

**CITY OF EUHARLEE
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
FEBRUARY 15, 2022**

Mayor Craig Guyton called the meeting to order, led prayer, and 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.

Arbor Day Proclamation

Mayor Craig Guyton read the proclamation designating February 16, 2022 as Arbor Day in the city of Euharlee. The proclamation was presented to the Hoe'n in Euharlee Garden Club members that were present. In return, the members presented a tree to plant to the Mayor, Council and City Manager. Council Member David Duncan motioned to accept the proclamation. Council Member Tim Abbott seconded the motion. The motion was carried with all voting in favor.

Recognition

Mayor Craig Guyton recognized the Cartersville Bartow County Chamber of the year volunteer, Council Member Tim Abbott. He congratulated Council Member Abbott, and said he brought great pride to the whole city.

Frankie Harris Park Design Bids for Additional Campsites – James Stephens

City Manager, James Stephens, stated there were no responses for the pre-bid advertisement for the additional campsites at Frankie Harris Park. The job will be posted again in the local organ, on the city website, and on a statewide website. He heard from some local engineering firms that missed the first advertisement, and stated they were interest in the project. The pre-bid meeting will be held February 24, 2022 at 10:00 am. The bids are to be received by March 15, 2022 by 7:00 pm, and will be opened that evening at the work session.

Euharlee Police Department 2021 Annual Report – Chief Jody Matthews

Chief of Police, Jody Matthews presented a copy and discussed the 2021 annual report that included the following:

- Statistics for 2020 & 2021 for service calls, incident reports, accident reports, arrest reports, traffic stops and citations/warnings.
- Employed (9) full-time sworn officers, (6) part-time sworn officers and (1) non-sworn civilian position.
- POST Training - Officers received 1972 hours, and the department employs (3) POST certified instructors. Occasional adjunct instructors for the North Central GA Law Enforcement Academy.
- Citizen Police Academy was held in 2021.
- Networking with state and local agencies which includes sixteen regional enforcement networks servicing all 159 counties in Georgia.
- Provided graphs which included increased percentages for 2021 in the areas of residential and business patrolling by 15% and 19% respectively, calls for service 16%, reports written 29%, citations 37%, arrests 55%, and self-initiated field activity by 43%.

Council Member Tim Abbott said, great job. He wanted to know how they measured self-initiated field work. Chief Matthews said, traffic stops, finding suspicious vehicles, and anything they dispatched themselves. They keep a daily record, and also the dispatched calls maintained. He said the same is true for residential and business patrolling. Council Member Abbott stated it is all interesting to him, and he

has a high regard for the Chief and the officers. He also asked what contributes the increases. Chief Matthews stated more people were home and COVID-19 played a big part of that, as well as, a small increase in population that did not include Westminster.

City Manager, James Stephens shared during the interviews for the Police Chief, the 333 Program differentiated Chief Matthews, and enhanced his interest to hire him as Chief. He has followed through and implemented at the city of Euharlee.

Council Member Greg Free asked about the Citizen Academy class. Chief Matthews said it was the 2nd class, and they had a really good turnout that graduated 12 citizens. He stated Council Member David Duncan was part of the first class and probably could have taught half of it, but he sat in with his wife. He encouraged them to join.

Council Member David Duncan asked if he thought the citation numbers would increase with the school cameras. Chief Matthews said the project was not included in the 2021 statistics.

Chief Matthews also included a summary for the True-Blue School Zone Safety Program, Phases 1- 4 which showed a 98% decrease in vehicle speeding.

Mayor Guyton said for Chief Matthews to share with his officers, a big thank you from the city council.

Permitting Fees – Don Matthews

Code Enforcement Officer, Don Matthews provided the council with a detailed spreadsheet that included permitting rates for the city of Euharlee, and neighboring cities. He and Ashley Bailey, Assistant City Clerk, contacted Adairsville, Cartersville, Emerson, and Bartow County to compare the local permitting rates. They determined the city was behind on permits. The current rates charged by the city were less than the average rates for other city permits. The proposed change, by square footage for city of Euharlee is \$.28, and the surrounding cities were \$.35 and \$.31 per square foot. The city also contracts with a local inspector, so the city is not making a lot of money.

