

**CITY OF GRIFFIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING
ONE GRIFFIN CENTER, W. ELMER GEORGE MUNICIPAL HALL
TUESDAY, February 24, 2015**

Chairperson Doug Hollberg presided and Commissioners Rodney McCord, Ryan McLemore, Dick Morrow, Cynthia Reid-Ward, Cora Lee Flowers and Joanne Todd were in attendance. Also present were City Manager Kenny L. Smith and City Attorney Andrew J. Whalen, III.

Pledge of Allegiance Commissioner McLemore

Invocation Chairman Hollberg

Approval of Agenda – *Motion/second by Commissioners Todd/Morrow carried 7-0.*

PRESENTATIONS / DELEGATIONS

1. Recognize Johnnie Stephens, Office Administrator for the Solid Waste Department who retired on January 31, 2015 after 12-1/2 years of dedicated service to the City of Griffin.

Central Services Director Phill Francis introduced recently retired Johnnie Stephens, saying she has been quite literally his right hand person for many years. This is a bittersweet moment, and everyone will miss her. He thanked her, both professionally and personally, for her service. Ms. Stephens is an asset that cannot be replaced and he wished her well. Ms. Stephens thanked the City, the Board of Commissioners, City Manager Kenny Smith, and her colleagues. As a transplant from Alabama, she has worked several places but was thankful to have such a pleasant and rewarding experience here.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Daniel Ham, active with VFW, came forward to speak in favor of the deannexation of 30± acres along Williamson Road so that their project will qualify for grant funding. Chairman Hollberg instructed Mr. Ham that he could speak during the Public Hearing on this matter if he so desired; Mr. Ham concurred.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

2. Receive comments regarding a request for a variance from Section 1211 I, Billboard Signs, developed property, of the City of Griffin Unified Development Code to reduce the front yard setback from seventy-five (75) feet to forty five (45) feet and the side yard setback from seventy five (75) feet to ten (10) feet for a proposed billboard sign at 1108 Zebulon Rd., submitted by Southern Digital Displays.

Planning & Development Services Director Toussaint Kirk detailed the petition whereby the applicant, Southern Digital Displays, is requesting a variance to reduce the front and side yard setbacks. He referenced Exhibit B, noting that site #1 is the approved location of the proposed 10' x 30' billboard but the applicant is requesting to relocate the sign to site #2. If nothing happens tonight, the applicant can still put the billboard on site #1. The property is zoned PCD and the billboard is allowed by right according to permitted uses for that zoning classification.

Commissioner Morrow said over the years, the airport has not protected its runway zones, and this failure to put in prohibitions has allowed such uses. The applicant, by right, can put in a billboard at site #1 and they have gotten FAA approval; the Board can deny approval for site #2.

Commissioner Todd commented she felt there are enough eyesores in this area, and the billboard was not needed. Director Kirk confirmed they could put in the billboard at site #1.

Mr. Kirk said, based upon Staff evaluation, the applicant's request does not meet the hardship requirements as set forth in the Variance application, and staff recommends denial of this application. The proposed billboard sign does not suffer visual impairment by existing trees, plants, natural features, signs, buildings or structures on a different lot creating a need for a variance from the setback regulations of the Unified Development Code.

**CITY OF GRIFFIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING
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Robert Mohl, Airport Director, 1035 South Hill Street, Griffin, GA

Mr. Mohl agreed they got FAA approval, but that determination of no hazard to air navigation was with respect to height. He referenced a slide that showed sites #1 and #2, as well as the Spalding County Airport Overlay and local ordinances. Looking at the graphic, to move the billboard from the current location to the new site #2 would line it up with the center line of the runway and would be a real distraction to pilots, particularly since it is proposed to be a lighted digital sign with changing graphics. He asked that the Board deem this a hazard to air navigation.

Commissioner Todd asked if the Board could table until the Airport Authority could explore since it does involve the airport. They can also involve the County since the Airport is jointly owned. She felt this needs more study.

