

City Council Minutes, July 11, 2024

Mayor West called the meeting to order at 6:30PM, July 11, 2024. Those in attendance were, Nick Sears, Monty Parks, Spec Hosti, Kathryn Williams, Tony Ploughe and Bill Garbett. Also attending were Michelle Owens, Interim City Manager; Bubba Hughes, City Attorney, Tracy O'Connell, City Attorney; and Jan LeViner, Clerk of Council.

Opening Ceremonies

Call to Order

Invocation: Jan LeViner

Pledge of Allegiance

Consideration of Items for Consent Agenda

- Special Meeting, June 26, 2024 (10:00AM)
- Special Meeting: June 26, 2024 (3:00PM)
- Special Meeting: June 27, 2024, Second Reading of the proposed Millage Rate
- Minutes, Regular Meeting: June 27, 2024 (As Amended)
- Tybee Island Maritime Academy - Tybee Island Police MOU
- Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization - MOU

If there is anyone wishing to speak to anything on the agenda other than the Public Hearings, please approach the podium. Please limit your comments to 4 minutes

Ben Goggins approached Mayor and Council to speak to the Non-profit Grant Funding in regard to the MLK organization. Mayor West thanked Mr. Goggins.

Dawn Shay approached Mayor and Council. Ms. Shay asked Mayor and Council to treat all non-profit organizations fairly and allocated monies fairly as well. Mayor West thanked Ms. Shay.

Spec Hosti made a motion to approve the consent agenda. **Kathryn Williams** seconded. Vote was unanimous to approve, 6-0.

Public Hearings

Appeal of Actions Sec 7-100 regarding denial of tree permit, Applicant Harry Drummond, 2 Carpenter Road. **Ms. Owens** stated this is 2 Carpenter Road and it is a single-family home in the Fort Screven Historic District. The applicant is requesting to remove a palm tree that is located on city property that's near his driveway. The palm trees are on the City's significant tree list and it's protected by the ordinance. Ms. Owens continued, the application was denied by Staff and the Planning Commission also denied, 5-1. This tree is one that is being reviewed as part of the Land Development Code and that tree may potentially come off the Significant Tree List but it is on there right now. The applicant has asked to remove it because he feels it blocks his driveway, and it makes it difficult for them to back out of their driveway. Brent Levy, City Arborist, visited the

property and reported at the Planning Commission meeting he did not feel like it was in the way. Also, there was discussion about the potential of moving the tree and the arborist has ruled if that tree were to be moved, it is of a variety that would more than likely survive. Mr. Drummond approached Mayor and Council. Mr. Drummond stated he and his wife moved to Tybee Island about a year ago and the tree has been a problem for them. He further explained the difficulty they have backing out of the garage and explained he has concerns if a storm comes that the tree will fall on the power lines. Mayor West thanked Mr. Drummond. Mr. Ploughe stated he listened to Mr. Drummond at the Planning Commission Meeting and the City has the authority to move the tree to the other side of the driveway. Mr. Drummond stated he is willing to do that and another option would be for him to plant another tree somewhere on his property. Mr. Garbett stated moving the tree is not unreasonable and stated there are limitations on how wide a driveway could be in a 25' property line. He continued, the house has been there since 1986 and the pine is still standing. He then recommended Mayor and Council table. **Mayor West** stated the petitioner can either wait to see if the Code is altered so this type of tree may come off the list or you can come back with a request to move the tree, not to cut it down. **Nick Sears** made a motion to deny. **Bill Garbett** seconded. **DISCUSSION:** Ms. Williams stated she believes that a palm tree should not be on the Significant Tree List as it is a "woody herb" and not a tree. Ms. Owens recommended Mr. Drummond reach out to the Planning and Zoning Office and speak to Lisa Schaaf. Voting in favor to deny were Nick Sears, Monty Parks, Kathryn Williams, Tony Ploughe and Bill Garbett. Voting against was Spec Hosti. Motion to deny approved, 5-1.

Consideration of Bids, Contracts, Agreements and Expenditures

2024-2025 Non-profit Grant Funding Request and Recommendation. **Monty Parks** stated he would like to read a proposal for funding of the non-profits, line by line item. He continued: Tybee Clean Beach, \$10,000; Tybee Arts Association, \$10,000; Tybee Island Farmers Market, \$135.00; Tybee Post Theater, \$10,000; Tybee Beautification Association, \$5,500; Friends of Cockspur Lighthouse, \$10,000; Fresh Air Home, \$4,800; Manomet, \$7,500; Historical Society, \$10,000; American Legion, \$10,000; Irish Heritage Committee, \$3,500; Mariene Science Center, \$10,000; Tybee Island Festival Association, \$10,000; Tybee MLK \$10,000; TIMA, \$25,000; and Marine Rescue Squadron, \$3,000. This comes to \$139,435 with \$765.00 remaining. Ms. Williams asked if that was a motion. Mr. Parks confirmed. **Monty Parks** made a motion to approve the amended proposal. **Bill Garbett** seconded. **DISCUSSION:** Mr. Plough stated he was happy with what Staff proposed as recommendations in the packet before them tonight and thought those were reasonable. He also appreciated that effort of the Staff. Mr. Hosti stated he agreed with Staff recommendations and just to let the audience know that the \$40,000 that was supposed to go to TIMA was reduced. Voting in favor were Nick Sears, Monty Parks, Kathryn Williams, and Bill Garbett. Voting against were Spec Hosti and Tony Ploughe. Vote to approve as amended, 4-2.

