

CITY OF LAGRANGE, GEORGIA
REGULAR MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

February 23, 2021

Present: Mayor Jim Thornton; Council Members LeGree McCamey, Mark Mitchell, Tom Gore, Nathan Gaskin, Jim Arrington and Willie Edmondson

Also Present: City Manager Meg Kelsey; City Clerk Sue Olson; Assistant City Manager Bill Bulloch; City Attorney Jeff Todd; Communications Manager Katie Van Schoor; Community Development Director Alton West; Strategic Planning Manager Mark Kostial; Captain Mike Pheil; Police Chief Lou Dekmar

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Thornton, the invocation was given by Rev. Ann Baker, Word of Grace Christian Center, and Mayor Thornton led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

On a motion by Mr. Gaskin seconded by Mr. Arrington, Council unanimously approved the minutes of the regular Council meeting held on February 9, 2021.

The LaGrange Animal Services Department was recently awarded a \$10,000 Grant by the Atlanta Humane Society, and achieved “No Kill” shelter status by achieving a 91% save rate. Mayor Thornton congratulated them and read the following proclamation in their honor:

WHEREAS, the right to live is every animal’s most basic and fundamental right; life always takes precedence over expediency; and

WHEREAS, every year shelters in the United States are killing millions of animals who could be saved, and are killing millions of free-living animals who do not belong in shelters; and

WHEREAS, 150 years ago, humane organizations were founded to establish standards for humane treatment of animals, to promote their rights, and to protect them from harm, which marked the formal beginning of the humane movement in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the “No Kill” movement in the United States has successfully implemented new and innovative programs that provide alternatives to mass killing; and

WHEREAS, lifesaving change will come about only if “No Kill” programs are embraced and further developed; and

WHEREAS, LaGrange Animal Services has received a \$10,000 Grant distributed by the Atlanta Humane Society to help save more animals; and

WHEREAS, the Atlanta Humane Society recently chose LaGrange Animal Services to become part of their Statewide Outreach Program, which includes providing veterinary consultation and assistance to Georgia shelters, determining potential funding opportunities, and other services deemed beneficial by both parties involved; and

WHEREAS, LaGrange Animal Services recently achieved “No Kill” shelter status, having achieved a 91% save rate.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jim Thornton, Mayor of the City of LaGrange, do hereby proclaim that the City of LaGrange Animal Shelter has been established as a “**No Kill Shelter**”, and commend our Animal Services Staff Chris Bussey, Nataly Johnson, David Mixon and Dakota Davis, who have worked diligently for the implementation of this service that will end the mass killing of animals in this shelter.

Capt. Pheil and Chief Dekmar also thanked Supervisor Chris Bussey and his staff for their dedication to the shelter and the animals.

Leon Childs, Director of Adaptive Growth and Cultural Advancement Organization, came before the Council to update them on his program of after school mentoring and tutoring. Mr. Childs thanked them for their continued support of the program. Mayor Thornton and several Council Members thanked Mr. Childs for his dedication and the work he is doing in the community.

Kenneth Brewer, owner of Sanigreen Cleaners, came before the Council with Mr. Childs, to ask the Council for support of his business which would incorporate some of the students that Mr. Childs works with in his program. Mayor Thornton thanked Mr. Brewer and asked him to set up an appointment with Ms. Kelsey for further discussion.

Mr. Edmondson reported that he wanted to follow up on his comments from the January 26, 2021 Council meeting, when he stated that he had not been pleased with the Troup County Health Department regarding distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in our community. He stated that he had spoken with the Health Department staff regarding the issue and now he wanted to thank them for agreeing to work harder for our community to get citizens signed up for the vaccine.

Mr. Mitchell reported that he wanted to thank Officer Meghan Keith for being alert and aware of her surroundings when she made a traffic stop that led to an arrest for theft of several hundred dollars worth of stolen merchandise, not only in LaGrange but in other surrounding cities.

Mr. McCamey stated that he wanted to thank the Cochran Gallery for hosting our Work Session this morning. He stated that this is a huge asset to our community and encouraged citizens to stop by to view the beautiful art on display.

Mr. Gaskin reminded everyone of the litter pickup this Saturday, February 27th at 8:00 a.m., beginning at Berta Weathersbee School on Forrest Avenue.

Michelle Moore, CEO of Groundswell, presented an update to the Council on the SOUL Program that is being used to help low and moderate income residents with higher than average utility bills by improving energy efficiency. The program has been in place in LaGrange for about one year and Ms. Moore, along with Chief Program Officer Lenwood Coleman and other staff members, wanted the Council to see how effective the program has been. Mayor Thornton thanked Ms. Moore and staff for the information and for the work they have done in our community.

