



CITY OF THOMSON
PUBLIC HEARING AND CITY COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

6:00PM

Thomson-McDuffie Government Center

Present:

Kenneth Usry, Mayor
Alton Belton, Councilmember
Keryl Corley, Councilmember
Elaine Johnson, Councilmember
John Smalley, Councilmember
Scott Whittle, Councilmember
John Waller, City Administrator
Lucretia Ferguson, City Clerk
Jimmy Plunkett, City Attorney

Also Present:

Chief Courtney Gale, TPD
Assistant Chief Robert Brown
Jason Smith, Community Relations
22 Interested Citizens
Josh Heath, McDuffie Progress

PUBLIC HEARING

At 6:00pm, Mayor Kenneth Usry welcomed all to the Public Hearing concerning the Planning and Zoning Board's recommendations on the two variance requests and one re-zoning request.

Public Relations Officer Jason Smith presented the recommendations.

REQUEST FOR VARIANCE OF R-1 ZONING TO ALLOW A GROUP HOME: 306 Grier

Circle: The owner of the property asked for a variance in the R-1 zone to permit a non-medical sober-living facility at this address. Group dwellings are permitted in R-2 zoning, Not R-1. If approved, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommends several conditions. The Planning Board did not recommend approval of the request.

REQUEST FOR VARIANCE OF B-2 ZONING TO ALLOW A CHURCH: 218 Jackson

Street: Knox Enterprises, LLP, has requested that the recently formed New Thomson Methodist Church be allowed to operate and meet in the dining room of the existing facility as a church group. They received verbal permission to use the Truist Bank parking on Sunday mornings for parking. The Planning Board recommended approval. The Commission added that the church should arrange for Police assistance, if needed, for crossing Jackson Street.

REQUEST TO RE-ZONE FROM R-1B TO R-2: 600 O'Neal Street:

Felicia and Dwayne Jenkins requested the property be re-zoned to R-2 and split the existing parcel into two parcels to allow for two two-family dwelling units, one unit on each parcel. The Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval with three stipulations: 1. The subject property is evaluated for jurisdictional wetlands; 2. The project will be required to connect water and sewer infrastructure; and 3. Each proposed duplex will be required to have a shared driveway.

CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:

306 Grier Circle: Cyndie Locklear of Grier Circle presented a petition with forty-eight signatures of area residents that did not want the group home to be allowed to operate in the neighborhood. Boyd Long, who asked for the zoning variance to

allow a group home at this location, spoke to the Council in support of the proposal, as the Arise International Ministry will be moving into the area and he expects to appear before them again.

218 Jackson Street: Ruth Knox asked that the Council follow the recommendation of the Planning Commission. She said that they have no plans to change anything structurally or build anything new. The owners feel that a church would be less intrusive than a restaurant and bar in the space.

600 O'Neal Street: None.

There being no more comments, questions or other concerns, Mayor Usry closed the public hearing at 6:09pm.

COUNCIL MEETING

At 6:21pm, after the Millage Rate Public Hearing, Mayor Usry called the regularly scheduled City Council meeting to order. Councilmember Smalley gave the invocation, followed by the pledge of allegiance to the United States flag.

CITIZEN INPUT: None

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: The motion was made by Councilmember Belton and seconded by Councilmember Corley to approve the agenda as written. A vote of 5-0 in favor was taken.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- a. City Council Meeting, August 10, 2023 - A motion was made by Councilmember Belton and seconded by Councilmember Smalley to approve the minutes with the stipulation of a correction of Councilmember Smalley's name in the section for Approval of Agenda; a vote of 5-0 was taken to approve the minutes.
- b. Called Council Meeting, August 17, 2023 - A motion was made by Councilmember Whittle and seconded by Councilmember Smalley to approve the minutes and a 5-0 vote in favor was taken.