Council Member Tim Abbott wanted to know what it would take to get caught up.

City Manager, James Stephens explained, Mr. Matthews was referring to the rates they charge for fees. The inspector is a contracted employee. They do not have a large backlog, but a healthy volume. The inspector they call is Mike Cheeks which is a contracted employee. It works but with the current fees the city is charging, they are not making a lot of money. The city is making less, and also pays him as a contractor. With a recommendation to go up \$.28, they can pay the current inspector plus put the city in line with other areas. The city is currently the lowest jurisdiction, and would not lose houses because of an increase to \$.31.

Mayor Craig Guyton said they are currently proposing \$.28 unless it is the councils' pleasure to increase to \$.31 to match the lowest of other municipalities.

Council Member Joe Turner stated his opinion. When they make a change like that, he would rather do a little bit at one time, and in a couple more years catch up, instead of increases to the top at one time. City Manager stated due to Council Member Turner's style, that is one reason Mr. Matthews presented \$.28.

Council Member Greg Free stated so on the building permit part is where the \$.28 comes in, and for all other not charging anything. Mr. Stephens stated it puts it on a consistent basis from the way it is currently calculated and streamline the calculation. They would be able to pay the building inspector, and leave a little in the general fund.

Council Member Free asked how do they monitor individuals needing permits. Is it done on the honor system or does someone monitor? Mr. Stephens stated that is why Mr. Matthews, Code Enforcement Officer is presenting; with him doing his routine checks and then he cross references with Clerk Bailey. However, it is basically on the honor system, but having Mr. Matthews they are doing good.

After discussion, Mayor Guyton stated the current rate posted is \$.28. Council Member Duncan and Abbott are interested in going to \$.31 which makes the city more in line. It will be brought before council at the next council meeting.

Osborne Park & Joe Cowan Park – Joe Turner

Council Member Joe Turner stated he would like to include Frankie Harris Park in the discussion as well. He stated the council, former Mayor, and City Manager James Stephens agreed on 11 campsites and to give it time to see how it worked. He still thinks that is what they should do. Apparently, others think they should go ahead and include 12 to 15 additional sites.

As far as Osborne Park, he shared playground equipment pictures at a previous meeting and everybody said it looks great and let's do that. He stated, there is no secret about how he feels. He didn't know if they wanted to move forward and interested in purchasing that piece of playground equipment or if they wanted to wait on the whole diagram. They all know the restrooms need repairs, and they can do them. They are smart enough to make the decisions. He stated, they had a project manager at Joe Cowan Park, and every month there was a change order, charging the city a lot of money. Therefore, he didn't think they needed a project manager who is going to get the contractor to do the work, and 15% to 25% going to the project manager for hiring the contractor.

The tennis and basketball courts at Joe Cowan Park, in the evenings you usually see 5 or 6 boys on one end of the court, and a couple of ladies playing tennis. He stated when the tennis courts were in good shape at Osborne Park, there was always someone playing, and kids playing on the playground. He thinks it is a mistake to take it away. It is a family park with parents and children doing things together.

City Manager James Stephens asked Council Member Turner if he would like to see tennis courts incorporated in the future of Osborne Park. He would like to see the tennis courts replaced, and vote to put playground equipment at Osborne Park. He does not believe they need someone else to tell them how to do it.

Council Member Greg Free said he agreed the playground is important, but he thinks they need to plan properly. He agreed they do need a playground, and the one at Osborne should have been gone 30 years ago and has out lived its' day. You don't want to put playground equipment in, and then have to come back and remove it to re-design to make it a better family atmosphere. Just like a house, you start with the foundation. They will need to figure out what that plan looks like. They had a discussion about the different amenities they would like to see in Osborne Park. They need to agree what the amenities will be and that is where they will need to start.