Ms. Kelsey presented information on a request to declare 645 Hudson Road as surplus. Mr. Russ Davidson, who owns adjoining property, has approached the City with the request to purchase the 10 acre site. On a motion by Mr. Edmondson seconded by Mr. Mitchell, Council voted to declare the property as surplus and authorized staff to advertise and receive sealed bids for the property, with a minimum bid of \$93,500. Messrs. Edmondson, Mitchell, McCamey and Gaskin voted in favor of the request, Messrs. Gore and Arrington voted against the request. Therefore, the vote passed 4-2.

On a motion by Mr. McCamey seconded by Mr. Edmondson, Council voted unanimously to approve the following Resolution:

ADOPTION RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of LaGrange has completed its 2021 Comprehensive Plan update; and

WHEREAS, the updated Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

WHEREAS, the two required public hearings were conducted during scheduled City Council meetings held at 208 Ridley Avenue, LaGrange Georgia on September 12, 2019 and January 26, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan was transmitted to the Department of Community Affairs and Three Rivers Regional Commission for review; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Community Affairs has reviewed the Comprehensive Plan and finds that it adequately addresses Minimum Standards for Local Comprehensive Planning; and

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, the City of LaGrange Council hereby adopts this 2021 Comprehensive Plan on this 23rd day of February 2021.

Mayor Thornton and Ms. Kelsey read the following statement into the record:

MAYOR THORNTON:

The service delivery strategy requires all local governments in the county to come together to discuss how best we can provide services to our residents. The purpose of the strategy is to make sure that services are provided in the most effective and most efficient ways possible. This process happens once every ten years.

County Chairman Patrick Crews called together the mayors and city managers of the three cities in Troup County to meet with him and the county manager early last summer. We decided as a group to let the four managers work through the details of the agreement and bring to our attention any areas of concern. This process has taken many months. It has involved detailed discussions and negotiations. As with any negotiation, there has been give and take. I often say that the sign of a great deal is when nobody likes it but everyone can live with it.

I would especially like to commend our city manager Meg Kelsey for her hard work through this process. Along with key members of her staff, she handled the bulk of the negotiation with the county.

As has been reported in the press, Mrs. Kelsey and I have come to an agreement with the county that we are prepared to recommend to the city council. At this time, I am going to pause and let Mrs. Kelsey summarize the terms of the deal that we have reached with the county.

MS. KELSEY:

We started with the existing SDS agreement as a template. That document was adopted by the county and all three cities in 2011. It addresses the 61 services that are provided by one or more of the cities or the county, and it specifies who is responsible for which service.

After reviewing the 2011 agreement among the four managers, the managers were comfortable continuing the vast majority of those services without change. We feel like most of the services currently provided to our citizens are being handled effectively and efficiently. There were a couple of minor areas of adjustment.

As you know, we have placed an emphasis on parks in the past few years and are trying to improve our park system. Under the proposed SDS, we will take over responsibility for the parks inside the city and the county will make a cash transfer to us to support that work. In addition, you know that the C&D landfill has been an area of concern for a couple of years, and the county has agreed to be solely responsible for the operation and management of that landfill.

We also had to make some minor adjustments to the agreement simply because things change over time. For example, the county no longer operates the work camp, which eliminated our ability to use inmate labor. There have also been some additions over time to services, such as housing and workforce development that needed to be adjusted. But for the most part, the agreement from 2011 has worked well for us and the others local governments.

I will tell you that when we started this process I asked for more from the county. My review of the current service delivery responsibilities and the sources of revenue led me to believe that LaGrange was entitled to significantly more services or alternatively more funding from the county. The county obviously had a different perspective. The county manager, Mr. Mosley, and I were able to negotiate through those issues, and I appreciate the county's willingness to engage in the "back and forth" discussion that the mayor has described. I think it resulted in a fair deal for both parties.

I would obviously be glad to answer any specific questions, but as the mayor said, I am comfortable recommending this agreement to the council.

MAYOR THORNTON:

Thank you, Mrs. Kelsey.

Although it appears that the county and LaGrange as well as the county and Hogansville were able to use a negotiation process to reach a fair deal and a good compromise, the same has apparently not happened between the county and West Point. There are a few days left, but we are moving dangerously close to the deadline of February 28, and it remains entirely possible that state imposed sanctions will begin next Monday, March 1.

