

**CITY OF GRIFFIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP
ONE GRIFFIN CENTER, W. ELMER GEORGE MUNICIPAL HALL
TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2015**

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Chairperson Doug Hollberg presided, calling the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and Commissioners Rodney McCord, Dick Morrow, Cynthia Reid-Ward, Cora Lee Flowers, Ryan McLemore and Joanne Todd attended. Also present were City Manager Kenny L. Smith, City Attorney Andrew J. Whalen, III, and Teresa Watson to record minutes.

CALL TO ORDER Chairman Douglas S. Hollberg

AGENDA

1. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 50-14-3(4), consider Executive Session for the purpose of discussing and acting upon the acquisition of real estate.

Motion/second by Commissioners Todd/McLemore to enter into Executive Session at 9:02 a.m. carried 7-0. Closed Meeting Affidavit is attached.

Motion/second by Commissioners Todd/Morrow to adjourn Executive Session and reconvene to Open Meeting at 9:17 a.m.

2. Discuss acquisition of current airport property encroachment onto the City Municipal Golf Course. *City Manager Kenny Smith will address.*

The City has the option to purchase additional properties and we need to consider that, along with this proposal, noted City Manager Kenny Smith. He needed to determine what property the City is interested in purchasing so we can survey and appraise it accordingly.

Commissioner Morrow noted the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approves such purchases, and paperwork goes up the chain of command up to FAA. Spalding County has found that it costs approximately \$15,000 per parcel to complete an appraisal. The City can designate such a request for one parcel or include other parcels, such as Kiwanis, and do it all at once.

Much discussion followed on the City's vision and plans for this property. Commissioner Morrow stated that with the other obligations looming before the City, he would have a hard time favoring purchasing any more than we need to at this time. Commissioner McLemore asked if it would be prudent to appraise all the parcels that may be of interest and then decide what to purchase.

Commissioner Morrow wondered if there might be underground fuel tanks from years past. Neither piece encroaches on the Kiwanis fairgrounds. Commissioner Morrow pointed out this is not an environmental issue but the FAA requires a full environmental piece before releasing. Some discussion followed regarding waiting for the appraisal on the walking track to come back to Spalding County so as to have something with which to compare, but it was noted that was not fair as the walking track parcel is flat, cleared and improved. The walking track property also has pollution coming from an old plant. The tract has been released by FAA from monitoring those old tank sites at the airport. However, fuel/oil/lead could certainly be scattered around any old airport. It was noted that the FAA will pay for the environmental and that then the City must have a full blown environmental which would, of course, require a great deal more money. It still could be an FAA eligible project and they will pay some match, but we would have to assume clean-up.

Commissioner Flowers asked if we have to purchase and what would it be used for should we elect to go ahead. Mr. Smith said greenspace and possibly other things down the road. We don't need to actually purchase anything in addition to this 4.3 acres now, but we might want to consider more.

Commissioner Morrow stated we could have the survey and environmental done on the much larger area, so we would only have to do it one time, and then decide what to purchase. The 4.3 acre tract being discussed currently is a pretty important piece of the equation, noted Mr. Smith. We can wait for the County appraisals to come in, but they won't compare. Commissioner Morrow agreed they would be of no relevance as the land is different. The County's appraisals are in the works now.

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The general consensus of the Board was the City definitely wants the 4.3 acre tract and maybe more.

3. Discuss status of Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc. contract with the City of Griffin and possible reactivation of the red light camera system at Intersection of Highway 92 and Highway 19/41, pending permit approval by the GDOT. *Public Safety Director Frank Strickland and City Attorney Drew Whalen will address.*

Director Strickland said they recently surveyed a six-hour window at this intersection and logged no fewer than 70 violations in that time period. Hoping GDOT will approve permit up to Pine Drive and down to Bowling Lane perhaps since new equipment is not as intrusive as the previous equipment with radar/Wi-Fi. That issue has hopefully gone away since this intersection is back open. They desire to repermit our system at Hwy. 92 and Hwy. 19/41 without a right hand turn prohibition. There is no need for a permit or system that continues to press that issue. In October/November they were told to submit a permit for review without the right hand turn prohibition. This is a dangerous intersection where two pedestrians have been killed here in the past few months. Crash numbers are up as follows: 2012 – 49; 2013 – 49; 2014 – 74; and 13 accidents so far in 2015.

