



CITY OF
Swainsboro
Crossroads of the Great South



City Council Meeting

April 05, 2010

The regular meeting of the Mayor and City Council, held Monday, April 05, 2010, at 6:00 P.M. at Swainsboro City Hall.

Members Present: Parker, Edenfield, Stroud, Collins, Stafford & Faulkner

Members Absent: None

Prayer of Invocation: Mayor Schwabe

Mayor Schwabe presented a proclamation to Mr. Jack Fordham in support of his efforts to support the local Food Pantry. The proclamation "Helping Hands and Linking Arms Day" is an effort to replenish the food pantry. Mr. Fordham is a retired citizen of our community that is heading the efforts. He thanked the city for the part it plays in support of the pantry.

Mayor Schwabe presented a proclamation proclaiming April 24 through May 1 "Swainsboro/Emanuel Co. Pine Tree Festival and Southeast Timber Expo week in Swainsboro. Mayor Schwabe pledged the support of the city to make this festival a success.

Mayor Schwabe presented a proclamation saluting the reunion committee organizing the Swainsboro High School reunion for the classes of 1950 to 1959. He commended these classes for their continued support of our community and wished them well with the reunion. He presented a picture of the 1951 Swainsboro High School State Champion Baseball Team and stated that a marker will be place at the entrances to the city acknowledging their accomplishments.

Mayor Schwabe introduced the winners of the sixth grade "If I Were Mayor" essay contest. Each one of the students stood and read their essays to the audience attending. The winners are as follows:

Hannah Gomez	Third Place	\$50.00 cash prize
Justin Price	Second Place	\$75.00 cash prize
Mikella Hansley	Winner	\$100.00 cash prize

Mayor Schwabe present to council and all in attendance the Georgia Parks and Recreation Association State Champion Midget Boys Basketball winners. Greg Waters with the Swainsboro Recreation Department introduced each member of the state winning team.

Mayor Schwabe introduced Lynn Brinson who is the newly hired Swainsboro Downtown Development Director. She was in Swainsboro for the council meeting. Mrs. Brinson will start her new position with the city on April 12, 2010. Mr. Jerry Cadle, Chairperson of the Swainsboro Downtown Development Authority, was also in attendance in support of Mrs. Brinson.

Motion to accept minutes from the previous meeting was made.

Motion: by Stafford Seconded: by Parker 6-0

A. Consensus Business

Consensus items presented as follows;

1. Swainsboro Firefighters Burn Foundation Grant \$500.00
2. Emanuel County Relay for Life Organization Grant \$1,000.00
3. Swainsboro Shrine Club Burn Hospital Grant \$500.00
4. Swainsboro/Emanuel County Pine Tree Festival Grant \$5,000.00

Motion was made to accept and approve the consensus agenda as presented.

Motion: by Edenfield Seconded: by Stroud 6-0

B. New Business

1. Council heard the request for alcoholic beverage application from Mengzia Lui dba New Great Wall 537 South Main St. Questions about the application prompted council to postpone this request to a later meeting.

2. Mr. John Brantley with Tomlinson Funeral Home approached council with the idea of erecting a flag pole in the city cemetery honoring the fallen veterans in our community. He stated that Tomlinson Funeral Home would like to install a 35ft flagpole in a memorial garden. A drawing of the garden was passed around for council to see. He asked if the city would landscape the area and provide a light for the flag. Mr. Brantley, Mayor Schwabe and Adm. Lawson met in the cemetery and found a location suitable for the project. The location chosen was the southeast corner of the intersection of Martin Luther King Blvd and Lewis St. Motion was made to accept the project as presented.

Motion: by Stafford Seconded: by Edenfield 6-0

C. Old Business

1. Council heard the zoning ordinance request on the C6-D Zoning change. Adm. Lawson reported that a Public Hearing was held at 5:30 on March 1, 2010 and members of the Downtown Development Authority were in attendance to support the change. No one was present in opposition to the change. Motion was made to approve the ordinance as written.

Motion: by Stafford Seconded: by Stroud 6-0

2. Council considered the application to GEFA for a \$1,000,000.00 water loan/grant. This money will replace a water tank that is in bad need of replacement. Council discussed the repayment plan considering many options. Council then decided to go ahead with the application with the option of not raising water rates and setting aside a dedicated deposit to secure the loan and then possibly paying the balance with the upcoming SPLOST funds. Motion was made to submit the application.

