

**CITY OF EUHARLEE  
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES  
JUNE 20, 2017**

Mayor Dennis Thayer called the meeting to order followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

City Clerk, Carolyn Banks called the roll and the following were present: Mayor Dennis Thayer, Council Members Craig Guyton, Ronald Nesbitt, David Duncan, Joe Turner and City Manager James Stephens. City Attorney Boyd Pettit was not present.

**Proclamation- Jean Goss Cowart Day Euharlee Historical Society 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary- July 8, 2017**

Mayor Dennis Thayer was assisted by Mrs. Barbara Ford, member of the Euharlee Historical Society. Mrs. Ford asked Mrs. Cowart to come forward. Mayor Thayer read the proclamation honoring Mrs. Jean Goss Cowart by the City of Euharlee city council, for her faithful service and recognized July 8, 2017 as Jean Goss Cowart Day. Mayor Thayer said there will be a ceremony held at the museum on July 8, 2017 at 10:00 am honoring the Euharlee Historical Society for their 20 year anniversary. Mrs. Ford said there is no cost so please join them.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Joe Cowan Park – Mayor Dennis Thayer**

Mayor Dennis Thayer brought to the council's attention Joe Cowan Park expenses, the continued cost and the lack of participation by the city of Euharlee residents. He brought it up so everybody could think about it. He said, in 2013 the park started to come on line and come on line full board in 2014. Looking at the information prepared by the City Manager, James Stephens you can see that there is a significant increase in our recreation budget. Since then, it has maintained pretty even about \$170,000.00 each year. It has changed a little bit over the years because over the years with different models of how we staffed at the park, where that staffing has come or where the budget has come from for that and has been pretty consistent of about \$170,000.00. He said, his concern is, it is about or pretty close to the amount of money we are taking out of the reserve each year, well not as close, but we are having to supplement our operational budget with reserve money and the park is very limited used by the Euharlee residents. He stated, he is having a hard time being the best stewards of the Euharlee resident's money when we are spending that kind of money to operate a park, after the profits, and still \$170,000.00 roughly in the hole and getting very little for it. It doesn't know what the answer is and he does not expect them to solve it tonight. But would like to discuss some opportunities to make this right.

Council Member Joe Turner said, this had become much more expensive than what they figured when they started 10 years ago. But the idea of the participation from the City of Euharlee, always in the beginning, Osborne Park was technically not included with Joe Cowan Park. It would be open to anybody in the city at any time. What has happened, the ball teams and travel teams sometimes overflow in Joe Cowan and end up using it. Theoretically, it should be left open for the citizens. The fact that the tournament teams actually drew the crowds, they did what was incorporated into that.

Council Member Turner stated, on the other side, we all are kind of guilty. Remember the arguments we started out over the budget and the things we needed and didn't need. We added back 2 employees at the park and maintenance and 2 at the police department. The normal fund balance for the city, we all are responsible for it getting lower. He said, he understands how the Mayor feels about the park itself, but, we can't just blame it all on Joe Cowan Park. We are all a part of this.

Mayor Dennis Thayer said he thinks Mr. Turner is misrepresenting what he is saying. The problem is we are having to take from reserve to make operational budget each year and it did not happen before the park. The park is costing us \$170,000.00 a year and we are not making money from anywhere else and that is where the problem is. Regardless of where the funding is coming from, even if it was not coming from the reserve, we are spending a \$170,000.00 a year above what we make on that park to maintain the park and the citizens are not getting a thing out of it except a little bit of a walking track. The rest of the park is being used exclusively for travel ball for people who live outside the city.

Council Member Turner said he understands, but if we didn't have the travel teams you still have to maintain the park. Trying to change the procedure or our prospect of it and what people do, otherwise we are going to let it grow up we still have to maintain it. These travel teams and Perfect Games is why we are maintaining as well as we are. Mayor Thayer said they are the only ones using the park and it is costing the citizens \$170,000.00 a year to do that and it doesn't make sense. Council Member Turner said, if we do away with them for the citizens, we still have to maintain it.

Mayor Thayer said, first of all he did not say do away with them, but it makes no sense. He didn't know how any of them could sit there and look at taxpayers and say it is okay to \$170,000.00 a year and you don't get use of the park.