City Attorney Whalen said we could go ahead and reactivate for the 13 months when we suspended service because of GDOT construction. Redflex wants a contract contingency on approval. We have talked about the cost since the advent of the new technology. We were paying \$4820 per approach at the time of contract suspension. They are proposing \$4620 per approach for five approaches which is more than in the past even at the \$200 savings per approach because of five approaches. Redflex has done all they can do for the City until we reactivate the contract. There was some time gap between reactivation and the City's permit, and they will not charge us for that period.

Mr. Strickland said there would be no risk to us until equipment is installed. We won't pay anything and maintenance/admin fees come out of fines that are generated by the camera system. Commissioner Morrow agreed it is a very dangerous intersection as evidenced by the numbers. Right turns on red are legal unless otherwise indicated, and they won't be part of a new contract. We will, however, monitor left turns on red and straightaways on red. This monitoring is done with radar and speed whereas it used to be on a loop; the camera activated itself as a loop was made. The City has never had red light cameras anywhere but this intersection.

The general consensus of the Board was in favor of reactivating the contract with GDOT approval as presented. Mr. Strickland has personally witnessed the speed increased and was told that GDOT plans to allow 55 mph as soon as you cross this intersection. The two new technologies can actually freeze the light and traffic if, in its monitoring, it determines someone approaching with speed on yellow that will be unable to stop in time. It freezes red in all directions to take over the traffic system in order to protect the speeding car and others from all other oncoming traffic. Redflex has done much engineering and work, and the City has not given them any assurances of our direction. Again, we won't be doing maintenance on equipment. Commissioners voiced their support for this effort to mitigate traffic concerns at this very busy and dangerous intersection.

Mr. Whalen reminded the Board that any contract will come back to the Board for approval. Mr. Strickland said nothing will happen if GDOT denies the permit unless they appealing to the Lt. Governor under state statutes.

4. *Update City Commission on 2015 Development Review Process. Brant Keller, Director of Public Works and Utilities, will address.*

Dr. Keller noted it takes 35 days for NRCS to review drawings due to a workforce reduction and budget cuts. So, the process has slowed but not due to City. One challenge currently is 542 lots on "pipe farms" and another is that it appears banks are starting to sell off lots individually instead of as a group of lots. When owners purchase and decide they want a building permit, they must provide

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notice of intent on that parcel. Then they have to submit a site plan for a lot which will go through the development review process to make sure the lot is buildable.

Commissioner Morrow noted that previously if a subdivision was sold entirely, a plan would be submitted. Now, one or two lots must do the same thing. Subdivisions such as Coldwater Creek, Powers, Shoal Creek, and other numerous areas around town have this issue. There is also the issue of detention for stormwater but lots are becoming subject to that, too. Single lot purchases now must go through the development review process. Crescent Village is currently experiencing this, and the City is trying to educate developers, staff, banks, etc. Single lot owners essentially become developers.

Dr. Keller reminded there is one subdivision that hasn't been topped, and City taxpayers aren't paying for it if it hasn't been topped. One such subdivision not topped contains 36 lots. Additionally, we no longer take letters of credit from banks but rather cash bonds or cash only. When several bonds went under and the City got burned, with roads suffering, the City discontinued this practice.

Toussaint Kirk will check on a two-story on home on South Hill Street that Commissioner Todd thought might have utilized vinyl siding.