Commissioner Morrow said he had agonized on this even though there appears to be no hardship. When he looked into moving it from off the side of the runway to a more centered location, this does constitute a navigational hazard in his opinion, particularly with the lighting and changeable copy component of the sign. He will vote against, noting it was bad enough off to the right, and to move it to the center location is even worse.

Terry Anderson, 1035 South Hill Street, has his business at the airport. The limits of one mile visibility and 200-400 feet above the ground means planes will be within a few feet of this sign and with it lighted with a changing display, it will be unsafe especially at night or in inclement weather. Either location is bad, but at least don't make it worse by centering it with the runway.

There were no further comments, and Director Kirk concluded by reminding everyone that the application to be considered tonight was just for the variance to relocate the sign to site #2.

3. Receive comments regarding a request for deannexation of approximately 30± acres located along Williamson Road just west of South Pine Hill Road to include property known as tax parcel numbers 054 Block 01 Lot 001 submitted by Bankston Properties LLC.

Toussaint Kirk, Director of Planning & Development Services, stated this property owner is requesting deannexation of approximately 30 acres along Williamson Road just west of South Pine Hill Road. In order to qualify for USDA Grant Funding, the property needs to be considered rural to meet the grant qualification restrictions. The City exceeds the qualification restrictions set forth in the grant; therefore, to make the project viable, deannexation into the County is necessary. Owner of the property, Chuck Bankston, has petitioned for this deannexation and a resolution is to be considered tonight. The project is a Veterans Women's Facility known as "Healing Bridge" that will provide residential care and support for female veterans who are experiencing multiple service related issues. The property directly borders the Spalding County/City of Griffin boundary and would not result in any County separation of "County island" with City limits. Staff recommends approval.

City Attorney Drew Whalen said the property was in a residential zone. This residential zone became annexed at the same time as the adjacent subdivision. It is at the westernmost portion of the City along Williamson Road, between Powers Court Subdivision Phase I and the Oak Grove Road Subdivision. Deannexation means it will go back to the County; they can address zoning.

Dan Ham, VFW Post 5448 here in Griffin. This project has been planned for well over a year and, in order to move forward, deannexation is required so it will qualify for grant from the Department of Agriculture. The facility being planned there is for female veterans (who number over 80,000 in Georgia alone). Only Texas, California and Virginia have a larger population of female veterans. Female veterans number in October 2010 at 184,380 in the United States. Female veterans compose 15% of troops coming home, and many Americans are insecure about how to absorb them back into society. Many end up homeless, on the streets, or as prostitutes. The VA facilities were designed for males and are not equipped or trained to handle problems unique to the female population. This facility would be dedicated to the rehab of female veterans to receive medical attention, support, education and training to relocate. The facility would have a fairly large staff and he very much supported the project. The Healing Bridge Foundation was very worthy and he read the mission statement.

**CITY OF GRIFFIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING
ONE GRIFFIN CENTER, W. ELMER GEORGE MUNICIPAL HALL
TUESDAY, February 24, 2015**

Commissioner Morrow stated his support for “The Healing Bridge” and was happy to see that help was on the horizon for female veterans. He hated to see that deannexation was going to be required but he supports it in this instance.

CONSENT AGENDA

4. Consider approval of Minutes for the 2-10-15 Annual Goals Workshop.
5. Consider approval of the Minutes of the Regular Scheduled Meeting of February 10, 2015
Motion/second by Commissioners Todd/Morrow to approve Consent Agenda carried 7-0.

REGULAR AGENDA

6. Yvonne Langford, 245 Meriwether Street, asked to address the Commission regarding concerns with the parking changes in the 200 block of Meriwether Street.