Motion: by Faulkner Seconded: by Edenfield 6-0

3. Council will consider the a “Community Redevelopment Tax Incentive Program” . This program is designed to tax blighted property at an increased rate. Mayor Schwabe pointed out that a couple of changes had been made since the original presentation. The changes are included in the proposed ordinance as follows. This will be the first reading of the ordinance.

Chapter 18

BUSINESS LICENSEES AND REGULATIONS

ARTICLE XII. Community Redevelopment Tax Incentive Program

Sec. 18-360. Purpose.

The existence of real property which is maintained in a blighted condition increases the burden of the state and local government by increasing the need for government *services*, including but not limited to social services, public safety services, and code enforcement services. Rehabilitation of blighted property decreases this need for such government services.

In furtherance of its objective to eradicate conditions of slum and blight within, the city, this city council, in exercise of the powers granted to municipal corporations at Chapter 61, Urban Redevelopment, of Title 36 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, has designated those areas of the city where conditions of slum and blight are found or are likely to spread.

In recognition of the need for enhanced governmental services and in order to encourage private property owners to maintain their real property and the buildings, structures and improvement thereon in good condition and repair, and as an incentive to encourage community redevelopment, a community redevelopment tax incentive program is hereby established as authorized by Article IX, Section II, Paragraph VII(d) of the 1983 Constitution of the State of Georgia.

Sec. 18-361. Definitions.

Blighted property, blighted, or blight means any urbanized or developed property which:

(1) Presents two or more of the following conditions:

a. Uninhabitable, unsafe, or abandoned structure;

b. Inadequate provisions for ventilation, light, air, or sanitation;

c. An imminent harm to life or other property caused by fire, flood, hurricane, tornado, earthquake, storm, or other natural catastrophe respecting which the governor has declared a state of emergency under the state law or has certified the need for disaster assistance under federal law; provided, however, this division shall not apply to property unless

the relevant public agency has given notice in writing to the property owner regarding specific harm caused by the property and the owner has failed to take reasonable measures to remedy the harm;

d. A site identified by the federal Environmental Protection Agency as a superfund site pursuant to 42 U.S.C. Section 9601, et seq., or having environmental contamination to an extent that requires remedial investigation or a feasibility study;

e. Repeated illegal activity on the individual property of which the property owner knew or should have known; or

f. The maintenance of the property is below state, county, or municipal codes for at least one year after written notice of the code violation to its owner; and

(2) Is conducive to ill health, transmission of disease, infant mortality, or crime in the immediate proximity of the property.

Property shall not be deemed blighted solely because of esthetic conditions.

Building Inspector means a certified inspector possessing the requisite qualifications to determine minimal code compliance.

Community redevelopment means any activity, project, or service necessary or incidental to achieving the redevelopment or revitalization of a redevelopment area or portion thereof designated for redevelopment through an urban redevelopment plan or through local ordinances relating to the repair, closing, and demolition of buildings and structures unfit for human habitation.

Governing authority means the Planning Commission of the City of Swainsboro, a Georgia municipal corporation.

Millage or millage rate means the levy, in mills, which is established by the governing authority for purposes of financing, in whole or in part, the levying jurisdiction's general fund expenses for the fiscal year.

Person means such individual(s), partnership, corporations, business entities and associations which return real property for ad valorem taxation or who are chargeable by law for the taxes on the property.

Public officer means the city administrator or such officer or employee of the city as designated by the city administrator to perform the duties and responsibilities hereafter set forth in this article.

Sec. 18-362. Levy of increase ad valorem tax on blighted real property.

There is hereby levied on all real property within the city which has been officially identified as maintained in a blighted condition an increased ad valorem tax by applying a factor of five (5.0) to the millage rate applied to the property, so that such property shall be taxed at a higher millage rate generally applied in the municipality, or otherwise provided by general law; provided, however, real property on which there is situated a dwelling house which is being occupied as the primary residence of one or more persons shall not be subject to official identification as maintained in a blighted condition and shall not be subject to increased taxation.

Such increased ad valorem tax shall be applied and reflected in the first tax bill rendered following official designation of a real property as blighted.

Revenues arising from the increased rate of ad valorem taxation shall, upon receipt, be segregated by the city administrator and used only for community redevelopment purposes, as identified in an approved urban redevelopment program, including defraying the cost of the city's program to close, repair, or demolish unfit building and structures.

