglas, seconded by Councilman Gurley, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

Work Session Meeting – February 7, 2023. Motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilwoman Higdon, seconded by Councilman Gurley, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

DELEGATIONS:

James Standley – Azalea Park Disc Golf. Mr. Standley explained that he would like to put in a disc golf course at Azalea Park. He said he hoped to get local businesses to sponsor the tee signs and tee pads for the course and as far as park maintenance, there would need to be weed eating around the baskets. He also asked if the city could pour concrete in each of the baskets. He went on to say that it would be a nine-hole course and would cost the city no more than \$300. Motion to approve putting in a public disc golf course contingent on City Manager Brown's approval was made by Councilman Byrden, seconded by Councilman Douglas, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Consider Permit for a Walk – Walking to the Cross, March 29, 2024, from 11:00 am to 3:30 pm. The walk will start at Johnson's Meat Market on Highway 84 E and continue in the right lane east bound to Family Worship Center. Arnold Gonzales – Applicant. Mr. Gonzales said that this would be the second year he is doing the walk with this number of people, last year they had about sixty individuals who participated and this year they hoped to have about one hundred. Councilman Douglas asked if there was a different route he could take; last year he received several complaints about the traffic being backed-up on Highway 84 and he had safety concerns for the individuals walking as well as for the drivers. He then asked if Mr. Gonzales could take his group down Thomasville Road, Highway 188, 17th Avenue NW, and then up to Family Worship Center. He said he could not vote for this event because of the way it was laid out and the safety of the people who were walking as well as the fact that the Police Chief had voiced his concerns and did not agree with the event either. Chief Santos said that Mr. Gonzales had called him asking for his support for the event. His concerns were the issues they had last year, there were big spaces between the walkers, the hours were not good on a Friday between 11:30 am and 3:30 pm, you have school letting out and lunch traffic is a busy time. He said he was willing to agree to a small group of individuals walking if they were together at the same pace and a police car was able to follow the entire group. The problem last year was the group was so big and spread out there were five police cars and that still was not enough to cover the group. The individuals would need to understand that once the pace car passes them, they would have to walk on the sidewalks and would no longer be allowed to walk in the road. Councilman Renaud asked about permission from D. O. T., City Manager Brown said he had thought about D. O. T. as well and that the city had reached out to them for more information but had not received a call back as of yet. Councilman Renaud explained that while he supports the idea of the event, he felt that he also must take a step back and be aware of the safety concerns that are being brought to their attention. If it were just Mr. Gonzales walking that would be one thing, but now he was talking about one hundred people joining the group and an alternate route becomes a lot safer. Mr. Gonzales said his concern with an alternate route was that it would be two lane roads. Councilman Renaud returned with now that Family Worship Center had a track surrounding their cross could a smaller group of five walk the highway and the bigger group walk the track and be there when the smaller group finished at the church. Mr. Gonzales said that he was fine with this option, could the five walk on the highway. Chief Santos answered yes because they would have a police escort the entire way. Mrs. Gonzales asked what was the maximum number of people that would be allowed to walk on the highway. The council agreed there should only be twelve people within twenty yards of each other. City Manager Brown asked Chief Santos if he were comfortable approving the event without D.O.T.'s approval, Chief Santos replied that this would be no different than we do a 5K run, as long as the group stays together, but he could not give them permission to do anything outside of the city limits. Mr. Gonzales said that they had Georgia State Troopers and Grady County Sheriff's Deputies that would be

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escorting them in the county. Councilman Gurley added that each year the event seems to be growing and asked the Gonzales' to be mindful when planning each year of the adjustments they may possibly need to make. Motion to approve the special event Walking to the Cross contingent on Police Chief Santos' plan of twelve individuals walking on the roadway was made by Councilman Byrden, seconded by Councilman Gurley, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

Considered Special Event/Downtown Street Closure – St. Patrick's Day on Main, March 16, 2024, from 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Requesting street closure of S. Broad Street from MLK SW to 1st Avenue SW, street to be closed by 2:30 pm. Cairo Main Street/The Carousel Sports Bar & Grill – Applicants. Motion to approve the special event/downtown street closure for St. Patrick's Day on Main was made by Councilman Byrden, seconded by Councilwoman Higdon, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

OLD BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

PUBLIC HEARING - Rezoning request to allow a zoning change from I-1 Light Industrial District to R-1 Single-Family Residential District; for the property listed as Tax Map 53, parcel 13.1 at the location of 1st Avenue S.W. Applicant – John B. Tuggle, Jr. and Charles Renaud. Councilmembers Renaud and Higdon both excused themselves from the meeting. With there being no public input, the hearing was closed.