Yvonne Langford, 600 South Hill Street, Griffin. Ms. Langford stated that up until a few months ago, the 200 block of Meriwether Street had parallel parking on both sides of the street. One day they saw City personnel changing this block to angled parking on the south side of the street only. Georgia Business Service has been at 245 Meriwether Street for 60 years. When the City changed to one way traffic several years ago, they solicited a lot of input from businesses on the street at that time. They did studies and talked to everyone; business owners knew what was happening. Conversely, with this action, the City just came out and did it. She has written three letters with not much success, so she asked for this opportunity. She submitted a request for the name of the property owner who requested this change, copies of any results from reports/surveys/studies, and the minutes of any meeting with property owners. She noted that when she received these three items, she wanted to address this Board. Nothing was furnished until a memo today which said this was done at the request of Gary Betz last fall. Mr. Betz relayed he had established a new business on the street and was evidently concerned with the parking situation and the high curb on the north side of street as parents dropped off children.

In fact, this action impacting only the 200 block of Meriwether Street has been detrimental for several reasons. There is no loading zone for their deliveries by truck and, without exception, delivery drivers have been in the building and complained about the removal of the loading zone on the north side of the street. She asked them to address their comments to the City, but all drivers advised they are not allowed to do that. They removed all parking from the north side totally and moved to angled parking only on the south side. Employees in those businesses along the south side park in those spaces in front of their buildings all day and leave nothing for customers, including the employees of the very company who asked for this change. Their main complaint is that patrons of a tutoring service for children had difficulty dropping the kids off because of high curb on the north side of the street. The truth is that if employees’ vehicles were not in those parking spaces, parents would have had no problem pulling into spaces on the south side and dropped off their children without incident. Additionally, there is a free parking lot only half a block away. All GBS employees park in this parking lot. The removal of spaces on the north side meant that GBS customers have no place to park in front of their building, as all the angled spaces are always occupied by business owners/employees. Also, when a pickup truck or other large vehicle pulls in at angle with a long bed or possibly a trailer hitch, it impedes traffic on this narrow street. It already is a tight fit with much slower traffic, and this change has been a total disruption. She thanked Frank Strickland for addressing the issue with Burger King’s delivery trucks blocking the entire street, saying that situation is much better now. She asked to please put the parking back like it was.

Commissioner Morrow felt that in an effort to solve one problem, the City perhaps created another that may be even worse. Unloading is extremely difficult.

Ms. Langford noted that she was told in one conversation that, in order to address the situation, GBS should just let the delivery trucks totally block the street as that was how they did it in New York or Atlanta. She noted she did not live in either New York or Atlanta.

Commissioner Todd asked why such a drastic change was made without notifying people or even let this Board know. This sounds like Searcy Avenue, Cora’s area and, again, it is not a good

**CITY OF GRIFFIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING
ONE GRIFFIN CENTER, W. ELMER GEORGE MUNICIPAL HALL
TUESDAY, February 24, 2015**

way to do business, she stated. City personnel need to say why this change to a traffic pattern was made without the Board's knowledge or action. There was no vote to make this change.

Ms. Langford noted that the person who asked for this change is not even a property owner but rather rents building space. She respects that he is entitled to say something and has the right to request action, but nothing was studied; nor did they realize the impact it would ultimately have.

Chairman Hollberg said it appeared that no compromise was going to work and he was prepared, whether tonight or again in two weeks, to move that parking be put back like it was previously. Commissioner Todd concurred.

City Manager Kenny Smith said a vote tonight could be made. Public Works Director Brant Keller said the parallel parking was not conducive to getting kids in and out and that was the primary reason, but they can put it back.

Mr. Smith said they can't do a loading zone on Meriwether Street with angled parking. If they put it back then yes, they can mark loading zones. Parallel parking on both sides of the one-way street is problematic since drivers open their door into the street and passengers open their door onto the high curb, adding to the difficulty. He was sorry GBS was not consulted, but staff thought the change to be a logical and safe solution to the problem. The City has tried hard to reach a compromise but have been unsuccessful, so he advocated bringing it to the Board.

Commissioner Todd noted a compromise should have been explored prior to just changing the traffic pattern and parking and not after, and the school should have done its due diligence before locating there on Meriwether Street. To change for a new business without consulting one that had been there 60 years is problematic.

Commissioner Morrow said he would opt for going back if they have to make a decision, but they may need to discuss and deliberate.

