Special Called Meeting

February 8, 2025 at 9:00 AM
City Hall, 875 Main Street, Stone Mountain, Georgia 30083

Minutes

Mayor and Council: Dr. Beverly Jones – Mayor | Post 3: Mayor Pro Tem Ryan Smith
Post 1: Council Member Anita Bass | Post 2: Council Member Mark Marianos
Post 4: Council Member Gil Freeman | Post 5: Council Member Shawnette Bryant
Post 6: Council Member Teresa Crowe

Staff: Shawn Edmondson - City Manager | Maggie Dimov - Assistant City Manager | Shavala Ames - City Clerk | Jeff Strickland - City Attorney

Call to Order
Mayor Jones called the meeting to order at 9:07 A.M.

Determination of Quorum
PRESENT: Council Member: Post 1 Anita Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Mark Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Ryan Smith, Council Member: Post 4 Gil Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Shawnette Bryant, Council Member: Post 6 Teresa Crowe, Mayor Beverly Jones

1. Consideration of an action on a request to designate the use of the Lawn on Main as Village Center Mixed Use (VCM), requested by Council Member Mark Marianos

   Councilmember Marianos gave reasons why Lawn on Main should be developed as Village Center Mixed Use (VCM) to allow for additional revenue in the city. Improving and diversifying the revenue is the goal. The previous surveys show that VCM fits the criteria for the Lawn on Main. If designated VCM, watershed issues will be remedied by POND. The city has a lack of revenue, and the state will come in to dictate the use if they have to provide funds to help the city due to the lack of increase our revenue. The city is not in danger of running out of money tomorrow, but we need to buy into the city.

   Council Member Crowe inquired whether the 10-minute time limit had elapsed. The Mayor stated that when time is up, the Clerk will inform the body. The governing body engaged in a discussion regarding the decorum rules, exchanging differing perspectives on the matter.

   Mayor Jones Jones stated citizens would like an amphitheater. Since the lawn has been purchased, events have taken place to draw people in.

   ACTION: DESIGNATE THE LAWN ON MAIN AS VILLAGE CENTER MIXED USE

   Motion made by Council Member: Post 2 Marianos, Seconded by Council Member: Post 6 Crowe

   Motion Withdrawn

City Attorney Strickland gave an overview of designating a zoning change. Rezoning must follow the standard format which includes public hearings; however, the city themselves can use the property however they decide as the title owner.

The City Manager stated that POND is anticipated to present on March 18th regarding Lawn on Main. City Manager also stated that administration is seeking guidance on the use of Lawn on Main to go after specific grants.

Councilmember Freeman expressed concern regarding grants that are being pursued.

ACTION: SEEK COUNCIL APPROVAL TO DESIGNATE THE USE OF LAWN ON MAIN AS MIXED USE

Motion made by Council Member: Post 2 Marianos, Seconded by Council Member: Post 6 Crowe

Voting Yea: Council Member: Post 1 Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Smith, Council Member: Post 6 Crowe

Voting No: Council Member: Post 4 Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Bryant

2. Discussion: Progress update/presentation of amendment to address issues with the directing of staff and retaliation against staff requested by Council Member Mark Marianos

Attorney Strickland reviewed the drafted ordinance provided in the agenda packet. The City Council will provide suggestions for modifying the ordinance as the presented ordinance is only the initial draft. The ordinance is intended to establish a process if complaints do arise. Members of council added that the HR staff member will need to be involved in the process.

City Manager addressed comments regarding claims of harassment to follow up on such allegations.

Mayor Jones expressed improprieties in allegations and suggested a discussion be had in executive session. Council Member Marianios began to comment regarding an allegation, Mayor Jones was not finished talking a requested a police officer for decorum.

Attorney Strickland advised that if the ordinance is passed, it will be in effect for new/future claims, not past ones.

3. Discussion: Rules of Decorum, requested by Council Member Shawnette Bryant

Council Member Bryant asked for clarity on why the decorum resolution was adopted.

Council Member Crowe confirmed that she initially requested a resolution regarding decorum due to the extended meeting times and agenda items. Council Member Bryant stated her concerns with the decorum resolution which included having a set time to deliberate on agenda items; and some council members have abused their political powers.

Mayor Jones suggested placing a cap on the number of agenda items and spoke on meeting decorum overall. Mayor Pro Tem Smith suggested that the governing body limit items that are requested for the agenda. City Manager Edmondson suggested that the requested items of the Mayor and City Council be placed under Remarks of Privilege to offer uniformity and efficiency of the City Council agenda.

4. Discussion: Audio system, requested by Council Member Shawnette Bryant

Council Member Bryant asked the City Manager about the council chambers audio system; and the City Manager confirmed the audio was good.

5. Discussion: Require/create a new ordinance that requires meeting minutes approved before legal documents are signed to ensure city council votes in open records for Open Records Act compliance, requested by Council Member Gil Freeman

Council Member Freeman expressed concerns regarding complaints he received about what was passed in the meeting also the public does not have access to what was passed and information provided. There is no documentation of the vote and many times the vote in the minutes are wrong.

Mayor Pro Tem emphasized that staff is doing what they think is best through the attorney. City Attorney stated that he does not recommend withholding contracts until minutes are approved. A contract is approved once done so in a meeting. The mayor shall execute at that time.

Mayor Jones stated that certain contracts need to be reviewed before executing. The City Attorney stated the process should be where contracts are reviewed prior to consideration by City Council. If approved, there will be a signature by the City Attorney the same evening, and the Mayor should sign the same evening to make the process more streamlined without delay. Regarding the ordnance process, an updated form has been sent out to streamline that process as well.

Council Member Freeman raised a request for the City Attorney to provide specific citation or legal reference outlining the requirement that meeting minutes must be approved before any legal documents are executed. In response, the City Attorney stated that he was not currently aware of any legal or procedural requirement that necessitates the approval of minutes prior to the execution of legal documents. However, he assured Council Member Freeman and the rest of the Council that he would conduct further research into the matter to determine if such a process exists and to provide a detailed response if requested.

A question was raised about adjourning the meeting due to the website calendar time. The City Attorney clarified that the website calendar does not dictate the actual meeting length. There is no rule in place that would limit special called meetings. The governing body can modify the decorum resolution to account for special meetings on the weekend. It was again stated that the lengthy agenda is why the meeting items carry over to the next meeting.

ACTION: MOTION TO MOVE THE REMAINING AGENDA ITEMS TO THE NEXT MEETING OF MAYOR AND COUNCIL SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 18, 2025, WHICH INCLUDES REQUEST NEW LOCAL AUDITOR TO AUDIT ALL SPLOST 1 AND 2 DISCUSSION, DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY DISCUSSION, AND RELOCATE THE CONFEDERATE SIGN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE COLUMNS AT THE 5-WAY INTERSECTION DISCUSSION

Motion made by Council Member: Post 4 Freeman, Seconded by Council Member: Post 1 Bass

Voting Yea: Council Member: Post 1 Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Smith, Council Member: Post 6 Crowe, Council Member: Post 4 Freeman

Council Member: Post 5 Bryant was not present for the vote

MOTION PASSED

Adjournment

ACTION: MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 11:09 A.M.
Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem: Post 4 Freeman, Seconded by Council Member: Post 2 Marianos

Voting Yea: Council Member: Post 1 Bass, Council Member: Post 2 Marianos, Mayor Pro Tem: Post 3 Smith, Council Member: Post 4 Freeman, Council Member: Post 5 Bryant, Council Member: Post 6 Crowe

MOTION PASSED (UNANIMOUSLY)

Dr. Beverly Jones, Mayor

City Clerk, Shavala Ames