I am reminded that while I would like for everyone to be happy and pleased with the terms of the SDS agreement, my primary obligation is to the people of LaGrange who elected me to represent their interests. With that in mind, I am going to make some recommendations to the council that I hope you will follow.

First, I would recommend that the city council adopt the service delivery agreement as proposed and adopted last week by the county board of commissioners and that you authorize me to sign that agreement.

Second, I would like the council also to adopt a resolution authorizing me to request an extension of the SDS deadline from DCA, if the other parties are not able to reach an agreement by this Friday. I believe such a request would probably need to be unanimous, and I am not sure the county or other cities will request an extension, but I will encourage them to do so if they haven't reached a deal. State imposed sanctions would not be good for the city or our residents and businesses.

Third, I would like the council to adopt an intergovernmental agreement between LaGrange and Troup County that would incorporate the terms of the newly negotiated service delivery strategy as they relate to us and the county. In other words, even if Hogansville and West Point hold out, whether we get an extension or not and whether sanctions are imposed or not, LaGrange and Troup County can confirm our new deal and start acting on it accordingly.

Finally, I am recommending a resolution finding that Kia Boulevard and Kia Parkway are roads of county-wide significance. This appears to be one of the big sticking points for West Point. Given the number of jobs located on the Kia pad, those roads that provide access to it are important to all of us. My goal here is for us to confirm for the benefit of West Point that we acknowledge the important of those roads. This resolution will commit our support that county-wide funding in the next SPLOST referendum should include funding for the maintenance and repaving of those roads.

What I plan to do is call for each resolution in turn, and certainly we can discuss them if you like, or if you are comfortable moving forward, we can take action tonight.

RESOLUTIONS IN ORDER:

1. Approval of SDS
2. Authority for Extension
3. Intergovernmental Agreement
4. KIA Parkway Resolution

On a motion by Mr. Edmondson seconded by Mr. Gaskin, Council voted unanimously to adopt the following four Resolutions regarding SDS:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, in order to comply with the Service Delivery Strategy Act, O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20 et seq., the local governments within Troup County are required to meet, confer and submit to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) a summary of service delivery arrangements agreed upon by Troup County, City of LaGrange and one or both of the cities of Hogansville and West Point;

WHEREAS, after extensive negotiation, LaGrange has reached an agreement with Troup County as to those portions of the Service Delivery Strategy which affect LaGrange and Troup County;

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the Mayor and Council to approve the Service Delivery Strategy for Troup County and to submit same to DCA prior to the deadline of February 28, 2021;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the City of LaGrange, Georgia, and it is so ordained by the authority thereof, that the Service Delivery Strategy for Troup County is hereby approved, and the Mayor, City Manager and City Clerk are hereby authorized to execute such documents and agreements as are necessary to memorialize and transmit to DCA the terms of such strategy. Moreover, the Mayor, City Manager and City Clerk are authorized to approve and accept such changes to the strategy which may be made subsequent to this Resolution but are non-material to the interests of LaGrange.

SO ORDAINED this 23rd day of February, 2021.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, in order to comply with the Service Delivery Strategy Act, O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20 et seq., the local governments within Troup County are required to meet, confer and submit to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) a summary of service delivery arrangements agreed upon by Troup County, City of LaGrange and one or both of the cities of Hogansville and West Point;

WHEREAS, after extensive negotiation, the proposed Service Delivery Strategy has not been approved by the required number of local jurisdictions, and the current deadline for such submission is February 28, 2021;

WHEREAS, the governing authority of the City of LaGrange desires to authorize the Mayor to execute such documents required for an extension of the Service Delivery Strategy Act deadline if, in his discretion, such is warranted;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the City of LaGrange, Georgia, and it is so ordained by the authority thereof, that Mayor Thornton is hereby authorized, on behalf of the governing authority, to execute documents as are necessary to seek a three (3) month extension of the current Service Delivery Strategy Act deadline of February 28, 2021, if, in his discretion, such extension is warranted.