Commissioner McLemore noted this is a process issue, and he is bothered by the process too. The City often meets, talks and looks at designs in many other areas all the time, and he is fine with going back to the previous parking design. Then if the change is still deemed necessary, they can follow the proper process and do it in the proper manner.

Motion/second by Commissioners McLemore/Todd to return parking design back to the way it was previously carried 7-0.

Commissioner Flowers said she would be much more comfortable if the City could put it back but perhaps block off some spaces where parents could drop their kids off. Commissioner Todd said parents also could utilize the parking lot and walk their children to the school location.

7. Consider a request for a variance from Section 1211 I, Billboard Signs, developed property, of the City of Griffin Unified Development Code to reduce the front yard setback from seventy five (75) feet to forty five (45) feet and the side yard setback from seventy five (75) feet to ten (10) feet for a proposed billboard sign at 1108 Zebulon Rd., submitted by Southern Digital Displays.

Motion/second to deny this petition by Commissioners Morrow/Todd carried 7-0. C

Commissioner Morrow noted the applicant had exited the meeting. The Board noted that the applicant can still put up the billboard at the other site (#2), and Commissioner Morrow stated they may need to request shielding on the parking lot lights too.

8. Consider on first reading an ordinance requesting the deannexation of approximately 30± acres located along Williamson Road just west of South Pine Hill Road to include property known as tax parcel numbers 054 Block 01 Lot 001 submitted by Bankston Properties LLC.

Motion/second by Commissioners Morrow/McLemore to approve deannexation carried 7-0.

9. Consider approval of a Resolution to submit the 2015 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for \$500,000 to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to make public water and sewer infrastructure improvements in the Northeast Griffin low-income area (Zones 7 & 8).

Chairman Hollberg recused himself due to a previously stated potential conflict of interest.

Motion/second to approve by Commissioners McLemore/Flowers carried 6-0-1 with Chairman Hollberg abstaining.

**CITY OF GRIFFIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING
ONE GRIFFIN CENTER, W. ELMER GEORGE MUNICIPAL HALL
TUESDAY, February 24, 2015**

10. Consider a Resolution providing direction and authority to the City Manager as to the acquisition of real property of Hani Zaidieh, located at 722 North Hill Street, to be used for construction of the N. Sixth Street Realignment Project.

The Chairman said he would like the Board to consider going into Executive Session to discuss.
Motion/second by Commissioners McLemore/Todd to table in order to discuss in an added Executive Session and pick back up as Item #24 later in the meeting carried 7-0.

11. Consider a supplemental resolution to ratify/authorize final acquisition of land interests required for GDOT Federal Aid Project No. CSSTP-0008-00 (237) and (238), City of Griffin Intersection improvements.

Mr. Whalen said this was a supplemental resolution coming after last year's approved resolution that allowed the City to go forward with land acquisition, necessary to move forward the GDOT 237 project pertaining to Broad and Experiment Streets. They have acquired all but two parcels and are set to close on Thursday and should complete by the deadline of the end of this month. GDOT 238 has more easements and there are problems with two parcels. We cannot locate one property owner after searching high and low by Steve Manley. They own property on records and get mail but there is no one living in the house and they cannot locate. The irony is that all we need is a temporary construction easement. He hated to ask for authority to condemn, but felt we had no other choice and time is of the essence. The second parcel is the triangular property where Meriwether, West College and 12th Street come together. The problem is that the property owner has not paid taxes for a couple of years, and they owe County taxes too. The County Tax Commissioner has tried to be of assistance but cannot release this parcel, and there is a bank lien. Consequently they again have no choice except to file for condemnation by the end of next week. Project certification deadline was the end of next week, but they are willing to extend for us. One other parcel on the GDOT 238 project, which is owned by the Land Bank Authority, has a problem in that the foreclosure of the Taxpayer Equity of Redemption has not quite run; it runs around the first of April. The Land Bank Authority is willing to donate but cannot do that until the first of April, so we are in good shape on these parcels.

Motion/second by Commissioners Morrow/Ward to approve carried 7-0.