Council Member Ronald Nesbitt said he can understand where they both are coming from. We looked at the budget at the beginning of the year and noticed it was going down, then we tacked on another \$30,000.00 salary to it. We probably should have took a second look at it right there. The next thing, the park is our baby. The citizens voted us in to be creative and to make everything we have work. I think, verses looking at what it's not doing and what it is doing and make it work even better to be more productive, then we won't be losing. I personally think before we start throwing this conversation out there we need to sit down, look at it as a whole, get the City Manager involved and determine what we can do about this deficit we are seeing year after, year after year. That was the approach we probably should have taken instead of throwing our situation out there. We could have put it out there with some solutions to go along with it.

Mayor Thayer said the conversation has to start somewhere. We have identified the problems now we talk about what the solutions are. If you don't identify the problem you can't talk about solutions. You have to throw it out there to get solutions. I have not once said get rid of the park and I haven't said get rid of the travel teams, but we got to come up with some other avenues to justify spending this type of money. This is my opinion and you guys may disagree.

Council Member Joe Turner said he doesn't disagree with Mayor Thayer at all. If this continues, the fund balance will continue to go down. I understand and that is not the argument. He said he misunderstood the first part of the conversation about doing something different to add to it and didn't know what that meant. When the Mayor said change the procedure at the park or do away with certain things is why he was off on a different line. We do need some solutions.

Council Member Nesbitt said based on the geographical area, the field rentals we can increase by \$10 because we are kind of in range. Council Member Craig Guyton said we are a little low. Council Member Nesbitt continued saying, we can up a little based on our area of the county.

Council Member Guyton said, one thing council have not done a good job of keeping up with is maintaining. Every year most parks bump their cost, their fees and we have not had a price increase on tournaments since they implemented. City Manager James Stephens said there was a small increase on practice field rates. Council Member Guyton said very small increase based on what the teams are getting. I think they need to look at that overall at even minimum now and bring it in line. We are offering currently \$115.000 per day per field with a field crew where as other people in the county or doing \$150.00 to

\$200.00 a day if they include a field crew. If you don't include a field crew, that creates a hold new challenge. They can do what they want to your fields and it causes problems. Mr. Stephens said Don Varvel, Recreation Director, would not look to go that route and would rather take care of the fields. Council Member Guyton said so that we are all on the same page to start this discussion. He understands the Mayor's position and appreciate him bringing it out at the last meeting. It is something we need to discuss, not only in this area, but in every single area we do. This is not the only negative department we have. If we are going to discuss, which we need to, we need to do it in every department that's a negative. Really in every department even if it's a positive.

Council Member Guyton said, the current budget shows it is going to be around \$186,000.00 for the cost of the recreation department and includes all line items. We are expecting a revenue around what amount. Mr. Stephens said \$86,000.00 which is based on experience. Council Member Guyton said so this is \$86,000.00 in the negative for 2017. We are looking at a department of \$100,000.00 negative in the department. Do we have any idea how many people use the park. He said understands the Mayor's point, that it doesn't appear that a lot of people from the city of Euharlee use the park. Do we have an idea the number of people? Mr. Stephens said, we do not have any kind of log, but he does know that people use the trail every morning. He has been going through more frequently and the tennis courts are being used at 7:45 am. But no he did not have numbers to provide. The tennis courts and the basketball courts at Osborne had activity.

