



**WORK SESSION NOTES
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
CITY OF DULUTH, GA
FEBRUARY 26, 2024**

PRESENT: Mayor Whitlock, Councilmembers Harkness, Thomas, Doss, Graeder, and Holloway, City Manager, Asst. City Managers, Department Directors, City Attorney

Mayor Whitlock called the work session to order at 5:30pm.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

1. TRAFFIC CALMING AT CHATTAHOOCHEE RESERVE

Traci Mollenkopf of 2350 Black Rock Dr. and Felipe Hurtado of 2135 Chattahoochee Dr. came forward to address concerns regarding Chattahoochee Reserve. They reported Canterbury Walk Dr., located within the subdivision, is frequently used as a cut-through for traffic on Peachtree Industrial Blvd. They also reported that the neighborhood has had a series of break-ins. They requested a study be conducted for their subdivision aimed at potential solutions to remedy these issues.

II. DISCUSSION ITEMS/PRESENTATIONS/UPDATES

1. BUNTEN PARK TRAIL – SPLOST PROJECT

Parks and Recreation Director Kathy Marelle came forward to present. She said the Bunten Park trail is a popular passive park amenity that is well used by the community. The surface of the walking trail has deteriorated, and the questionable condition of its sub-base has led to an uneven walking surface with large voids in the asphalt. Proposed improvements will enhance and stabilize the park trail system as well as bring it into alignment with ADA requirements. The project is expected to cost 3.6 million dollars and take 24 months to complete. Columbia Engineering representatives Randy Strunk and Erin White came forward to outline project details regarding ADA required markers.

Council authorized Staff to place this item on a future Council agenda for authorization.

2. TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM

Community Development and Engineering Director Margie Pozin came forward to present traffic calming, which is defined as self-enforcing improvements in safety, mobility, and comfort of roadways for both drivers and pedestrians. The objectives of a traffic calming program are to reduce speeding, accidents, and cut-through traffic, as well as increase access for all modes of transportation. Some examples of traffic calming strategies include speed humps, raised crosswalks, mini-roundabouts, speed signage and pavement markings. From time to time, staff gets complaints and requests for traffic calming but has no mechanism to determine which requests to follow up on, how to prioritize such requests, which measures to implement, and how to pay for these capital improvements. The City Manager stated that staff will work with Council and discuss further at a future meeting.

3. MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC

Chief Carruth came forward to present a recommended change to Chapter 8 of the Duluth Code - Motor Vehicles and Traffic, which will add "Section C" clarifying penalty and notice requirements. This would implement civil enforcement against the registered owner for illegally parked vehicles. There will likely be an increase in the penalty from \$15 to \$20 to cover the additional expenses.

Council authorized Staff to place this item on the next Council agenda for approval.

4. BOARD AND COMMISSION APPOINTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Department Directors presented recommendations for the 2024 board appointments.

City Clerk

Alcohol Beverage Review Board:

Three appointments are required on this board due to Joy Thompson reaching 14 years of service, Demetrius Nelson moving outside of City limits, and one vacancy. The Chair and Staff recommended moving Robert Edwards to fill the position vacated by Joy Thompson, appointing Jay Lastinger to the Alternate 1 position, and appointing Richard Middleton to fill the vacant Alternate 2 position.

Board of Ethics:

Appoint two recommendations from Councilmember Holloway

Employee Benefits & Audit Review Committee:

The Chair and Staff recommend appointing Margaret Middleton to fill the position currently held by Brandon Odum, who currently serves on the Urban Redevelopment Agency. Staff further recommended appointing Greg Johnson to fill the Alternate 1 position. Councilmembers Harkness and Thomas currently hold the two governing body positions.

City Manager

Duluth Public Art Commission (DPAC)

Staff recommended reappointing Sanjay Parekh, Julie McKevitt, and Heather Blanchard for an additional term. Mayor Whitlock will continue to serve as a member of the governing body.

Duluth Tax Allocation District Advisory Committee (TADAC):

Councilmember Graeder will fill the vacant position previously held by Mayor Harris. Mayor Whitlock will continue his term on the committee.

Community Development & Engineering/Planning Director:

The interview panel, consisting of The Director, Deputy Director, and Planner within the department along with the current Chair of the Planning Commission, unanimously decided on the following recommendations.

Planning Commission:

Appoint Elizabeth Baggett (filling the unexpired term of Scott Perkins) and Jack Milner (filling the unexpired term of Councilmember Holloway), as well as reappointing Carey Fisher and Niti Gajjar for an additional term.

Zoning Board of Appeals:

Appoint Catherine Stringer (filling the unexpired term of K.C. Callaway who reached the term limit).

Economic Development Director

Downtown Development Authority (DDA):

Staff recommend reappointing Slade Lail, James Graham, and Richard Meehan for an additional term.

Parsons Alley Design Review Committee

The appointment term for the Parsons Alley Design Review Committee is two years. Staff recommended appointing Trang Tran and Ben Bailey and reappointing Ray Williams (Planning Commission Chair) and Ken Odum (Downtown Development Authority Chair) until 2026. Council recommended appointing Councilmember Holloway as the alternate position (previously held by Nancy Harris). Mayor Whitlock will continue to serve as an elected official.

Municipal Court Judge

Judges:

The Duluth City Charter provides for the appointment of the municipal court judges by ordinance. Accordingly, the Municipal Court proposes to reappoint the following municipal court judges for a one-year term as follows:

Charles L. Barrett, III, Chief Judge/Court Administrator
Margaret Gettle Washburn, Associate Judge
Claude Mason, Associate Judge
Chung Hun Lee, Associate Judge

Public Works Director

Veteran's Marker Committee

Councilmember Thomas will continue to serve as the governing body position.

Council authorized Staff to place these ordinances of appointment on the March 11th Council agenda for approval.

5. DOWNTOWN DULUTH TRADE AREA DATA

Economic development specialist Jessica Bianchi came forward and presented the PlacerAI data from 2023. The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) uses this data to track and understand visitation to downtown Duluth compared to similar downtowns in the Northern Arc and along the Buford Hwy Corridor.

III. MATTERS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Council asked for an update on the studies being conducted for flood areas/stormwater. Staff reported these studies are being conducted by Columbia Engineering and the City will receive an update in March.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

The next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council is March 11, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.