12. Consider purchase of two (2) 2015 Dodge Durango SUV's from Akins Ford Dodge, state contract vendor, in the amount of \$58,344 (\$29,172 each); and equipment and installation by TransComm Services in the amount of \$8055.

Motion/second by Commissioners Morrow/McCord to approve the purchase and the Budget Amendment carried 7-0.

13. Consider purchase of a 2015 Dodge Journey in the amount of \$27,039 from Cronin Dodge under State contract, and the installation of equipment in the amount of \$600 by TransComm Services, for the police department using asset forfeiture funds and amend the budget for this and other purposes.

Motion/second by Commissioners Morrow/McCord to approve the purchase and the Budget Amendment carried 7-0. Commissioner Morrow commended the use of forfeiture funds.

14. Consider the approval of Phase II of the Way Finding Sign Program to Creative Design Signs in the amount of \$86,240.00 for Public Works of the Public Works and Utilities Department.

Motion/second by Commissioner Morrow/Todd to approve.

Commissioner Todd asked about the color of the signs which are difficult to read if one is vision impaired, particularly the rose/pink (or yellowish) shade. She felt they ought to tweak so that those who are vision impaired can more easily see them. The black and white signs are much more easily readable. This color and the atrocious cost are her only problems with the signage. Commissioner Morrow has a problem seeing them, as well.

Public Works Director Brant Keller noted he did not select the colors but would merely be putting them up.

Commissioner McLemore asked about the grant money and the budget for this project. Some locations may be altered because of GDOT requirements said Dr. Keller and the \$20,000 grant was supplemental.

**CITY OF GRIFFIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING
ONE GRIFFIN CENTER, W. ELMER GEORGE MUNICIPAL HALL
TUESDAY, February 24, 2015**

If there is a possibility the City will be changing colors, Dr. Keller needs to know pretty quickly. The distance of 2'6" back from the curb puts it in the middle of sidewalks, so we are looking at a change to put them in medians perhaps. They will work with GDOT since they control state routes. Some changes can be made for the group selected for manufacturing of the signs. Some positions were identified so there may be signs we don't need if locations are not approved. They are looking at the type of signs, as well, if placed in medians. There is nothing wrong with the parking signs and these are time sensitive for construction purposes. The City must utilize the \$20,000 or they'll take funding back, so he asked that they proceed with approval in order to place the parking signs. They can look at other signs later and there's some interest in building a mock. Many variables have to be considered.

Motion carried 7-0.

15. Consider approval of task order to Burns-McDonnell for the development of construction documents for the integration of Variable Frequency Drive (VFD) unit for Still Branch Water Treatment Plant in the amount of \$147,300.00 and amend the budget accordingly for the Public Works and Utilities Department.

Dr. Keller agreed with Commissioner Morrow that the magnadrives' shelf life of 10 years is pretty poor performance. We are waiting on the insurance adjustor who felt the failure probably was not caused by natural conditions when the pump blew, and it looks as though they will honor the pump, the rewind and the other pump motor. These magnadrives have not performed to the level assured on purchase, and technology changes will allow us to move forward with the VFDs. The magnadrives were ESI issue and were state of the art at the time. They have stood behind the pumps and have absorbed much expense over these years. VFDs have been around a long time and have a demonstrated performance. The VFDs are actually less than the magnadrives which cost over \$300,000 total, not including installation. We have sent magnadrives back for reworking to Washington State. This consulting will develop not only immediate plans but long-range plans as well, for the third location with SCADA and electrical control panels. Magnadrives is delivering a rebuilt unit next week and we'll use until the VFDs are in which should be about August.

Motion/second to approve by Commissioners Morrow/McLemore carried 7-0.

16. Consider the approval to purchase a Toro Groundsmaster 360 turf mower from Jerry Pate Turf in the amount of \$26,168.83 off state contract for the City of Griffin Municipal Golf Course of the Public Works and Utilities Department.

Motion/second to approve by Commissioners Todd/Ward carried 7-0.

17. Consider approval to purchase 2015 F150 pickup truck from lowest bidder, Speedway Ford for \$24,021.88 and surplus the existing unit #865 for the Water and Wastewater Department of the Public Works and Utilities Department.