Sec. 18-363. Official identification of property maintained in blighted condition.

(a) In order for a parcel of real property to be officially designated as maintained in a blighted condition and subject to increased taxation, the following steps must be completed:

(1) An inspection must be performed on the parcel of property. In order for an inspection to be performed,

a. A request may be made by the public officer or by at least five residents of the city for inspection of a parcel of property, said inspection to be based on the criteria as delineated in ordinance, or

b. The public officer may cause a survey of existing housing conditions to be performed, or may refer to any such survey conducted or finalized within the previous five years, to locate or identify any parcels which may be in a blighted condition and for which a full inspection should be conducted to determine if that parcel of property meets the criteria set out in this article for designation as being maintained in a blighted condition.

(2) A written inspection report of the findings for any parcel of property inspected pursuant to subsection (1) above shall be prepared and submitted to the public officer. Where feasible, photographs of the conditions found to exist on the property on the date of inspection shall be made and supplement the inspection report. Where compliance with minimum construction, housing, occupancy, fire and life safety codes in effect within the city are in question, the inspection shall be conducted by a certified inspector possessing the requisite qualifications to determine minimal code compliance.

(3) Following completion of the inspection report, the public officer shall make a determination, in writing, that a property is maintained in a blighted condition, as defined by this article, and is subject to increased taxation.

(4) The public officer shall cause a written notice of his determination that the real property at issue is being maintained in a blighted condition to be served upon the person(s) shown on the most recent tax digest of Emanuel County as responsible for payment of ad valorem taxes assessed thereon; provided, however, where through the existence of reasonable diligence it becomes known to the public officer that real property has been sold or conveyed since publication of the most recent tax digest, written notice shall be given to the person(s) known or reasonably believed to then own the property or be chargeable with the payment of ad valorem taxes thereon, at the best address available.

(a) Service in the manner set forth at O.C.G.A. § 41-2-12 shall constitute sufficient notice to the property's owner or person chargeable with the payment of ad valorem taxes for purpose of this section, except that posting of the notice on the property will not be required.

(b) The written notice given to the person(s) chargeable with the payment of ad valorem taxes shall notify such person of the public officer's determination the real property is being maintained in a blighted condition and shall advise such person of the hours and location at which the person may inspect and copy the public officer's determination and any supporting documentation. Persons notified that real property of which the person(s) is chargeable with the payment of ad valorem taxes shall have 30 days from the receipt of notice in which to request a hearing before the city's municipal court. Written request for hearing shall be filed with the public officer and shall be date stamped upon receipt. Upon receipt of a request for hearing, the public officer shall notify the municipal court and the building inspector or person who performed the inspection and prepared the inspection report.

Within 30 days of the receipt of a request for hearing, the municipal court clerk shall set a date, time and location

(c) for the hearing and shall give at least ten business days notice to the person(s) requesting the hearing, the public officer and the building inspector or person who performed the inspection and prepared the inspection report. Notice of scheduled hearings shall be published as a legal advertisement in the Swainsboro Forest Blade, or other designated legal organ in Emanuel County, at least five days prior to the hearing. Hearings may be continued by the municipal court judge upon request of any party, for good cause.

(d) At the hearing, the public officer shall have the burden of demonstrating by a preponderance of the evidence that the subject property is maintained in a blighted condition, as defined by this article. The municipal court judge shall cause a record of the evidence submitted at the hearing to be maintained. Upon hearing from the public officer and/or their witnesses and the person(s) requesting the hearing and/or their witnesses, the judge of municipal court shall make a determination either affirming or reversing the determination of the public officer. The determination shall be in writing and copies thereof shall be served on the parties by certified mail or statutory overnight delivery. The determination by the court shall be deemed final. A copy of such determination shall also be served upon the Tax Commissioner of Emanuel County, who shall include the increased tax on the next regular tax bill rendered on behalf of the city.

(e) Persons aggrieved by the determination of the court affirming the determination of the public officer may petition the Superior Court of Emanuel County for a writ of certiorari within 30 days of issuance of the court's written determination.

Sec. 18-364. Remediation or redevelopment to remove designation of blighted condition.