Council Member Joe Turner said, he knows the walking trail, basketball and tennis courts are being used. The only thing that is kind of negative to the citizens is the actual ballfields, unless you have children that are a part of a travel team and there are several in the city that does. Mr. Stephens said the field rentals are booked full. We don't have vacancies and he believes some of them are as close as Taylorsville. Council Member Guyton said most of them are Bartow County teams and obviously not too many Euharlee residents because there are too many teams coming in. The fact that we are booked should tell every one of us the demand is there and we need to bring the pricing up and even that's minimum. He said, he wish there was a way, and brainstorm on how to do it, to quantify how many people use the park. We are going to have discussion and have to start making cuts, we would have to know how many people are getting use of the park with every other department. Tonight at 6:45 pm before coming in, he said he drove to the park and 16 people were using the park that were not baseball related. They were using the walking trail, basketball courts, tennis courts and soccer field. He said he does not know how that relates to Dellinger Park and other places. He wants to figure out a way to quantify the number of people. City Manager James Stephens said he would reach out to GMA to see if he can get some resources for metrics for us to have when making decisions. Council Member Turner said you might have a counter a cross the road, a rubber counter to drive over. It will tell how many cars goes in and out. Council Member Guyton said to quantify is going to helpful for them to know how many people are using it. He said, he suspects more people are using it than what they think. He said, his family uses it occasionally, not as often as they should. He thinks it is going to be a bigger number because they don't see it on a daily basis. It is something to discuss, plus what they have started here and need to compare with local counties and municipalities. He said, they need to keep up, bring it to the forefront every year to discuss pricing and obviously they need to do one for next year. Council Member Joe Turner said, he agreed with Council Member Guyton. If they were running short, he feels the departments need to be looked at. Things we didn't think of at the beginning of the year, there may be other things we can look at right now. He doesn't know what the police department or maintenance is doing. There is nothing to compare to sit and talk about.

Council Member Guyton said to the Mayor, one of the other questions you asked two weeks ago when you brought it up, how was it originally designed. You have 5 people sitting on the council and 5 people thinking in different directions, not to mention the directors that have been through here as well. From his take, one of the reasons they went travel ball heavy was that would immediately bring in some sort of revenue. This was prior to the Mayor being elected. It was not ever supposed to be the total compromising

amount. They do need to look at other alternatives. He said, they may determine travel ball is not the way to go and to have our own recreation department which a lot is involved in that as well.

Mayor Thayer said, that is something else he would like to look at too, is there feasibility to do recreation ball here. If there is a recreation program, then there is a greater service to the citizens of the city. Not every kid in the program would not live in Euharlee just like it is in Bartow County and the City of Cartersville. Some of the kids in that program does not live in Cartersville.

If it is a big problem or a big operational function every year and it's been in place for 3 ½ years now. They have worked on people and how do they sustain it. Now they have a good idea that it is causing the city more than is made almost 150%. Maybe the original intent was for that to be okay. Mayor Thayer said, if they continue as is, they are going to have a millage increase and he struggles with the thought of telling people you are going to have to start paying more taxes and part of that is used for folks outside the city. He said he may be completely wrong. There may be more people in the city using it and worth \$120,000.00 a year for us to pay. Realize it is almost 10% of the budget, more like 7% to 8 % of our annual operating budget for this year. It is a significant amount of the operating budget for that one piece of property and that one facility.

Council Member Guyton said one of the things, we could start the process on is to discuss with the county recreation department some type of intergovernmental agreement where they can use our fields. One of the things that was done up at Manning Mills in Adairsville, it is county operated. He doesn't know if the city originally built it and turned it over the county. He doesn't know the whole history but, believes that is the way it was done. If you play county recreation ball there are games you go play up in Adairsville and that is a long way to go from Euharlee to play ball. But there may be an opportunity, the county may be interested as having something on our part of town.

Mayor Thayer said we have done a couple of things like the home field Excel Christian is anywhere cutting it close. Mr. Stephens said we had more in spending. Mayor Thayer said and next year when we renew the contract we need to at the very least for it to break even.

Council Member Ronald Nesbitt asked had it been an attempt to promote our softball fields with the county. Mr. Stephens said no not with the county. He said, so that is another thing we can do. We are talking about Perfect Games, you are saying the fields are booked up through October and now you are coming back trying to pull in the recreation program; how much more would it pull with recreation and cutting out Perfect Games. Mayor Thayer said, recreation is not going to generate revenue, it is going to cost you money. It is not a money maker by any means and you would be providing for the citizens. Council Member Guyton said, you would not kick Perfect Game to the side to allow that to happen. It would be during the week on the other 3 fields that are not being used. You already got your personnel and concession, so if you added more folks you would not have any additional cost. Council Member Nesbitt said, so let's promote our other resources which is the soccer fields. Mr. Stephens mentioned that he and Don, Parks and Recreation director had discussed a mingle type of adult kick ball team with adults and teenagers coed. We have had some conversation about some activity on the soccer fields.