SO ORDAINED this 23rd day of February, 2021.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, in order to comply with the Service Delivery Strategy Act, O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20 et seq., the local governments within Troup County are required to meet, confer and submit to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) a summary of service delivery arrangements agreed upon by Troup County, City of LaGrange and one or both of the cities of Hogansville and West Point;

WHEREAS, after extensive negotiation, the proposed Service Delivery Strategy has not been approved by the required number of local jurisdictions, and the current deadline for such submission is February 28, 2021;

WHEREAS, in the event the Service Delivery Strategy for Troup County is not reached and submitted to DCA by February 28, 2021, the governing authority desires to enter into an agreement with Troup County which contains the bilateral elements of the Service Delivery Strategy which are unique to LaGrange and Troup County with said agreement to expire upon approval of the required Service Delivery Strategy by DCA, whenever such event occurs.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the City of LaGrange, Georgia, and it is so ordained by the authority thereof, that the Mayor and City Clerk are hereby authorized, on behalf of the governing authority, to execute such documents as are necessary to enter into an agreement with Troup County for those bilateral elements of the Service Delivery Strategy which are unique to Troup County and LaGrange.

SO ORDAINED this 23rd day of February, 2021.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, in order to comply with the Service Delivery Strategy Act, O.C.G.A. § 36-70-20 et seq., the local governments within Troup County are required to meet, confer and submit to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) a summary of service delivery arrangements agreed upon by Troup County, City of LaGrange and one or both of the cities of Hogansville and West Point;

WHEREAS, as a component of the Troup County Service Delivery Strategy, the local governments of Troup County have discussed issues relating to the maintenance of Kia Boulevard and Kia Parkway, two significant roadways constructed by the State of Georgia in conjunction with the location of Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia, Inc. in the City of West Point;

WHEREAS, it is the opinion of the Mayor and Council of the City of LaGrange that required maintenance of Kia Boulevard and Kia Parkway constitutes a “county-wide project” as defined in O.C.G.A. § 48-8-110, et seq.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the City of LaGrange, Georgia, and it is so ordained by the authority thereof, that the Mayor and Council of the City of LaGrange, Georgia, hereby endorse and call for the inclusion of funds for required maintenance of Kia Boulevard and Kia Parkway in the next Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum as a county-wide project.

SO ORDAINED this 23rd day of February, 2021.

Council heard the first reading of the following ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY; TO AMEND THE CODE SO AS TO MODIFY COMPENSATION FOR THE OFFICE OF MAYOR; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO FIX AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Council heard the first reading of the following ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY; TO AMEND THE WATER AND WASTEWATER USER CHARGES IN CERTAIN SPECIAL DISTRICTS; TO MODIFY WASTEWATER CONNECTION CHARGES; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO FIX AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

On a motion by Mr. Gaskin seconded by Mr. Gore, Council voted unanimously to approve the following ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY; TO AMEND THE ZONING MAP AND ORDINANCES OF THE CITY SO AS TO RECLASSIFY THE USE ZONE OF REAL ESTATE LOCATED AT 111 AND 115 FORT DRIVE AND OWNED BY DOROTHY LYNN MURPHY; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO FIX AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE, GEORGIA HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1:

That the zoning map and ordinances of the City of LaGrange be amended so as to reclassify from use zone R-3 (residential district) to C-3 (general commercial district) the following described real estate, to wit:

All that tract or parcel of land located in Land Lot 172 of the 6th Land District, Troup County, Georgia, containing 8.5 acres, more or less, known as 111 and 115 Fort Drive and Troup County Tax Map Parcel Number: 051-3-000-013.

SECTION 2:

All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed.

SECTION 3:

This ordinance, after adoption by the Council and upon approval by the Mayor, shall become effective immediately.

INTRODUCED AND FIRST READING _____ February 9, 2021

SUBMITTED TO MAYOR AND ADOPTED _____ February 23, 2021

SUBMITTED TO MAYOR AND APPROVED _____ February 23, 2021

BY: /s/ James C. Thornton, Mayor

ATTEST: /s/ Sue Olson, City Clerk

In good news, closing comments, Ms. Van Schoor reported that she wanted to remind everyone that we will be hosting our next litter cleanup this Saturday, February 27th, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. We'll be meeting in front of Berta Weathersbee Elementary School, 1200 Forrest Avenue, and picking up litter around the neighborhood. The LaGrange Police Department requested we have a litter cleanup in this area. We will have another cleanup in Calumet Park area the following Saturday, March 6th, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Our partners are the Calumet Park Neighborhood Association, the Chamber's Leadership Troup Class of 2020-2021 and the Kiwanis Club of LaGrange.

Also, Ms. Van Schoor reported that LGTV is proud of a recruitment video produced for the LaGrange Police Department. They plan to heavily circulate this video to help in recruitment. We will soon create a similar video for the fire department. The video was shown for the Council.

There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m. by Mayor Thornton.

Mayor

City Clerk