

**CITY OF EUHARLEE
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
JANUARY 18, 2022**

Mayor Craig Guyton called the meeting to order. City Manager, James Stephens led prayer, followed with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following were present, Mayor Craig Guyton, Council Members Tim Abbott, Greg Free, David Duncan, Joe Turner, and City Manager James Stephens.

NEW BUSINESS

K-9 Demo – Chief Jody Matthews

Jody Matthews, Chief of Police for Euharlee Police Department stated he had made an attempt once before and it failed miserably, but this time it's a little different. He gave some background on an opportunity to obtain a trained narcotic tracking K-9 from a reputable K-9 kennel. He is a fixed 3-year-old German Shepherd named Blue, trained from a police department in South Carolina. Due to him being fixed, they chose not to move forward. Some agencies believe it will cause them to lose their drive, but can assure you that one will not.

Blue was born in Mexico in 2018, and will be 4 in August. He started out with a K-9 program in Michigan, relocated to South Carolina, but again they decided not to move forward. The agency had 49 more K-9's to arrive the next day. They were made aware of the dog from the part-time employee, Julie Collins whose husband was a K-9 handler and purchased the dog for \$750.00.

A demonstration to search for drugs with the dog was presented by part-time Officer Walker, trained K-9 handler, and Officer Page who has been working with the dog. Officer Page who will be the handler has 11 years in law enforcement, 6 ½ as K-9 handler with 2 different K-9 dogs. He is a state certified drug expert, with an extensive number of arrests since his tenure with the city of Euharlee. They opened the floor after the demonstration for questions for the council.

Chief Matthews provided additional information in reference to the dog's ability, along with further information about Officer Page as a K-9 handler. For the record Mr. Stephens, City Manager asked Chief Matthews if the council should move forward, that this would not cause a delay with departments certification. Chief Mathews stated as far as the state certification, they are scheduled to do a mock on March 8th and 9th. This will help with certification because they already have a K-9 policy in place and they can determine if the policy is updated for cortication. If they waited after they were certified, it would have to be reviewed again. It will not stop them at all with state certification.

Facility Leases – James Stephens

City Manager James Stephens reminded Mayor Craig Guyton when he served as council member, the lease structured for the country store was a 3-year lease. The council had three 1 -year leases before them to review and discuss.

The lease for the Granary technically expired December 31, 2021. Mr. Stephens said thank you to the lessee, Just Believe in Santa for Kids organization, for providing information pursuit to their operation. Council received that information by email. He pointed out the lease for the Granary does require the lessee be responsible for the maintenance, and up-keep on that facility. The lease is for \$1 per month. Also, states they would pay the utility assessment although there is a clause that states, for the months of November and December the city reimburses them which is the heavily activated times. In essence,

the cost is \$1 per month. They have been a long-standing tenant over a decade, and he thinks they would like to renew the lease.

In addition to that lease, the Country Store lease expires February 1, 2022. Lessee, Gwen Goss has asked for them to extend the lease to a 2-year lease. She is currently open for foot traffic, Friday through Sunday. There have been some that would like to see more availability.

The lease for the Old Museum comes up on April 1, 2022, and is leased to Bradley Farms. They are also eager to renew the lease and if the country store were to become available, they would have an interest.

Mr. Stephens stated all three are very simple and similar leases, and if the council desires to change the terminology, they would have a month or two, to do so. They were presented at the work session for discussion.

Mayor Craig Guyton said, Kathy Bibbings, current lessee for the Granary stated she was interested in continuing. He intends to meet with her later in the week, along with the city manager to discuss how the city can better partner with her going forward. He has some ideas, and wants to hear her thoughts as well. He wants to ensure they are not doing anything to constrain growth, and how the city can assist.

Council Member Tim Abbott stated they should definitely keep the Festival of Trees in some fashion. He would be interested in a \$1 lease too, but if they are going to turn to economic development and revenue for the city, they should find a way to establish businesses with normal business hours for citizens. An empty building 10-months a year doesn't help economic growth. If it is not open, nor is he there to dictate how someone should run their business, however, they are there to set how to better serve the citizens. They have to provide to serve Osborne Park and Joe Cowan Park events. Sooner or later, people will find somewhere else that will serve them. For the downtown and economic development to thrive they would have to be open, provide services and he would hope to use the buildings.

Council Member David Duncan shared that he participated with the Festival of Trees from the beginning. The lease was from September-December. They would have to remove items in and out during the four months. The 12-month lease allows them to store instead of having to remove items each season. This would allow her to store, and move stuff around at her convenience. He hadn't been involved in 10-years, but still knows what goes on. Council Member Abbott said that was a fair statement and they may consider a fair-market storage lease.