Consider rezoning request to allow a zoning change from I-1 Light Industrial District to R-1 Single-Family Residential District; for the property listed as Tax Map 53, parcel 13.1 at the location of 1st Avenue S.W. Applicant – John B. Tuggle, Jr. and Charles Renaud. Councilmembers Renaud and Higdon both excused themselves from the meeting. Councilman Douglas said that the city's Planning and Zoning Commission had approved the rezoning of the property, but the Regional Commission had denied it, but had originally looked at the wrong property and asked if they had come back and evaluated the correct property; he was told yes, they had. Kellee Kennett, 318 1st Street SW, who sits on the board of the city's Planning and Zoning Commission stated that originally the SWGRC had reported on the wrong property and then re-evaluated the correct property and then returned their recommendation. Chassidy Gurley, 1910 1st Avenue SW, stated that she was there to receive more information as to what was going on with the property and zoning, and what was coming in the neighborhood. Mayor Gainor asked Mrs. Kennett to come up and explain the situation that happened with the SWGRC. Mrs. Kennett said as she understood it, the property sat on the corner of 1st Avenue SW at the corner of the railroad tracks. The property was a little over .8 of an acre which was a sizeable city lot and is zoned I-1. The request was to rezone the property to R-1, so she completed a drive by to check out the properties and found that the R-1 zoning fits in with the rest of the neighborhood as far as the other homes on that side of the road. There are four to five nice size properties that fit in fine, across the street there is a commercial facility that is set back and operates fairly quietly. She went on to say that she could not see keeping this piece of property industrial because it could potentially create more noise for the people who lived there, therefore, she had voted in favor of rezoning it to R-1 because it made more sense for the people who lived there. Councilman Gurley said that the information that he had from the SWGRC clearly states that it should not be rezoned to R-1 and for him to hear that they were presented with the wrong map and was not given the correct information was surprising to him. He said he was curious as to what map the SWGRC was presented. Mrs. Kennett explained that the city did not supply the maps, the SWGRC pulled the maps themselves. Councilman Gurley asked if the setbacks would actually meet the requirements. Mrs. Kennett said the property was .8 of an acre, which was larger than the piece of property she owned herself, and she has a 2,000+ square foot home and garage on her property; based on the fact that the property was bigger than hers the manufactured home would have to be very big not to be able to fit on .8 of an acre and not meet the setback requirements of a R-1 zoning. Councilman Gurley stated that he could not make a motion on the rezoning if they received incorrect information from SWGRC. City Manager Brown explained that the SWGRC did submit a second report for the rezoning with a correct map. Mayor Gainor said it was not up to him, but he recommended that the process start over with the correct information so that an accurate recommendation could be given. Councilmen Byrden said that there was a second recommendation in the agenda from the SWGRC and read the recommendation aloud stating that they recommended the city council not approve the rezoning. Attorney Lehman said that he wanted to point out that there is a planning and zoning commission whose job is to look at this serious and then when it comes to council, he felt that it should be their job to approve or disapprove of the recommendation of your Planning and Zoning Commission. He felt that there should be greater efforts given to what Planning and Zoning thinks about it because they are the ones you have chosen to do the footwork for you, therefore, once it comes to you all it should be the choice to approve or disapprove based on the recommendation of your Planning and Zoning Commission. Mayor Gainor asked Ms. Gurley if her questions about the property had been answered. Ms. Gurley stated that it had always been residential and the property across the road was a commercial tire business. She went on to say that the lot was a curved lot and to her knowledge it was not big enough to put a driveway on and she was on an acre lot with three mobile homes and also did not see it being safe for anything