Council Member David Duncan shared that the merry-go-round at Osborne Park needs to be removed and replaced and the tennis courts repaired. He would not like for the upgrades to done all at one time at Osborne Park. He patrolled for over 14 years, and watched the parents play tennis, while the kids played at the playground.

Council Member Joe Turner stated that he also thinks there should be playground equipment near the soccer field at Joe Cowan Park.

Mayor Craig Guyton asked Mr. Stephens what it would take to replace the merry-go-round, and from an insurance purpose how would they go about replacing it. Mr. Stephens said from an insurance purpose, as soon as possible or either remove it, whether they replace it or not. They do have new designs that are similar with the same activity, but structured differently.

Mayor Guyton said to Council Member Duncan he was right when he patrolled, because his family was there playing tennis a lot. Since they completed Joe Cowan Park, they play there and the courts are much better. He thinks now they have duplicated services. He has no issue with putting a child friendly playground down by the tennis courts and soccer fields if that is something that is needed. They discussed that when they initially did Joe Cowan Park, and said they would address it later, and now may be later. At Osborne Park, if they go replacing playground equipment without an overall concept of what the full park is going to look like, they may spend \$100,000 of citizens' money on playground equipment and then have to come back to rip it out, and place it in a different spot. In good conscience they can't say that will be the best spot for that playground equipment.

Council Member Turner stated when the discussions about Osborne Park started, he said he did not want to do away with anything, including the ball fields. He said maybe his age or his time spent in Euharlee has something to do with how he felt. Georgia Power built the fields and kids, and church teams used to play on them all the time. Why it had gone away, he doesn't understand.

Mayor Guyton stated all three of the items are duplication of services. If there is a better use of the property, why wouldn't they do it.

Council Member Free stated technology has changed how kids interact with their peers. Before they didn't have anything to do, now they play in their neighborhoods. The world has just changed.

Mr. Stephens stated in the last 10 to 15 years, there has been a development of something called travel ball, and kids and parents take it very seriously. That is the reason you don't see the local kids like they were and didn't think it had anything to do with Osborne Park fields.

Mr. Stephens stated he wasn't sure if the council wanted to invest another \$50,000 on the tennis courts at Osborne Park, and it may or may not happen; or if the council had an interest in conducting another survey. They have accumulated a lot of data, and he said that in respect to Council Member Turner.

Council Member Free stated they built Joe Cowan Park, a sports park for families and did they do it for the right reasons. Euharlee is not big enough for two parks. They need to make the decision now and realize that Osborne Park will always be a family park and is not designed to be a Joe Cowan Park, it is a sports park. He agreed to having a playground closer to the tennis courts and soccer fields at Joe Cowan Park.

Council Member Abbott said thank you to Council Member Turner, it was a great discussion. He thinks it is wise to access all the cost before focusing on the one factor, and should establish the cost they are walking into. He would be afraid of just spending money. They need a plan for it all to come together.

Mayor Guyton stated the nostalgic aspect, he feels the same way as Council Member Turner. But for them to leave the tennis courts, playground, and baseball fields at Osborne Park, less than ½ mile away from Joe Cowan Park, that have better amenities; for the nostalgic sake, they should not have built the current city hall, and continued meeting in the Jolly building for the council meetings. Things move on unfortunately, and based on the discussion before he was re-elected, Osborne Park needs updates that will be very useful for the citizens. It was a good discussion, and there were things to discuss at the next work session.

Public Comments

Local resident, Joe Campi asked for them to identify the different parks. He stated, he liked the ideas for updating Osborne for his daughter that visits every summer from a different state. The last two times she visited she was pregnant. She wished there was somewhere to sit out by the playground, and not have to walk all the way to the pavilion. He stated he would attend more meetings in the future.

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:58 pm.