Motion/second to approve by Commissioners Morrow/McCord carried 7-0.

18. Consider approval to purchase F150 pickup truck from lowest bidder, Speedway Ford in the amount of \$21,506.00 and surplus existing unit 1814, for the Water and Wastewater Department of Public Works and Utilities Department.

Motion/second to approve by Commissioners Morrow/McCord carried 7-0.

19. Consider the purchase of an F350 Service Truck off state contract from Speedway Ford in the amount of \$43,168.00 and the surplus of existing unit #872 for the Water and Wastewater Department of the Public Works and Utilities Department.

Motion/second to approve by Commissioners Todd/McLemore carried 7-0.

20. Consider the approval of a professional services agreement with Hazen and Sawyer for the Engineer of Record of the City of Griffin's Category I Dams as required by Georgia Environmental Protection Division for the Water and Wastewater Department of the Public Works and Utilities Department.

Motion/second to approve Hazen and Sawyer agreement by Commissioners Morrow/Todd to approve carried 7-0.

**CITY OF GRIFFIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING
ONE GRIFFIN CENTER, W. ELMER GEORGE MUNICIPAL HALL
TUESDAY, February 24, 2015**

21. Approve withdrawal of up to \$245,000 from the MEAG Competitive Trust, Short Term Portfolio and amend the budget accordingly for completion of the Griffin Power Line Construction and Technical Services facility being constructed at the former Thomas Packing site.

Motion/second to approve withdrawal by Commissioners McCord/McLemore carried 7-0.

22. Consider authorizing the City Attorney to work with our local legislative delegation to introduce local legislation to increase the City of Griffin Hotel / Motel tax from 7% to 8%.

Motion/second to authorize legislation introduction to increase Hotel/Motel Tax to 8% by Commissioners McCord/Morrow carried 7-0.

This same action is being taken by Spalding County. Mr. Whalen said since the legislature is close to crossover day, it may possibly be next session before this could be accomplished.

23. Consider authorizing travel for Commissioner Morrow to attend the GMA Spring Legislative Policy Council Meeting, April 29-30, 2015 in Athens, Georgia.

Commissioner Morrow noted he had never charged the City for meals and would not again, so that does not need to be part of this request. Request will be adjusted to remove meal allocation.

Motion/second to approve such travel by Commissioners McCord/McLemore carried 7-0.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Kenny Smith introduced Brian Miller as the new Citizen Engagement Specialist. Brian is a native of Griffin, attended Clemson and is busy getting the lay of the City right now. We are excited to have him on board.

CITY COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Todd said she was brokenhearted to hear the City is going to lose Tom Ridgway. She wished him well as he deserves this advancement, but we will miss him.

Commissioner Flowers said the light pole on her street across from her house was involved in an accident and is very splintered. She mentions this in the hope power doesn't go off at some point.

Commissioners McCord, Morrow and Ward had no comment.

Commissioner McLemore felt there may be some momentum with this billboard issue so that perhaps the City can correct this historical error.

Commissioner Hollberg thanked staff.

Motion/second by Commissioners Morrow/McLemore to enter Executive Session to discuss the acquisition of property carried 7-0 at 7:13 p.m.

Motion/second by Commissioners Ward/Morrow to adjourn Executive Session at 7:36 p.m. carried 7-0. Motion/second by Commissioners Ward/McCord to reconvene Open Session.

24. ***Motion/second by Commissioners McLemore/Todd carried 7-0 to lift from the table:***

10. Consider a Resolution providing direction and authority to the City Manager as to the acquisition of real property of Hani Zaidieh, located at 722 North Hill Street, to be used for construction of the N. Sixth Street Realignment Project.

Motion/second by Commissioners McLemore/Todd, to approve the supplemental resolution to authorize and provide direction to the City Manager as to the acquisition of stated real property, carried 6-1 with Commissioner McCord voting in opposition.

ADJOURN

Motion/second by Commissioners McCord/McLemore to adjourn at 7:38 carried 7-0.