Council Member Greg Free said he shared some of the same thoughts as Mayor Guyton. He would love to see the festival incorporated into being something bigger, and better in downtown Euharlee. Some of the other cities have big events to draw others to town, just like many other things in the world over the last 20 to 30 years. As things change, the ones that have stayed the same have not adapted, and have fallen by the wayside. They need to look at the best use for the building. If it is going to be storage it needs to benefit the city. The citizens look at it as a taxpayer's building. The second thing, what can they do to make a greater event in downtown Euharlee that the festival of trees is a part of that kicks off the holiday season for the city. There's a lot of things that can be done to make the event bigger and better, not just the festival of trees but things surrounding the festival of trees. Making changes will attract new people, and keep generations coming back. We need to look at ways to make the downtown buildings serve a purpose. They need to capitalize what works for Euharlee. He does not think the festival of trees should go away, but become better partners.

Council Member Joe Turner said over the years it has always been a community event, and knowing it was a charitable event, from his knowledge they have never charged. They did try to rent it for storage once. They put stuff in there and never came back.

Mayor Guyton said he had no issue with the lease with Bradley Farms. He is not interested in a two-year lease with the Country Store. It is a business that is not open as much as the city might like. Some landlords in retail do require number of hours per week. For a business like this, he is not interested in dictating that. She is open on the weekend, which are the three busiest days downtown.

Mr. Stephens said there are 5 individuals that would like to rent the building, and Ms. Goss would like to buy the building. She is profitable the way she is operating.

Council Member Turner said she is using the facility to bake and sell all over Bartow County, not just to opening the door, except on the weekend.

Mr. Stephens said he would reach out to her to get an idea of the business plan for the upcoming year, and to let her know the council is not interested in the 2-year lease.

Council Member Free stated it would be nice for the businesses to open for downtown events. Food trucks will benefit from large events downtown.

Council Member Abbott said the challenge before them would be how do they help their town turn the corner to provide services using what they have, to build an economic environment for all of the business owners.

Mayor Guyton said to share the thoughts of opening during special events and maybe a couple nights during the week.

Mayor Guyton stated, in regards to the granary he has voted for the \$1 for eight years, and this would be his 9th if they decided to do so. The granary is awesome for history but lacking for comfort. It would be extremely difficult to lease this building to any type of business that could operate during the stifling heat during the summer or the cold temperatures during winter without central heat and air, and cracks in the walls. It's a historical building, and it operates like one. He was under the opinion the foundation that rents from them, is a very good use of the building. He would not be interested in raising the cost of the lease or charging a storage fee. He is interested in how to make it a better partnership. He is very pleased with what it does for the city currently.

Council Member Abbott stated at some point they need to grab a hold of the condition of the building to make use for more than what it is used for or sell it. It will eventually run its course.

Mr. Stephens stated the council approved removal of some trees for the view at the Euharlee creek right before Mayor Guyton came aboard. He pointed out that Kathy Bibbings, Eric Smithey, and Mitch Tripp were very instrumental in bringing that vision into view, and he was grateful the council approved it. Ms. Bibbings purchased lights that were paid from the Jeep Show funding, so there is an opportunity to make the bridge more beautiful next season. Mayor Guyton asked Mr. Stephens to arrange for the two of them to meet with Ms. Bibbings next week.

ARP Funding Options – James Stephens

City Manager James Stephens, provided council with a document from the US Department of the Treasury. The city received over \$815,000 in American Rescue Funds, and stand to receive a second amount of the same which will total over 1.6 million. The final rule has come out, and has given more latitude. Formally, it was a more integral calculation for cities to calculate the revenue loss pursuit to covid. Now there are options to claim up to 10 million dollars of lost revenue to total your full award amount. This category allows the city to use the monies for any general fund use, to include for roads and streets. Sewer expansion were available in the original interim rule, business related to covid, recreational renovations, and facilities were eligible. The best option for the city with the new rule is parks, campsites, sewer expansions, and roads and streets. The 1.6 million dollars is a lot of money for this city's community. The mayor is scheduling a meeting with Bartow County Water and Sewer

Department to discuss some options for sewer expansion. He is excited and hopes the council decides to use a significant amount at Osborne Park. If they choose not to, SPLOST monies is available to move forward with Osborne Park. The second allotment of monies will be available in a year and it has to be committed for eligible uses in 4-years. He responded to Council Member Abbott, building renovations would be eligible under the lost revenue rule. Predominately, they would use SPLOST funds for those items. He would still consider first Frankie Harris Park, Osborne and sewer expansion and once they get those numbers in, they would know what monies were available for roads and streets. The final ruling makes the city's life easier, and clearer.

Request for Design Proposal for Osborne and FHP – James Stephens

City Manager James Stephens stated they have two documents that are proposed advertisements to take sealed bids. Currently, the bids are worded to be received on the same date. In discussion with the mayor prior to the meeting, it may prudent, to have Frankie Harris Park for additional campsites including full hook-ups, and an alternate for not full hook-ups, and to move on it first because if approved, it is more time sensitive than Osborne Park. He would change the dates the bids would come in. The proposal for Frankie Harris is for engineering and design work for 15 additional sites for full hook-ups. The 11 sites they already have, are not full hook-ups. The bid is also asking for a construction estimate.