Council Member Guyton mentioned the adult softball and thought it was successful. Council Member Guyton stated, there are some opportunities there so let's discuss it with the county and see what they can do to help or what we can do to help them with, maybe some games on this side of town. Mayor Thayer said, there is really nothing on the west side of town. Hamilton Crossing, but it is not really on the west side of town.

Mr. Stephens said, we may have some data from when the survey was being conducted about a possible interest in a splash pad. The questions did ask are you a Euharlee resident, Bartow County and how many times did you use the parks. Also, we can reach out to GMA about means of getting accurate attendance records. Council Member Nesbitt said, the overwhelming response we got from the splash pad, he knows

it is not in our budget to do it, but thinks it is something council need to take another look at if we are talking about something for the citizens of Euharlee.

Council Member Guyton said this is something that we will need to discuss again, in about 4 more items. Anytime you add SPLOST projects it's great to get that money to add a project, such as the mill and we are in the middle of planning and still haven't start building. These things can add to your yearly budget and SPLOST monies does not get used for operations. Those are things we need to cognizant of when we are looking at this.

Mayor Dennis Thayer asked, were there any conceived or percentage of operational cost when it was decided for the park to be built and was the operational cost close to it. Council Member Craig Guyton said yes and yes to the questions even before he was elected. Council Member Joe Turner said he does not remember. He said he is just as guilty as the people was sitting here during that time period. The project manager we had at that time, pretty much gave us all our figures, all our thoughts and all our stuff because none of them had any experience of that size of a park. We pretty much got all our information through him. He said, the goal is to start the conversation and look at some opportunities. Discuss with the county and the recreation league is a place to start. Council Member Guyton said if Mr. Stephens need any of them to go with him to any meeting in that capacity do not hesitate to ask.

Mayor Thayer said they will come back when they have some information and start these conversations before we get close to budget time and make crunch decisions.

## ***NEW BUSINESS***

### ***Frankie Harris Pavilion – Mayor Dennis Thayer***

Mayor Thayer said, they have been doing Food Truck Friday for the past 2 to 3 years. Between that and looking at the other larger event held there, the pavilion itself is kind of sitting in the wrong direction. He would like to ask City Manager to get a price of what it would cost. It would be fairly inexpensive. If you are standing looking at the stage, to the left wall put the stage on that wall and open up the right wall to where the pavilion will face out to the park. This is a project we can do with URA and SPLOST funds. It does not have to come out of operational budget. He said, it will be a fairly inexpensive, a quick project and will enhance the ability to use that park a lot better than it is being used now.

Council Member Joe Turner said he agrees with Mayor in principal, but if you put a stage up against the left wall it's going to take up space with the way it is designed. If you do away with the old stage and open the wall up you will have more room. Mayor Thayer said, to do away with the stage and open that wall up. There is nothing to taking that one wall out and nothing to putting up a low barren back drop or a semi-circle stage equal to as it is now or a little bit larger. It's not that great or expensive of a project. He said, he thinks it will greatly enhance for bands and other folks to use the pavilion for larger events. If there is no real heartburn with it at least ask Mr. Stephens to find out what the cost is to do that. Council Member Craig Guyton said there is no reason not to get pricing on that. One of the bands at Food Truck Friday went down on the floor and set up facing most of the crowd and it was a lot of good comments. City Manager James Stephens said that event was in April, but the one this past week the sound system may have been a little weaker. He said, it has been some comments on Facebook about how nice the set up was in April.

The problem with that you lost most of all the floor, but if you move it you will still have your space under the cover. Council Member Joe Turner stated, the last band said, the biggest reason they did not set up down there was because the sun was shining down on them.