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around the curve. Mr. Tuggle commented that the property had over three hundred foot of road frontage and the city would not put a driveway in that would not be safe, there was also a two hundred foot of railroad right of way; with putting the driveway in the middle of the property, there was no safer place it could be, because you have visibility in both directions. Councilman Douglas made a motion to approve the Planning and Zoning Commission recommendation to approve the rezoning. Councilman Gurley said he wanted to make a motion to approve the rezone, but he wanted to make sure that we had an approval from the SWGRC to do so. City Manager Brown and the City Clerk reiterated that the second report showed that the SWGRC did not approve the rezoning. There was not a second, therefore the motion died for the lack of a second motion. Attorney Lehman made the council aware that they could lay the request on the table to allow for more information to be gathered. Councilman Gurley made a motion to lay the rezoning request on the table in order for more information to be gathered, Councilman Douglas seconded the motion. Councilman Douglas added that he had been on the council for a long time and the council had approved request before without the approval of the SWGRC. The property owners cannot do anything with the property, and he did not feel that SWGRC would ever change there recommendation. Mr. Tuggle then added that he was concerned about Mrs. Metcalf, the neighboring property whose property is zoned R-1. If they were not going to be able to rezone this piece of property next to her's then they were going to have to look and see what was allowed on the property. He said he had a need himself to store rock and things of that nature, once that starts you will then have big trucks coming in and out of the property as well as the use of transporters and backhoes; in the long run it will hurt her the most. There is no property on that side that is not residential. After the discussion Councilman Byrden voted in favor of tabling the request in order to gather more information.

PUBLIC HEARING – Conditional Use Request to allow a home occupation as conditional use within a Single-Family Residential District (R-1A) located at 1385 12th Avenue N. W.; listed as Tax Map C1A, Parcel 21.1. Applicant – Felicia Berschauer. Mrs. Berschauer explained that she went to obtain a cottage license and was told she needed to first apply for a business license. She said she had installed a commercial kitchen in her home so that she could bake all gluten free foods. She said most of her customers are through deliveries, mail, and festivals. With there being no other public input, the hearing was closed.

Consider Conditional Use Request to allow a home occupation as conditional use within a Single-Family Residential District (R-1A) located at 1385 12th Avenue N. W.; listed as Tax Map C1A, Parcel 21.1. Applicant – Felicia Berschauer. Motion to approve the Conditional Use Permit at 1385 12th Avenue NW was made by Councilman Renaud, seconded by Councilwoman Higdon, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

Consider the Airport Advisory Board. City Manager Brown said the city used to have an Airport Advisory Board. As the City Manager he is also the Airport Manager, and although he loves all of the projects, he is not a master in aviation operations. Therefore, he felt it was a good idea to consider creating another Airport Advisory Board. He could see it having three members, he would attend the meetings as well as a representative from Precision Aviation who rents the maintenance hangar. City Manager Brown concluded with the request to look into an advisory board and reach out to people that may be interested in serving. Motion to approve the Airport Advisory Board was made by Councilman Renaud, seconded by Councilman Gurley, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

Consider Vehicle Purchase for Streets and Sidewalks Crew. City Manager Brown explained that Community Service Director Pat Mitchell was requesting a 1 Ton Flatbed Crew Cab vehicle for the Street Department. This truck would serve as their main truck, currently they are borrowing a vehicle from the landfill. We budgeted \$65,000 to purchase this vehicle with SPLOST funds. Purchasing Director Sam Kines received two bids with the lower bid being from Brannen Emergency Vehicle in the amount of \$59, 950. City Manager Brown said it was his recommendation to purchase the 1 Ton Flatbed Crew Cab from Brannen Emergency Vehicle in the amount of \$59, 950. Motion to approve the Purchase of a 1 Ton Flatbed Crew Cab from Brannen Emergency Vehicle in the amount of \$59, 950 with SPLOST funds was made by Councilman Douglas, seconded by Councilman Byrden, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

Consider TSPLOST Considerations. City Manager Brown said on January 31st the City of Cairo, Whigham, and Grady County met to discuss TSPLOST. Representing the city were City Manager Brown, Community Service Director, Finance Director, Public Works Director, Councilwoman Higdon, and Councilman Renaud. The County informed them that the collections of the current TSPLOST had moved faster than they had anticipated, and they felt that TSPLOST needed to be on the November ballot. They are proposing TSPLOST to collect \$20,000,000 opposed to the current TSPLOST that will collect \$15,000,000. He went on to say that he recommended the council to agree with the City of Whigham and Grady County to put the TSPLOST on the November ballot. Motion to approve agreeing with the City of Whigham and Grady County to put the TSPLOST on the November ballot was made by Councilman Douglas, seconded by Councilman Byrden, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

