**Minutes**

**Forsyth City Council Meeting**

**October 2, 2023**

**Call to Order**

Mayor Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation by Rod Callahan, and Roll Call.**

Mayor Wilson led the Pledge of Allegiance. The invocation was led by Mr. Rod Callahan. In attendance for the meeting was Mayor Eric Wilson, Councilmembers John Howard, Chris Hewett, Greg Goolsby, and Mike Dodd. Also in attendance was the City Manager, Craig Mims, Assistant City Manager, Regina Ivie, and City Attorney, Bobby Melton. Four members of the council were in attendance for the meeting; therefore, all unanimous votes will be four votes (Howard, Hewett, Goolsby, and Dodd.).

**Approval of the agenda.**

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to amend the agenda to allow the chairperson of the Betsy Lynn Subdivision to speak after the approval of the minutes. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to amend the agenda to change item number five approval of final plat for Fox Run Subdivision to the approval of Phase 1-A for Fox Run Subdivision. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the agenda with the amendments. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of the minutes from the called meeting and regular council meeting held on Sept. 18, 2023.**

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

**The withdrawn rezoning proposal for Betsy Lynn Subdivision.**

Mr. Chuck Richardson, from 355 Oakridge Drive, advised the withdrawn rezoning proposal was to put a road in the subdivision that would be of no use or advantage for Betsy Lynn. He thanked the council for all they have done.

**Approval of Phase 1-A for Fox Run Subdivision.**

Mr. Cody Ellis, Economic Development Director, advised that it is a multi- phase residential project that meets all the requirements for the R-2 residential zoning. Planning and zoning recommended approval.

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve phase 1-A for Fox Run Subdivision. Seconded Mr. Goolsby; the motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of a rezoning request by Trio Flex LLC, Matthew Wilds; tax parcel 054 010C.**

Mr. Melton advised the rezoning request is to rezone tax parcel 054 010C, located behind Shoney’s and across from Industrial Park Drive across from the DDS location, from MI, Manufacturing Industrial to HB, Highway Business for the purpose of a mixed- use commercial development. He advised the rezoning request was advertised in the Monroe County Reporter.

Cody Ellis, Economic Development Director, advised he was going to speak regarding this agenda item and the next agenda item; they are both the same project, parcel, and group. They had to be advertised separately because one is a rezoning request and the other is a variance request. He advised the purpose of rezoning is for mixed-use commercial for retail, restaurants, and a gym on the property. The rezoning matches future land use, and it is in the joint comprehensive plan with the county. Mr. Ellis advised for the variance portion that no type of residential is allowed in highway business. He advised planning and zoning recommended an approval for both the rezoning and the variance request.

Mayor Wilson opened the public hearing for comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed rezoning request by Trio Flex LLC, Matthew Wilds; tax parcel 054 010C.

Mr. George Emami, advised that it is a great project, and he would like to see more at that type of development.

There being no further comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed rezoning request, Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve the rezoning request by Trio Flex LLC, Matthew Wilds, tax parcel 054 010C. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of a variance request by Trio Flex LLC, Matthew Wilds; tax parcel 054 010C.**

Mayor Wilson advised that the variance request is for the same parcel and was ran in the Monroe County Reporter along with the rezoning request. He opened the public hearing for comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed variance request by Trio Flex LLC, Matthew Wilds; tax parcel 054 010C.

Mayor Wilson opened the public hearing for comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed variance request by Trio Flex LLC, Matthew Wilds; tax parcel 054 010C.

Mr. Matthew Wilds advised the lofts will be executive corporate lofts; some will have two bedrooms, but most are single bedrooms. He advised there will be no more than sixteen lofts.

There being no further comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed variance request, Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve the variance request by Trio Flex LLC, Matthew Wilds, tax parcel 054 010C. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously with four votes (Hewett, Goolsby, Dodd, and Mayor Wilson) and one opposing (Howard).

**Approval of a city initiated rezoning request of parcel 027 018 owned by H&H Timberlands.**

Mr. Melton advised the rezoning request was advertised in the Monroe County Reporter from September 13-27, 2023, it’s a petition application of H&H Timberlands for 20 acres of parcel 027 018; the applicant for the rezoning is the City of Forsyth, the land is owned by H&H Timberlands. The proposed rezoning is from Agricultural Rural to R3, Residential Moderate Density for the purpose of future single-family housing to fulfill grant requirements for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs workforce initiative. He advised that this is a city initiated rezoning request and property owners have been notified and informed of the city’s intent for the proposal.

Mr. Cody Ellis, Economic Development Director, advised this rezoning is to fulfill the grant requirements for the workforce housing initiative that the council approved. They are requesting R3 because every lot will not be a half-acre; some of the lots will be larger than a third an acre. The average square feet of homes will be from 1200sq ft. to 1900sq ft. depending on the lots size. There will be approximately fifty homes.