Research Services Agreement: GA Southern University Research and Service Foundation and City of Tybee Island. **Michell Owens** stated this is the Resident Sentiment Study as opposed to the Economic Study that was previously discussed. After the Tourism Study there was a desire to hear what residents felt about tourism in the

community. What is before you tonight is the contract for the Study which we will try to figure out resident's sentiments towards tourism. There is another Study that will be coming to you which is an Economic Study. Ms. Owens stated she has spoken with Georgia Southern about the Study and it will be forthcoming. Once the contract is approved by Mayor and Council it will go back to Georgia Southern. They will begin to develop the questions that will be on a part of the survey. Mr. Sears stated this is not what he intended as it is a broader and he does not believe the Economic Research Department of Georgia Southern is the entity that should be doing this. He does not believe Mayor and Council need to know what residents of other cities think about tourism. He also feels we need to move back a little and to rethink, which would probably save the City a great deal of money. Ms. Owens stated for some context, this was the Study that originally was to be done by a different company that was much more expensive. Mayor and Council had the conversation at a workshop to go back to Georgia Southern as they did such a good job on the Tourism Study and now to have them do the Residents Sentiment Study. The intent when they speak about reaching out to other cities is to see the types of questions that are asked and used to probe resident's experiences and try to understand their perspective. Not necessarily that we want their experiences but we want to know what kinds of questions have worked the best to get information that will be useful for the Study. Ms. Owens continued, Georgia Southern did the Tourism Study in 2023 and they did find one prior to that many years ago which understands the seasons in the market and conditions on Tybee. She thinks that part was nixed due to the fact on how it was being paid for as Visit Tybee was paying for half of it. She feels there were concerns about that group paying for part of a study that was going to be looking at residents and might be a predisposition for skewed results. But we are paying for the entire study, so I don't think that that concern is still valid at this point. Georgia Southern did a great job with a Tourism Study and she feels they could do a just a good job with the Residents Sediment Study. Council at some point had asked to be able to submit suggestions for the questionnaire and she asked they send her questions so she can get those to Georgia Southern. Ms. Williams asked if they involved sociologists on their team or just economists? Ms. Owens stated no, they will involve whoever is needed. Bill McKay usually leads the team but he is not the only one working on it so it will not just be an economist's perspective. Ms. Owens reminded everyone this is the City's study, and we can change as needed. Mr. Garbett stated a year ago he would be in favor of this but right now circumstance have changed, and he does not see the need for this like he did earlier. He feels there is a more productive ways to spend \$35,000. Right now, there were some things in the survey that he could nitpick such as why they are going to ask other communities how they feel about their public safety, trash collection and other utilities. He thanked Ms. Owens for the effort. Ms. Owens stated this is something the community asked the Staff to do as a companion to the Tourism Study. Mayor West stated there is opposition as you feel this is more of an economic orientation than a sociology orientation. Mr. Sears stated he feels the survey is more economically oriented and he would like to come back with suggestions about how to make it fit. He would like to step back and refocus on the Study and make it simpler. Mayor West stated it is important that professionals help design the Study

correctly as if it is not done correctly it could make your study invalid. Mr. Garbett stated with the Business School doing a Consumer Sentiment Survey, they probably have marketing departments who specialize in consumer sentiment. Ms. Williams asked if it would be appropriate to table or postpone this so Council could review the questions more thoroughly then get our feedback to Ms. Owens. Ms. O'Connell asked Ms. Williams for clarification in tabling this Study. She asked if this would be so the Council can review questions. Ms. Williams responded no; it would be to review what Council would want to submit to Georgia Southern. Ms. Owens stated they have not developed the questions and if Mayor and Council approve tonight, it can be approved with the condition the Council will have sufficient time to craft questions and also be a part of what the questionnaire will look like. Mr. Sears shared his concerns as to why Mayor and Council are doing the Study as he does not feel this would be helpful to Tybee. Ms. Williams stated with the first Study that was done there were funding issues and it did not happen. After going through the budget process this year, it has made her rethink the value of conducting a Study right now and would like to wait to see the revenue stream. Ms. Owens stated the money is in the budget and the quote came in lower than two years ago and the price in line with studies of this nature. Mr. Garbett stated he preferred to table the Study and have Ms. Owens talk to the University and ask if they cut the price significantly for a more specific Resident Sentiment Study and not utilities and how they feel about public safety. He continued, the survey has not been prepared and that would be the bulk of the work. Ms. Owens stated factoring in issues like public safety and utilities are relevant as you would want to know the impact the tourism is having on garbage collection for instance. Mr. Ploughe stated it sounds to him like the group still wants to be involved in the scope and making scope changes. **Bill Garbett** made a motion to table. **Nick Sears** seconded. **DISCUSSION:** Mr. Hosti expressed his concerns that the City is questioning the ability of the College to do the Study. Voting in favor were Nick Sears, Monty Parks, Kathryn Williams, Tony Ploughe and Bill Garbett. Voting against was Spec Hosti. Motion to approve, 5-1.

Monty Parks made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session to discuss litigation, real estate and personnel. **Kathryn Williams** seconded. Vote was unanimous to approve, 6-0.

Monty Parks made a motion to return to regular session. **Spec Hosti** seconded. Vote was unanimous to approve., 6-0.

Spec Hosti made a motion to adjourn. **Bill Garbett** seconded. Vote was unanimous to approve, 6-0.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:55PM.

Janet LeViner, MMC
Clerk of Council