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Consider Cemetery Contract. Mayor Gainor excused himself from the meeting and Mayor Pro Tem Douglas took over. City Manager Brown informed the council that there was a bid opening at City Hall, February 8th for cemetery lawn maintenance where Community Service Director Pat Mitchell, City Clerk Dana Barfield, and he were present. There was one bid that was disqualified for having only two years of experience. Davis Lawn Care, LLC was the low bidder at \$123,050.04, this will be a \$27,949.96 decrease to our current contract. Councilman Douglas asked City Manager Brown to explain what they would be doing. He said they were responsible for mowing, weed eating which is one of the hardest things at the cemeteries to do, as well as tree and bush maintenance, and blowing off what is needed. City Manager Brown added that it was extremely important that the cemetery was properly maintained because it was a sensitive place for a lot of people. We also considered taking back over the maintenance of the cemeteries ourselves. Community Services Director Mitchell, Public Works Director Todd and he all met discussed the possibility, but Community Services Director Mitchell did not feel he could keep up the service without hiring a few more people, at that point with our expenses with more employees we would probably come out with a better deal keeping the contract. Motion to approve entering into contract with Davis Lawn Care, LLC in the amount of \$123,050.04 was made by Councilman Renaud, seconded by Councilman Gurley, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

REPORTS:

CONSIDER FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE MONTHS OF OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, AND DECEMBER 2023.

- Motion to approve Financial Statements for the Month of October, November, and December 2023 was made by Councilman Douglas, seconded by Councilman Byrden, and unanimously approved by all Council Members.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2024

- No Comments.

REPORTS FROM CITY MANAGER:

- There will be an airport terminal parking lot bid opening on March 5th and that will complete the whole terminal project.
- CNS has sponsored the Cairo/Grady County Chamber banquet this weekend, February 17th, if for some reason anyone could not attend, please let him know.

REPORTS FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL:

- Councilman Byrden said he was not at the last meeting but still wanted to thank Chief Santos and his staff for all they had done at the MLK Celebration.
- Councilman Renaud said he and Councilwoman Higdon visited 3rd Avenue NW to 6th Avenue NW from 1st Street NW down to 4th Street NW, basically a big square. He said most of it was zoned R-1 and some of it was zoned R-3, in this area there are a lot of older houses and empty lots in this area, but he would like to find a way to encourage people to make that area all accessible to manufactured homes. The manufactured homes of today have permanent skirting, the wheels, axles, and tongues are removed, they are not used; they are actually building homes inside a factory, they are not your trailer of old. This would make it possible to raise your tax base, make affordable housing for people and with land/home packages today they could be very affordable.
- Councilwoman Higdon said that she and Councilman Renaud did ride and look at lots, but her concern was the way affordable housing was worded, affordable housing to her is not manufactured homes. If we are going to try and bring the city up, why can we not partner and receive some of the funding available that actually deals with affordable housing for individuals so that they can have a generational type of wealth opposed to manufactured homes because that is what affordable housing is to her. She went on to say she did not want the city to buy a bunch of lots and then have mobile homes all over town because that is not affordable housing.
- Councilman Byrden asked if we had any plans for the back of the RCC. City Manager Brown said that there had been some discussion, but no set plans. Councilman Byrden asked was there something we needed to do in order to move the situation that we have along. City Manager Brown responded that their agreement was from month to month, but what he was interested in most was getting a plan together of what we want to do, how we want to do it, and how we want to fund it because there is a lot of space that we could do something with. Councilman Byrden then asked Chief Santos how many openings we had in the Police Department, how many officers we have on staff, and how many vehicles we had. He went on to explain the benefits of officers having their own vehicles and being

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able to take them home. He stated that he knew these might be small things, but these were things that we needed to do in order to keep our people.

- Mayor Gainor thanked the Kennett’s for being at the meeting and Mrs. Kennett for sharing.

ADJOURN: There being no further business, a motion was made at 7:20 pm by Councilman Byrden and seconded by Councilman Douglas to adjourn the meeting.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

BOOKER T. GAINOR, IV

DANA W. BARFIELD, CITY CLERK