5. Discussion to review possible changes to the electric industry by recent legislation that will allow the possibility of multiple distributed generation units (solar) that will be placed on the City of Griffin, Griffin Power system and the possible effects it will have. *Bill Bosch, Director of ECG, will present.*

Mr. Bosch provided a slide presentation handled by Electric Cities of Georgia representative, Chau Nguyen, of Pricing & Sales Support.

Mr. Whalen said Georgia has followed a handful of states where solar advocates asked about interference with prohibiting folks putting in solar and selling power back to providers. Electric Cities, working with Griffin and EMCs and other power providers, is looking at doing the same thing. Georgia Power (GP) will have to come before the Public Service Commission (PSC), but Griffin is regulated by its City Council. GP has other resources to stimulate solar development but their rate is higher in many areas. A copy of the slide presentation is attached to, and becomes a part of, these official minutes.

Commissioner Todd asked about the situation with solar power at Liberty Technology; Mr. Bosch noted they are using power themselves but not selling back the product. They made more by taking a credit rather than selling power back. We buy back at a little more than the \$.04 per kw it costs. Mr. Bosch said he did not necessarily want Griffin Power to be a leader but could perhaps take steps on a tiered basis which he will address later.

Messrs. Bosch and Nguyen concluded the slide presentation and answered questions, noting we must work within the scope of law passed by the legislature. Mr. Bosch stated there are different ways to address this trend that affects residential and commercial. We can look to people who may install solar. Right now we are only required to be involved with 177 kw. On direction from the Board, he will work up a tiered proposal for the first 177 kw. He doesn't have a crystal ball and is unsure how many will come into Griffin but we need to be prepared. Griffin has a large rental population and he just does not feel there will be a tremendous number desiring to convert to solar. The best ways are to: 1) Be aware of what is going on, and 2) Allow him to develop and present a tiered proposal. He would like to work up suggestions and work with City Manager for presentation at a future meeting.

Commissioner Morrow felt this must happen as this trend is coming. If we proceed with solar power installations, the non-solar customers will be subsidizing those solar customers and that is hugely unfair. It is the City's responsibility to protect our lower-income, non-solar customers, and that will require that we do something. Solar companies are offering deceptive no-money-down programs and unfair advertising practices. He would like to allow Mr. Bosch to work on a proposal that will address all ratepayers but protect the system overall.

Mr. Whalen asked if Mr. Bosch needed to approve a tariff, and Mr. Bosch responded no, as it is a full tariff but he wanted to show what the final proposal may look like and he prefers a tiered proposal. If new construction is not tied to our system, it would not affect them as they would not

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be ratepayers. Law provides that we cannot prevent or otherwise interfere with installation, financing or maintenance of solar systems. The law says we can require safety stipulations and this is part of our existing policy already, said Mr. Bosch. We do much already except compensating for a large segment that would affect our system fiscally.

Mr. Whalen said recommended standards are not in our current building codes and he asked who would determine who would inspect them. Commissioner Morrow asked if the City would have these codes apply for solar only, and was informed that would be the case. Solar access is an issue – if one makes an investment with solar panels and system, what happens when a neighbor plants tall trees that may block access? Western states are adopting negative easement type situations, moving landscaping further from property lines. Mr. Whalen is looking at ordinances now. Lobbyists will certainly lobby hard for solar issues. Maybe tree planting could be recommended from a stormwater standpoint but would not be appropriate for solar power so the ramifications are broad and significant, and he felt wind power issues would be next.

Mr. Bosch noted that a distributed generation tariff would help put us in front of this trend, and he desired permission to move forward with development of a tiered plan.

Finally, Mr. Smith noted that a copy of a newspaper article in the Griffin Daily News has triggered widespread interest and the City is preparing for a large contingency of people in attendance at tonight's meeting regarding downtown issues.

ADJOURN

Motion/second by Commissioners Morrow/Todd to adjourn at 10:34 was approved 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny L. Smith, City Manager/Secretary

Accepted:

Douglas S. Hollberg, Chairperson