



**NOTES OF THE WORK SESSION
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
CITY OF DULUTH, GA
APRIL 24, 2023**

PRESENT: Mayor Harris, Council members Harkness, Thomas, Doss, Graeder, and Whitlock, City Manager, Department Directors, City Attorney

Mayor Harris called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Parisher Patel of 2690 Kingsbrooke Lane, Duluth spoke about the hardship of not being allowed to park on the street in front of her home.

Boy Scout Jim Cain, ninth grader at Duluth High School, was present to work on his badges.

II. DISCUSSION ITEMS/PRESENTATIONS/UPDATES

1. EMPLOYEE HEALTH BENEFITS – ANNUAL RENEWAL {A}

The city's insurance broker, Matt Bidwell with MSI Benefits Group, came forward and presented the annual renewal process for the employee health, dental, disability, life insurance and vision plan. Staff recommends that Council consider renewal of the employee medical benefits with United Health Care (UHC) with a proposed 3.06% increase and to renew dental with UHC with 2.93%. The total amount of all of the increases is approximately \$69,374.

Staff was authorized to place this item on the next Council consent agenda.

2. PLAYABLE ART UPDATE – TAYLOR PARK {B}

City Manager James Riker presented updates regarding the next steps on the Taylor Park playable art project. A budget amendment would be required.

There were concerns about the location now that several trees must be removed, but at least one of the larger trees are not healthy anyway and pose a risk to those in the park.

There were discussions about the design, and concerns with anticipating that the city would have more input in choosing the design. From the initial sketches, the tree needs more “filling in” to be attractive and inviting during daylight as well.

Staff had recommended adding a seating wall and shade sails. Council concurred with a seating wall that would match the area, but the sails would block the view for photo opportunities that this piece was designed to offer. Additional trees could be planted for future natural shade.

ADA compliance was discussed as well as concern about the total overall cost. Since the tree design seems more difficult, it was mentioned that there should still be an option to consider the second or third place design, or potentially move the location.

It was noted that any large-scale design would interrupt the root system for the existing trees, but Council also asked if there were options at certain benchmarks, if the city could be given a chance to evaluate and provide input during the fabrication process. There are some restraints due to engineering and construction.

If Council concurred with moving forward, a contract would be presented at the May 8th meeting as well as a budget amendment for the additional scope of work.

Staff was authorized to place these items under “Old Business” on the next Council agenda.

3. FY24 BUDGET FOLLOW UP

Asst. City Manager/Finance Ken Sakmar provided a summary of budget changes that Council directed from the April 17th .

1. Leadership Gwinnett/Glance Gwinnett funds removed, \$3,500.
2. Property & Liability Insurance budget line-item increase by \$85,000 based on latest invoice.
3. Preservation of Historical Documents \$2,500 removed (duplicate budget line item).
4. Cable service for Festival Center removed due to current usage in the amount of \$1,200.
5. Gravel Lot budget line-item renamed “Synthetic Turf Area.”
6. Added transfer to Public Art budget line item, \$35,000.
7. Electric utility budget line items increased based on GA. Power approved rate increase of 2.8% for an overall increase of \$21,210.
8. Budget amendment for \$175,000 for the Taylor Park playable art to be place on the May 8th council agenda. These funds will come from the General Funds and are for cutting trees, fencing and shade sails.
9. Budget amendment for \$195,000 for Columbia Engineering to be place on the May 8th council agenda. These funds are for the redesign of the walking trail at Bunten Road Park, funded by 2017 SPLOST interest.

10. Preliminary estimates for property tax digest growth indicate the City could receive between 1 and 1.3 million more in additional property tax revenue than was originally projected. Based on this information, the following Reserve Fund Use items listed below could be added to the FY 24 budget.

• New Financial Software	\$ 600,000
• Stormwater Spec Assessment funds	2,000,000
• Non-SPLOST vehicle purchases	300,000
• Non-SPLOST City Hall Maintenance	125,000
• Non-SPLOST Public Safety Maintenance	125,000
• Completion of Taylor Park Playable Art	175,000
• SDS Reserves	<u>4,000,000</u>
	<u>\$7,325,000</u>

Mr. Sakmar pointed out that with the current changes the FY 24 General Funds Proposed Budget with changes is:

Revenues	\$27,470,343
Expenditures	28,408,183
Surplus/(Deficit)	(937,840)
Additional Property Taxes	1,200,000
Reserve Fund Use Items	(1,325,000)
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$(1,062,840)

Budget public hearings will be held on May 8 and June 12 Council agendas, with adoption scheduled for June 12.

III. MATTERS FROM COUNCIL

1. SOLID WASTE CONCERNS

As the contract for Solid Waste removal was approved at the last meeting, Councilmember Harkness was concerned with the funding mechanism for the service. He felt that future increases for trash service could not be predicted and does not want the city to become a trash service "customer hotline," nor did he feel it was "pro-business" to pay for residential service only. Councilmembers Doss and Thomas spoke in favor of the model and felt it was equitable due to the majority of tax revenue generated by residences. Councilmember Graeder agreed but wanted to ensure the city exerted substantial marketing efforts so that the public would realize the full value of the service.

2. ELECTRIC CAR CHARGING STATIONS

Located in the parking deck, the electric charging stations are now operational. Councilmember Graeder asked how the residents/visitors know that they can use them. City Manager James Riker said that staff was currently ironing out the rates, and Investigating signage as well as painting/stripping to indicate them. He pointed out that the Downtown Development Authority facilitated installation and technically owns them. There are other charging stations in the city as well, but they are not always viewed as a positive amenity by all community members.

3. MARKETING REQUEST

Council asked for the city meeting schedules to be included in weekly eblasts when possible.

4. GMA LISTENING MEETING & DISTRICT 3 SPRING TRAINING

Councilmember Graeder attended an event sponsored by GMA to recap the 2023 Legislative session. Only 3 of the 10 topics were discussed as top voted among members and highlighted the topics. He also distributed copies of the "Public Values & Policy Choices" from the spring training, pointing out that Liberty, Community, Prosperity, and Equality should guide decision making. He also announced a GMA initiative for every training session that they provide to offer hosting to cities who can engage 20 participants.

The 2023 Spring Arts Festival is this coming weekend, April 29/30th.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:10pm.

Approved this 8 day of May, 2023.



Mayor Nancy Harris

ATTEST:



Asst. City Mgr./City Clerk, Teresa Lynn