Mr. Goolsby asked if the rezoning was tied to the grant; meaning if we don’t receive the grant will the rezoning go away?

Mr. Ellis advised that the rezoning could be tied to the grant.

Mayor Wilson opened the public hearing for comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed city initiated rezoning request of tax parcel 027 018 owned by H&H Timberlands.

Mr. Eric Dodd at Twin Oaks off Johnsonville Road advised that he came from Henry County, and he has seen what happens when you grow too fast. He questioned if the sewer was already there in place and if residents on Smith Road would benefit from the initiative. Mr. Dodd had concerns about the taxes, schools, police, and fire coverage. He questioned the cost of the houses that are to be built.

Mayor Wilson advised the grant requires the houses to be between $150,000 to $290,000.

Mr. Eric Dodd asked if that was the only annexation plan that the city has been working on?

Mayor Wilson advised H&H Timberlands was one property and they asked to be annexed.

Mr. Eric Dodd questioned how many houses would be built.

Mr. Ellis advised that it would be approximately fifty houses and it depends on the soil and erosion test.

Mr. Hewett advised that regarding the taxes you will have school, county, and city taxes.

Mr. Goolsby questioned how much the grant was for.

Mayor Wilson advised two million, the city applied for the max.

Mrs. Linda Hampton at 419 MLK Jr. Drive advised she supports the affordable housing grant. She advised that she does not think if the grant is not received that it should be attached the affordable housing; we don’t have affordable houses in the city.

Mr. Michael Griffin at 882 Smith Road stated that he opposed the grant. He questioned if the grant is not received does the development go through or is it only depending on the grant.

Mr. Ellis advised that if the grant does not go through it depends on the developer, they may want to develop housing on the property.

Mr. Griffin asked if the plan shown was the final plan. He advised that Smith Road was washed out five to six months ago and questioned if the road could handle the traffic. He also stated that the value of the homes bult in the last five years would be affected.

Mr. Ellis advised that it was a preliminary plan, it depends on the soil and erosion test.

Mr. Randy Hamlin at 1970 Smith Road advised he supports affordable housing. He questioned the current employment rate and if all those things had been taken into consideration. He stated the traffic is already bad on Smith Road. Mr. Hamlin questioned was the right location picked for the project or was it selected just to receive a grant.

Mr. Goolsby questioned where the location is in comparison to H&H properties.

Mr. Ellis advised it is located across from Zellner Road.

Mr. Rod Callahan at Taylor Drive questioned if the county could do an assessment on the road to see if traffic is feasible for the area.

Mrs. Kristen Griffin at 882 Smith Road advised the schools have issues with funding and questioned would that be a concern to bring in new families. She also advised she has concerns with crime; houses that are close knit tend to bring criminals.

Mr. Kevin Williamson at 2020 Smith Road advised that the small lots would bring more crime. He advised that there are about eight of them that have 30 acres lots and the city wants to put 50 houses across from them on half acre lots; that is not feasible.

There being no further comments in favor of or opposition to the proposed city initiated rezoning request, Mayor Wilson closed the public hearing.

Mr. Goolsby questioned when the deadline for the grant was.

Mr. Cody Ellis advised the deadline is October 14, 2023.

Mr. Goolsby stated that affordable housing is a need; where you put it is the hard part. He was not convinced that that this location is the place it needs to be.

Mr. Howard offered a motion to approve the city initiated rezoning request of parcel 027 018 owned by H&H Timberlands for discussion. Seconded by Mr. Hewett.

Mr. Goolsby questioned if the grant happens every year.

Mr. Ellis advised this is the first year the grant was offered, and this is the first round. He is not sure if they will offer another round next year given how much they are giving out in the first round.

Mr. Howard amended his motion to approve the city initiated rezoning request of parcel 027 018 owned by H&H Timberlands for discussion. Seconded by Mr. Hewett.

Mr. Howard offered a motion to approve the city initiated rezoning request of parcel 027 018 owned by H&H Timberlands with the condition that if we fail to receive the grant the zoning would revert to agriculture. Seconded by Mr. Hewett.

Mr. Howard amended his motion to approve the city initiated rezoning request of parcel 027 018 owned by H&H Timberlands with the condition that if we fail to receive the grant the zoning would revert to agriculture. Seconded by Mr. Hewett.

After a brief discussion Mr. Howard offered a motion to approve the city initiated rezoning request of parcel 027 018 owned by H&H Timberlands with the condition that if we receive the grant current county residents have the option to get city water and if we fail to receive the grant the zoning would revert to agriculture. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously with four votes (Howard, Hewett, Dodd, and Mayor Wilson) and one opposing (Goolsby).