Council Member Joe Turner said he thought they were going to see how the 11 rented before adding additional sites. Mr. Stephens said that was last years' plan, and prepared to stay the course. It is a work session presented for discussion.

Council Member Turner said he was surprised the way the campsites were put in at the park. His original understanding, was they would go around the outside of the fence and not in the middle of all the traffic. He asked where they would put the 15 additional sites.

Mr. Stephens said he didn't follow Council Member Turner's statement; what he thought and where they are. The sites are on the right side of the campground, 4 of them are not.

Council Member Turner said he made the motion, but meant for them to go around the edge of the park against the fence-line leaving the middle clear. He didn't see the design before the work started. He does not understand where they will put more sites without interfering with the fall festival and the POW WOW.

Mr. Stephens stated, if they move forward, the sites will be all over the 11 acres at Frankie Harris Park. He apologized for the 4 sites on the left side of the entrance to the road. He thought the council received a sketch. This is a work session, and they have not rented the first site, but they did have a camper.

Council Member Greg Free said he understood they were waiting on the reservations site to be up and running in order to start taking reservations for the 11 sites already there. Mr. Stephens said that was correct. Ms. Lucas predominately had it completed, but is currently on maternity leave. He has not finalized the preparations for the dump station because of the discussion about expanding the 15 more sites. If they were going to be full hook-ups, it would change the need and the location for the dump station. If they put the dump station in, they could start renting the 11 sites soon. He does not recommend renting during construction.

Mayor Craig Guyton asked if the additional 15 sites would change Frankie Harris Park completely, and if they would be able to hold events there. Mr. Stephens said, they could still hold the fall festival there. The electrical hook-ups would be an enhancement of what already exist. Mr. Stephens about the POW WOW, he wasn't sure where any relics are, but believes it would still be enhanced. Council Member David Duncan said the relics are in the center of the circle. Council Member Greg Free asked who verified where they were. Council Member Duncan said John Montgomery and Joey Pierce. Council

Member Tim Abbott asked if there was some type of protection like the Etowah Mounds. Mr. Stephens said it was not environmental.

Mr. Stephens stated, in fairness to Council Member Turner, the plan was to see if the 11 sites would be successful or not, and he could proceed with that. There had been discussion about expansion and he was throwing it out in a work session looking for guidance.

Council Member Abbott said looking at the surrounding areas, they will fill the campsites, and has no doubt about it. The demand is there, and they are behind.

Council Member Turner asked what it would take to put the dumpsites in. Mr. Stephens stated, working with Bartow County, and also decide if they are going to asphalt the entrance road or just gravel it. The dump station can be put in fairly quick with the 11 sites.

Council Member Turner said the spring and summer was approaching, and by the fall they would know if they were successful. Mr. Stephens said, the Bartow County campsite revenue doubled over the last 18 months.

Council Member Free stated he and his family camped all over the southeast. If you look at Bartow County, in Emerson they are building a 250 site RV park. Bartow County has spent a ton on their parks. They are running sewer lines at most of their parks. He sent the council pictures where Red Top Mountain is building more yurts because they are at capacity. You have to book 6 to 8 months in advance if you want to camp, because there is an abundance of people that want to camp. The catch is, what you do to keep people there. At Red Top you have hiking, and the lake to keep people there. If all the city has is a campground, it will fail. They need businesses for people to patronize, and things for them to do or they will not camp there. The council needs to be open-minded, and to think outside the box. Council Member Abbott added, the city has a lot value, and the city is in control of it all.

Mayor Guyton asked, if they went forward with the additional 15 sites, would the location for the dump station be different. Mr. Stephens said it could be different if they wanted to include sewer at each site, and based on the topography and elevation, it could change. It is not very likely. The dump station is the cost of a sewer tap which is about \$3,500.00, and is a small cost compared to what they have invested in the 11 sites.

Mayor Guyton made the suggestion to discuss the two project, Osborne Park and Frankie Harris Park at different meetings, not at the same meeting due to the detailed discussions. They will open one bid on February 15, 2022. Council Member Free asked if the ARP monies could be the funding source. They could capitalize with it and make a lot repairs to the parks. Mr. Stephens said the ARP funds could be the funding source.

Mayor Craig Guyton explained the discussion about the tennis courts that was taking place. He stated Council Member Joe Turner took pictures of the tennis courts at Joe Cowan Park that need repair. He was not aware that Mr. Stephens, and the Park & Recreation Director were already working getting quotes for the repair. Council member Greg Free stated Woodland had tennis tryouts at Joe Cowan Park and they love the courts, and there is much more space. Mr. Stephens said the repair would cost around \$50,000 but it has to be done. If available, the quotes would be presented at the next council meeting.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

With no further discussion the work session adjourned at 8:16 pm.