City Manager James Stephens said the current 2017 budget is called to utilize \$ 227,000.00. In preparation, he provided a projected cash flow to the council. In that projection, cash flow he anticipated operating cash to be \$127,480.00. At this time, based on SPLOST and LOST running 6% higher, it looks like as of June 29, 2017 we will have approximately \$152,000.00. It is about a \$25,000.00 favorable experience half way

through the year. As you recall, \$250,000.00 will come in on October 15<sup>th</sup>. As a result of that we were looking at a situation and a decision about possibly cash in or liquidating a cd or taking a tax anticipation note with the insurance premium serving as the collateral. With our current experience for the 1<sup>st</sup> 6 months it looks like, we also have an asset on the books a due to the general fund due from SPLOST, based on where are currently standing and that receivable, the money is there to make the September SPLOST interest payment also, to cover the tight cash until the big payment comes in October 15<sup>th</sup>. It appears if the council will be comfortable with us making that transfer, which is on our books from our auditor, we can salvage liquidating the cd and possible not be required to take out a tax anticipation note. The revenue year to date through May is \$695,313.00. The budgeted revenue through May is \$641,427.00. The revenue is up and it does include the DOT grant. The expenses through May is \$764, 474.00 and budgeted through May is \$736,602.00. So, we also have taken in more money, we have spent more money but in the \$764,000.00 it includes more than 5 months of our liability insurance premium, payment to the library and some of our contractual arrangements. Through May our deficit is \$69,161.00 and the budgeted deficit was \$94,775.00. We are experiencing a \$25,000.00 favorable results over what the original budget was. Please stay on notice we are possibly looking for a transfer on SPLOST, which there is a receivable on the books, in fact the auditor would like to see us do that. Although we are not floating in cash, we look not to have to cash in the cd or take a tax anticipation notice. He told council he would keep them posted.

#### **Parking Fee at Boat Ramp – James Stephens**

City Manager James Stephens stated, when he have department head meetings he discuss our financial circumstances with them and ask efficiencies they are aware of that he may be missing with them being hands on at locations and have ideas for revenue streams. Multiple departments have asked have we ever considered charging a fee at the boat ramp. He said, he throws that out for consideration and they can revisit at another work session. Some of the thoughts were get a card so it would not be a man situation. We know state parks charge a parking fee. He said, he was not strongly advocating for it, just sharing that the employees' are looking for ways to contribute.

Mayor Dennis Thayer said, we need to get with the county to make sure the money that was utilized to build it doesn't prohibit that. Council Member Craig Guyton said it does not. We can double check, but we did look at this once before. Council Member Joe Turner said he was reminded by a citizen that this was an emergency management grant, not just for the county, for an emergency entrance for the city. We need to get in touch with Emergency Management. Council Member Guyton said you can double check but he believe council spoke with EMA the first time they were considering it. Council Member David Duncan asked if we start charging would we remove the pole for them to go down. Council Member Guyton and Mayor Thayer said no that it would stay the same.

Council Member Joe Turner said he thought it was already taken down. Mr. Stephens said there may be some information, but it is currently down and Peter Olson is aware of it. Council Member Guyton asked why the pole is down. Mr. Stephens said, Paul Cuprowski was approached about it and he had no problem. Mr. Stephens stated, Peter Olsen called him and he did not have a problem with removing it. Mayor Thayer said, if Cupowski spoke with the county and the county does not have a problem then it is not on the city.

Council Member Ronald Nesbitt asked, what is the number of months the park is used out of a year?

Mr. Stephens said, he can't give a number but he can tell him it is heavily used.

Council Member Nesbitt said he thought it was around 8 months. You would not be able to put anybody there you would have to put up a ticket booth and that would be a cost we would have to look at.

Council Member Guyton said, he would not have an issue with doing it. You would have to do some type with a gate, like a lift gate that you use at parking decks.

Mayor Thayer said, you could use the police to go by there every few hours and if someone did not have a ticket on the car then right them a ticket.

Mr. Stephens said, he could look into mechanisms to see what the next proceeds would be. Council Member Guyton said the biggest thing is in however we look at it, we can't slow down the emergencies if they would need to come in there for a quick rescue situation.

Council Member Nesbitt asked if it currently held around 35 cars. He said he counted when he rode by Sunday and some of them may not be park legally so you may have to back off that number.

Mr. Stephens said he would look in to it.

Council Member David Duncan said it was probably 35 legal parking spaces.

Council Member Nesbitt said, in considering that you may have to add more parking.

Council Member Guyton said the county is adding new spaces at the Hardin Bridge Road location operation soon this will be the only one in the county that charges from a public perspective.

Council Member Nesbitt said, he was looking at around \$7,000.00 a year for 5 dollars per car for 8 months.