**Approval of request for transfer of retail electric services.**

Mr. Mike Batchelor, Utilities Director, advised this is a territorial swap with the City of Forsyth and Central Georgia EMC. He stated that the first agreement is for the transfer of lots 4-11 and 12-32 to Central GA EMC. This is Phase 1 of Fox Run Preserve. He advised Central Georgia will transfer Manor at Montpelier to the City of Forsyth.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the request for transfer of retail electric services. Seconded by

Mr. Dodd: the motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of proposed personnel policy manual updates.**

Mrs. Regina Ivie, Assistant City Manager, advised that they formed a benefits committee to propose certain updates to policies in the personnel manual. They proposed the wait time for vacation accruals be reduced to 180 days rather than 1 year and to allow employees to roll over unused vacation hours with a maximum of 120 hours. To reduce the years of service to 15 years instead of 20 years and to reduce the minimum increments of from 1 hour to .25 for time off request.

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the proposed policy manual update. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Ivie advised that currently under civic and witness duty employees must pay funds back that they receive. They are proposing to no longer require pay back of funds received for civic and witness duty.

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve the proposed policy manual update. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Ivie advised that under funeral leave they proposed to change the policy so that each employee would be paid 3 consecutive shifts regardless of the number of hours of their shift.

Mr. Dodd offered a motion to approve the proposed policy manual update. Seconded by Mr. Goolsby; the motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of unbudgeted police department purchase request:**

1. **MPH Industries $14,383.00**
2. **McLaggan Communications & Radar service, Inc $19,785.00**
3. **Gulf State Distributors $12,368.83**
4. **Ed’s Public Safety $26,221.00**

Mr. Woodrow Blue, Police Chief, advised the purchases from MPH Industries is for a portable speed trailer with a data component, McLaggan Communications is for four doppler radars and four laser radars, Gulf State Distributors for ammunition, and Ed’s Public Safe is for the purchase of firearms.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to approve the unbudgeted police department purchase request as presented. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of requisitions greater than $6,000**

1. **Lenslock $15,192.00**

Mr. Goolsby offered a motion to approve requisitions as presented. Seconded by Mr. Hewett; the motion carried unanimously.

**City Manager’s Report**

Mr. Craig Mims, City Manager reported that:

-The 2023 LMIG project commenced on September 9, 2023; resurfacing Blount St., Jenay Ct., Clearview Ave., and 1200ft. of N. Frontage Rd. at the intersection of Hwy. 42.

-The police department has started recertification through the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police.

-The fire department has started flushing and painting fire hydrants throughout the city. We expect the process to be completed by late October.

-Trick or Treat around the Square will take place on Tuesday, October 31, 2023. We are actively engaging with the local businesses for participation.

- Assistant City Manager, Mrs. Ivie, and I met with all departments to begin the process of planning a holiday party for staff scheduled for December 1, 2023.

**City Attorney Report**

Mr. Bobby Melton, the City Attorney, advised that he has compiled a proposed amendment for Sec. 4-504 the temporary permit fee that is currently $100.00, changing it to $75.00.

**Mayors Report**

Mayor Wilson had no further business to report.

**Council Board Reports**

Mr. Dodd advised that the Golf Board had a meeting on Thursday, September 28, 2023, and approved the contract that Mr. Craig Mims presented for the city.

**Additional Business**

Mr. Bobby Melton reminded the council that an open meeting notice needs to be posted for the work session.

**Public Comments**

Linda Hampton at 363 MLK Drive advised that the fire hydrant beside her house is overgrown with weeds and wanted to remind the fire department that it needs to be flushed and painted.

Mr. Sewell at 70 Country Club Drive advised that someone vandalized the city skate park with graffiti.

Mr. Cody Ellis at 23 E Main advised that he was disappointed; he stated he was all for people coming to speak against projects. He stated the crime rate was 1.77 per 1000 residents in Monroe County. He was not aware of a huge crime issue in other subdivisions such as Manor at Montpelier or Juliette Crossing. Mr. Ellis advised the city has a problem when your everyday laborers cannot afford to live in your city. He stated when it comes to things that help the people in the community and the city tie the infrastructure to annexed property it is a problem. He stated you must grow from the outskirts and start attaching things so that you don’t have issues with how the city grows.

Mr. Darren Latch at 15 Mornside Drive stated he has been walking the streets in Juliette Crossing and several residents advised they need more police patrols in the area.

**Executive Session**

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to go into executive session at 7:20p.m. to discuss personnel matters and pending litigation. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Hewett offered a motion to end the executive session at 7:33p.m. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

**Adjourn**

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Hewett offered a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:35p.m. Seconded by Mr. Dodd; the motion carried unanimously.

Minutes Submitted by:

Shayla Furlow, Executive Admin. Assistant