(a) A property owner or person(s) who is chargeable with the payment of ad valorem taxes on real property which has been officially designated pursuant to this article as property maintained in a blighted condition may petition the public officer to lift the designation, upon proof of compliance with the following:

(1) Completion of work required under a plan of remedial action or redevelopment approved by the city's planning and development director which addresses the conditions of blight found to exist on or within the property, including compliance with all applicable minimum codes; or

(2) Completion of work required under a court order entered in a proceeding brought pursuant to the Code of Swainsboro, Georgia.

Before action on a petition to lift the designation, the public officer shall cause the property to be thoroughly inspected

(b) by a building inspector who, by written inspection report, shall certify that all requisite work has been performed to applicable code in a workmanlike manner, in accordance with the specifications of the plan of remedial action or redevelopment, or applicable court order. Upon finding required work to be satisfactorily performed, the public officer shall issue a written determination that the real property is no longer maintained in a blighted condition. Copies of this determination shall be served upon the person(s) chargeable with the payment of ad valorem taxes, and upon the Tax Commissioner of Emanuel County.

All plans for remedial action or redevelopment shall be in writing, signed by the person(s) chargeable with the payment
(c) of ad valorem taxes on the real property and the director of the city's planning and development department, and contain the following:

The plan shall be consistent with the city's comprehensive plan and all laws and ordinances governing the subject
(1) property, and shall conform to any urban redevelopment plan adopted for the area within which the property lies;

The plan shall set forth in reasonable detail the requirements for repair, closure, demolition, or restoration of
(2) existing structures, in accordance with minimal statewide codes; where structures are demolished, the plan shall include provisions for debris removal, stabilization and landscaping of the property;

(3) On parcels of five acres or greater, the plan shall address the relationship to local objectives respecting land uses, improved traffic, public transportation, public utilities, recreational and community facilities, and other public improvements;

(4) The plan shall contain verifiable funding sources which will be used to complete its requirements and show the feasibility thereof;

(5) The plan shall contain a timetable for completion of required work; and

(6) Any outstanding ad valorem taxes (state, school, county and city, including the increased tax pursuant to this article) and governmental liens due and payable on the property must be satisfied in full.

Sec. 18-365. Decreased rate of taxation to be applied after successful remedial action or redevelopment of blighted property. (Must be pre-approved, before work begins, by the Planning Commission, before reduction credits are allowed)

(a) Real property which has had its designation as maintained in a blighted condition removed by the public officer, as provided in section 62-144 of this article, shall be eligible for a decrease in the rate of city ad valorem taxation by applying a factor of 0.5 to the city millage rate applied to the property, so that such property shall be taxed at a lower millage rate than the millage rate generally applied in the municipality or otherwise provided by general law; such decreased rate of taxation shall be applied beginning with the next tax bill rendered following removal of official designation of a real property as blighted. The decreased rate of taxation may be given in successive years, depending on the amount of cost expended by the person(s) chargeable with payment of ad valorem taxes on the property to satisfy its remediation or redevelopment, with every \$25,000.00 or portion thereof equaling one year of tax reduction; provided, however, that no property shall be entitled to reduction in city ad valorem taxes for more than two successive years.

(b) In order to claim entitlement for a decreased rate of taxation, the person(s) chargeable with payment of ad valorem taxes on the property shall submit a notarized affidavit to the public officer, supported by receipts or other evidence of payment, of the amount expended.

Sec. 18-366. Duty of public officer to provide notice to county tax commissioner.

It shall be the duty of the public officer to notify the Tax Commissioner of Emanuel County in writing as to designation or removal of designation of a specific property as maintained in a blighted condition. Such notice shall identify the specific property by street address and tax map, block and parcel number, as assigned by the Emanuel County Tax Assessor's Office. The public officer shall cooperate with the tax commissioner to assure accurate tax billing of those properties subject to increased or reduced ad valorem taxation under this article.

D. Committee Reports

Police: Councilperson Stafford presented the Police Report.

Police Chief Randy Ellison asked council to hire a temporary employee to replace one of the officers that is out on medical leave. This officer would work until the current employee is clear from his medical condition. Motion was made to hire Dennis Mason as a temporary employee for the Swainsboro Police Department.

Motion: by Stroud Seconded: by Stafford 5-1 Parker opposed

Building and Safety: Routine

Executive: No Report

Public Works: Councilperson Collins reported everything routine. She reported that OMI has been repairing a lot of pot holes.

Councilperson Collins reported that the city had taken bids on material needed for the grass cutting season. Adm. Lawson presented the following bids.