Council Member Nesbitt said he would like to make a correction. It will be about \$14,000.00 to \$16,000.00 a year for the parking. Mayor Thayer said you definitely need to weight the financial benefit.

### **SPLOST Projects – James Stephens**

City Manager James Stephens stated, Bartow County has scheduled a meeting for the kickoff for the 2020 SPLOST. Mr. Stephens asked, Mayor and Council Members, each of them, to call him or email him with projects to work on and put estimates together for the July work session, so they can construct a plan for the Mayor to take with him to the kickoff meeting. The Lowry Mill is a project that could be on that list, possibly a pedestrian bridge on Euharlee Road would be something to consider and a possible splash pad. The sooner you have something to give him time to work on, for an education estimate, for the Mayor to have and more accurate than the 2011 sewer.

Mayor Thayer said, he would strongly urge the final list be as generic as we can possibly make it. Categories instead of projects. We do that at Cobb and it limits what you can do considerably. The categories allow you to do a lot more with it.

Council Member Guyton said, he would like to see on our website, face book through any media we can, get this out to the public and welcome their ideas. In the past, one of the things we have done is survey type things to see where things may rank. The meeting will get here in a hurry. Mayor Thayer said it would not be a bad idea and ask to see what projects they would like to see happen.

Council Member Ronald Nesbitt said, one thing we have to careful with is, he has done the survey and people have asked him what happened to it. After receiving the results which were overwhelming, the City of Euharlee wanted the splash pad. Mayor Thayer said, he thought the project was going to start to get donations.

Council Member Guyton said, one other thing on the SPLOST is what it will add to the general operating budget for upkeep and maintenance. There are several products out that we could pursue and it would not add to our operational expenses.

Mayor Thayer said, we also need to take infrastructure seriously such as paving, sidewalks and things that need to be repaired that we do not have to do in our regular operational budget.

Mr. Stephens said, Tom Sill with Bartow County will send someone to work with us to map out our existing sidewalks and what we would hope to see down Euharlee Road.

Council Member Guyton said, when you consider during the pedestrian bridge in conjunction with the current bridge. We need to discuss with DOT when that bridge might be in the mob. Mayor Thayer said it is not in the MPO. It is not in the 25 year plan. He said he fought for it. There areas in the county they that are drawing to these bigger projects, like the airport that wants to expand now Old Alabama has to have

a bridge put on it and go underneath it. Projects like that got the money. Council Member Guyton said, we need to be cognizant of that if we are going to put something up that they end up tearing down would be pointless. But never mind if it is not in the plan.

Mayor said, it did not make the 25 year plan. Council Member David Duncan said none of will be round when that takes place.

### **Public Comments**

Marshall Aiken said, council was talking about the expenses at Joe Cowan Park and one of the things you discussed was a millage increase. You are correct from a resident point of view, the residents will be able to stomach it if there is more resident involvement at the park. But you also said the ball fields are pretty full. You also have a soccer field and thinks you will be able to incorporate fall football league which will be a revenue maker. Lacrosse is starting to go in big in other counties and colleges. Just different ideas to utilize the rest of the park. As far as the operating expenses. When he was on planning and zoning, he has on paper a rough estimate of what the operational expense estimate if council would like for him to bring it for review. Mayor Thayer said its okay he was actually just curious. Mr. Aiken said off the top of his head he thought around \$120,000.00 a year. Council Member Guyton said he was thinking it was around that and Aiken is probably correct when it was designed to go as a recreational league.

Frankie Harris Park when the pavilion was laid out, the council, John Montgomery and Frankie Harris were agonizing over which way to put the pavilion in and the stage. The current location and the reason the back wall is there, is because most of the wind and the storms blew that way. The idea was if people had their musical instruments it would be shielded from the weather if a summer storm came up because instruments are not cheap. The other option would be to keep the wall there and have a mobile stage and have it anywhere you want to.

Parking at the ramp he would recommend parking pass at they do for frequent flyers.

Also, Mr. Thayer mentioned for SPLOST road improvements. Some of the roads are coming apart.

Fred Werner said that Mr. Aiken covered pretty much everything but thank you for the opportunity.

With no further discussion the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 pm.