BUSINESS:

Recommendation of Planning & Zoning, re: Three City Parcels:

- a. A motion was made by Councilmember Johnson and seconded by Councilmember Belton that the Council accept the recommendation of the Planning & Zoning Board to deny the request for a zoning variance at 306 Grier Circle. By a vote of 5-0, the denial motion was approved.
- b. A motion was made by Councilmember Belton and seconded by Councilmember Johnson to accept the Planning & Zoning Board's recommendation to approve the zoning variance request for 218 Jackson Street with the stipulation that the church obtain written permission to use Truist Bank's parking lot. Councilmember Corley abstained and the motion passed on a 4-0 vote.
- c. A motion was made by Councilmember Johnson and seconded by Councilmember Smalley to accept the Planning & Zoning Board's recommendation to approve the change in zoning for 600 O'Neal Street from R-1B to R-2 with the three stipulations laid out in the P&Z Hearing. A vote of 5-0 passed the motion.
- d. **Springfield Baptist Church Street Closing Request:** Springfield will be celebrating 150 years on October 15th and has requested that on that day, from 1:00pm – 6:00pm, Martin Luther King, Jr. Street be closed at West Street, Whitehead Street, and Springfield Street. They also asked that

Springfield Street be closed between the church's driveway and the apartment's driveway across the street. The church will manage the closures to allow ingress and egress for those who live in the closed portions. A 5-0 vote passed the motion made by Councilmember Belton and seconded by Councilmember Smalley that the request be approved.

- e. Lucky One Stop, LLC and Rimpby's Liquor: Two alcohol license applications for two businesses with separate entrances in the same building have been received. Lucky One Stop LLC at 735 Cobbham Road is applying for a Retail Package: Beer and/or Wine License and Jauhal Corporation, DBA Rimpby's Liquor, at 520 Old Washington Road is applying for a Retail Package: Distilled Spirits License. This is not a new location for alcohol, but a new owner at established businesses. With a motion to approve both licenses made by Councilmember Belton and seconded by Councilmember Corley, Councilmember Smalley abstained and a 4-0 vote in favor was taken. Councilmember Belton brought up his concern of cars backing out onto Old Washington Road when leaving the package shop and asked that the problem be brought to the attention of the new owners.
- f. 2023 Millage Rate: Mayor Usry spoke on the three public hearings to present the facts to the public. The City Council is being asked to vote on keeping the current millage rate of 6.890 mills with no rollback. General conversation noted that the rate is the same as it has been for five years, that the City must be led like a small business with the citizens becoming more knowledgeable about what it takes to keep the City working. A motion by Councilmember Whittle and seconded by Councilmember Belton to approve the 2023 Millage Rate of 6.890 mills was approved with a vote of 5-0.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Council Reports: Councilmember Smalley spoke on the Council having to have a balanced budget and his desire for citizens to understand the way that things in the City are handled. Councilmember Whittle commended Water Department employees Kim Odom and Benjamin Sturkey for being vigilant in quickly spotting the drop of water pressure, finding where the problem was and turning it off.

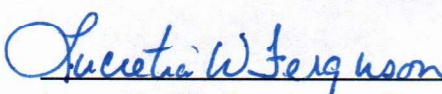
City Administrator Report: CA Waller spoke on thirty-five City employees now being CPR and AED (Automated External Defibrillator) certified. The Carl Vinson Institute from UGA is locally teaching a set of five classes for employees on Succeeding as a Supervisor. He also recommended a temporary moratorium on alcohol licenses to allow time to study the locations of alcohol sales in the City and perhaps recommend zoning changes to ensure the City is adequately controlling growth. City Attorney Plunkett will write up the Resolution for the Council for presentation at the October Council meeting.

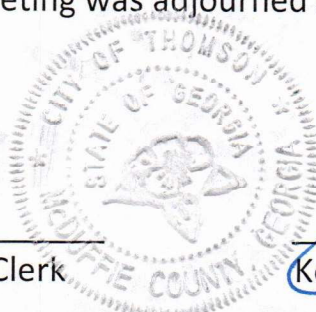
Mayor Report: The Mayor reported on the Kickoff Concert, the Blind Willie McTell Music Festival next week, and the Camellia City Festival in October.

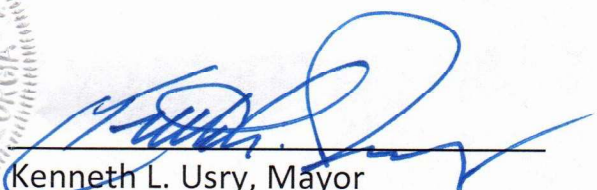
EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

There being no other business before the Council, a motion for adjournment was made by Councilmember Whittle and seconded by Councilmember Corley. A vote was taken (5-0) and the meeting was adjourned at 6:42.

Respectfully submitted,


Lucretia W. Ferguson, City Clerk




Kenneth L. Usry, Mayor