For Weed Trimmers:

John Deere 5 @ \$236.96 each

A to Z 5 @ \$236.69 each

Motion was made to accept the low bid and purchase the requested material.

Motion: by Stroud Seconded: by Edenfield Passed 6-0

For Lawn Mowers

Sears 5 @ 199.99

WalMart 5 @ 197.00

Motion was made to accept the low bid and purchase the requested material.

Motion: by Stroud Seconded: by Edenfield Passed 6-0

For Side Arm

Jenkins tractor - \$2,791.58

Motion was made to accept the low bid and purchase the requested material.

Motion: by Stroud Seconded: by Edenfield Passed 6-0

Administrator Lawson presented bids for the resurfacing of Empire Expressway. He reported this is a state aid project from the Georgia Department of Transportation. The city sent out the GDOT specifications and received the following bids;

Ellis Wood Construction - \$120,341.05

Land Care Services - \$129,996.35

Reeves Construction Co. - \$133,756.85

Mill Creek -MC Construction - \$196,737.00

Motion was made to accept the low bid pending GDOT approval.

Motion: by Stafford Seconded: by Parker Passed 6-0

Recycle: Councilperson Collins reported everything routine.

Fire : Mayor Pro-Tem Parker reported everything routine.

Recreation: Councilperson Stroud reported everything routine.

Airport: Mayor Schwabe had no report.

Water & WW: Councilperson Edenfield reported everything routine. He asked for the most recent inspections of the grease traps. Adm. Lawson stated he would get the Building Inspector to provide the requested information.

Downtown Development: Anthony Faris gave council an update on the Antique Mall project.

Mr. Faris informed council on the activities that would be going on in the downtown area for the Pine Tree Festival.

Mr. Faris reported that Swainsboro and the DDA would be featured in this months Georgia Trend Magazine.

Mr. Faris reported that on April 23 & 24, 2010 Swainsboro and Emanuel County would be the site of the Great Emanuel Shoot. All photographers in the areas will be asked to come to Emanuel County and shoot pictures of the area for 24 hours. The pictures will then be displayed in a show at the new Antique Mall location of April 24. Prizes will be awarded for the best photos. This project is being co-sponsored by the Forest Blade, The Emanuel Arts Guild, the Emanuel Arts Council and

WallGreens.

Administrative: Administrator Lawson had no report.

Mayor : Mayor Schwabe informed council that he has been in negotiation with Georgia Power for a new franchise agreement. He informed council he has reached an agreement with them and will be executing a new agreement for the city of Swainsboro with Georgia Power.

Councilperson Parker shared his concerns about the amount of life insurance that the city provides for it's employees. He stated that if a city employee dies in the line of duty they will only receive \$600.00 from the city. Mayor Schwabe asked Councilperson Parker to look into this and see what the additional cost to the city would be to increase the coverage.

Mayor Schwabe requested an Executive Session to discuss a land acquisition matter.

Motion was made to enter into Executive Session

Motion by Faulkner Seconded by Stroud Roll Call Vote all in flavor

AFFIDAVIT

Personally appeared before the undersigned attesting officer, duly authorized to administer oaths, Charles Schwabe, who, after being duly sworn, deposes and on oath states the following:

I was the presiding officer of a meeting of the Swainsboro City Council held on the 5th day of April, 2010.

That it is my understanding that O.C.G.A §50-14-4(b) provides as follows:

When any meeting of an agency is closed to the public pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section, the chairperson or other person presiding over such meeting shall execute and file with the official minutes of the meeting a notarized affidavit stating under oath that the subject matter of the meeting or the closed portion thereof was devoted to matters within the exceptions provided by law and identifying the specific relevant exception.

The subject matter of the closed meeting or closed portion of the meeting held on the 5th day of April, 2010, which was closed for the purpose of land acquisition requested by Mayor Charles Schwabe as allowed by O.C.G.A., Title 50, Chapter 14, was devoted to matters within those exceptions and as provided by law.

This affidavit is being executed for the purpose of complying with the mandate of O.C.G.A. §50-14-4(b) that such an affidavit be executed.

Council re-entered regular session

Mayor Schwabe stated that John McRae has offered the city a parcel of property located at 303 North Main St. This property can be used for any purpose the city needs it for. Motion was made to accept the gift from Mr. McRae.

Motion: by Parker Seconded: by Stroud Passed 6-0

Council Adjourned

Submitted: **Al L Lawson** , City Administrator