



CITY OF STATESBORO
WORK SESSION MINUTES
APRIL 18, 2023

Mayor & Council Work Session

50 East Main Street

4:00 PM

A Work Session of the Statesboro City Council was held on April 18, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 50 East Main Street. Present was Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr; Council Members: Phil Boyum, Paulette Chavers, Venus Mack, and John Riggs. Also present was City Clerk Leah Harden, City Attorney Cain Smith, City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles, Assistant to the City Manager Olympia Gaines, and Public Information Officer Layne Phillips. Absent was Mayor Jonathan McCollar.

1. Zoning Ordinance Update

Caleb Racicot with TSW presented a summary of key updates to the City of Statesboro Unified Development Code. The Unified Development Code takes all of the various regulations that shape development in the city of Statesboro primarily zoning, subdivision, and development controls. The code consists of five sections, introduction & general provisions, zoning, subdivision, environment, and definitions. The goal is making it user friendly and maintaining consistency. Mr. Racicot began with updates to the sign ordinance stating that most of the ordinance is in a pretty good place. However updates are needed in Sign District 2 which is MX, HOC, and LI zoning with frontages on Veterans Memorial Parkway and highway 80. The updates include a requirement for monument signs, a small increase in size and allocation and a required fall zone for billboards. Another update is in Sign district 4 would allow for signs over storefronts and pedestrian scale signs. A revision to the Downtown Master Plan includes the creation of a new Mixed-Use (MX) district that replaces the Commercial Retail (CR), incorporating urban design standards and allowing Mid-Rise Residential. Housing types and affordability consists of the consolidation of residential districts, removing variance requirements on historical lots and reduce the setback in older neighborhoods. In addition convert R-3 into a Mixed Use Residential district which would allow new housing types in several districts. Preservation incentives creates voluntary ways to protect local character the incentives include parking relief, relaxed zoning standards, residential in historic homes in the Office and Business district. The subdivision and environment portions of the ordinance include technical and engineering updates. TSW's Landscape Architecture Studio reviewed and revised Chapter 86: Vegetation ordinance beginning with making the language in it consistent, adding no irrigation in public rights of way and, tree protection standards for Mixed-Use development requiring a 35% canopy cover. There are a series of other code sections that received updates, Chapter 22 Cable Communications, Chapter 26 Cemeteries, and Chapter 70 Street, Sidewalks, and other Public Areas. We now have a 95% draft and anticipate having a 100% draft in the next week. After the final draft there will be the first public hearing with stakeholders in the community and a final public hearing will be held before adoption.

Councilmember Paulette Chavers asked for clarification about what the consolidation of the residential districts looks like.

Director of Planning and Development stated the consolidation allows for more flexibility, in fill housing, and helps to utilize the small lots on the west side of town for affordable housing.

Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr asked what live-work housing means.

Caleb Racicot stated it's a type of home occupation that allows for more home occupation than the city's usual.

Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr also asked about what is proposed in the draft regarding scooters and robots in the streets.

Mr. Racicot answered that the State of Georgia has passed some state preemption so the city is unable to prohibit delivery robots in the right of way but we are working to determine what we can do under this new state law if anything. It is proposed to prohibit Commercial Scooters such as the "lime scooters" in the city right of ways.

Councilmember Paulette Chavers stated she does not like a complete prohibition of scooters in the city.

Councilmember Venus Mack stated she does not want scooters prohibited so if students need to get around they can rent them. Council discussed possible requirements for rental scooters such as docking stations, limiting the amount of scooters, limiting where they are allowed in the city etc.

Mr. Penny stated we would do some more research on regulations for scooter and report back to you.

Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr asked for clarification on subdivision neighborhoods and water protection and changing trees, because from what I understand we don't have requirements about leaving trees or planting trees for individual home owners only for developers and commercial property.

Mr. Racicot stated that there have been no changes to the tree ordinance. So there is still the 35% coverage of tree canopy which has been expanded to include mixed use areas.

Council discussed options for more tree coverage requirements in developments such as larger trees, requiring at least one tree in the front yard, incentives etc.

Mr. Penny stated that we will work with Caleb to find a good balance regarding the concern for tree coverage and development. There is a timeframe of taking this document to stakeholders before bringing it back to council for consideration of adoption.

Kathy Filed stated a public hearing will be held in the second half of May and the first part of June. The finalized document should be completed by the end of June.

2. Creek on the Blue Mile 60% Update

Charles Crowell with Freese and Nichols presented an update to the Creek on the Blue Mile. Since the last update a 60% plan has been submitted to the city with an updated cost estimate. There is a draft masterplan for memorial park along with progress on the reservoir design. The net result of floodplain improvements is 35 acres will be removed from the 500-year floodplain and 30 acres will be removed from the 100-year floodplain. Upcoming activities are to advance the project to 90% completion, complete the 30% reservoir design, work through the permitting process with the Georgia Department of Transportation and the US Army Corps of Engineers, and to schedule a Memorial Park stakeholder meeting to walk through the park masterplan. The design and permitting schedule began in April 2022. A concept design report was submitted August 2022 and a 30% design submitted November of 2022. A 60% design was submitted in March of this year and a 90% design is slated to be submitted in June 2023 with a final 100% design submitted in September 2023. The estimated project cost is \$28,608,107. However, the city has been working hard to secure some grant funding. At this time there is about \$8,000,000 in grant funding that has been secured through two DOT programs in the amount of \$6,000,000 for the bridge. The remaining \$2,000,000 is from a State Neighborhood Improvement grant which will pay for the site furniture and light posts things of that nature. Currently the city is working on securing an additional \$5,900,000 in grant funds that would pay for a substantial part of the promenade.

Councilmember Phil Boyum requested to see an existing 100-year flood map and the proposed 100-year flood map overlaid because the difference does not look like 30 acres being removed from the floodplain.

Mr. Crowell stated he will provide the city with the maps.

3. Mission, Vision, and Values

Due to time constraints this item will be placed on the next work session agenda set for May 16, 2023.

Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

Leah Harden, City Clerk