

# ROME CITY COMMISSION

Monday, January 9, 2023

The Rome City Commission met at 6:30 p.m. this date in the City Commission Chambers of City Hall, 601 Broad Street. Commissioners Stevenson, Cochran, Bojo, Beeman, Doss, Quick, Askew, Collins, and McDaniel present. Commissioner Beeman opened the meeting with prayer and led in the salute to the flag.

## Minutes – December 19, 2022

The Minutes of the December 19, 2022, meeting, as submitted in writing by the Secretary, were approved by unanimous consent.

## Elect Mayor

Assistant City Attorney Frank Beacham assumed control of the meeting for the purpose of conducting the election for the 2023 Rome City Commission Mayor. Mr. Beacham opened the floor for nominations. Commissioner Collins nominated Commissioner Stevenson to serve as the City Commission Mayor for 2023. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Beeman. With there being no other nominations, Commissioner Doss moved to close the nominations. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Collins and Commissioner Stevenson was unanimously approved as the 2023 Mayor.

## Elect Mayor Pro Tem

Mayor Stevenson opened the floor for nominations for the 2023 Mayor Pro Tem. Commissioner Askew nominated Commissioner Cochran to serve as the Rome City Commission Mayor Pro Tem for 2023. Commissioner Collins seconded the motion. There were no other nominations, and Commissioner Cochran was unanimously approved to serve as the Mayor Pro Tem for 2023.

## Appoint City Manager

Commissioner McDaniel moved to appoint City Manager Sammy Rich to serve as the Rome City Manager for 2023. Commissioner Quick seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor. Commissioners McDaniel and Doss congratulated Mr. Rich on his performance for the City of Rome.

## City Manager Appointments

City Manager Rich recommended that the following officials, authorizing agents, management staff, department directors, and other staff be appointed for 2023:

### **I. Officials and Authorized Agents**

- |                                      |                   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1) City Commission Clerk & Secretary | Joe Smith         |
| 2) Assistant City Clerk & Secretary  | Mark Green        |
| 3) City Attorney                     | J. Anderson Davis |
| 4) Assistant City Attorney           | Frank Beachem     |
|                                      | Stephen Moseley   |

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Sam Lucas  |
|  | John Hawkins   |
|  | Chris Jackson  |
| 5) Municipal Court Judge                               |  |
| 6) Assistant Municipal Court Judge                     | John Scott Husser                                      |
| 7) City Physician                                      | Rome/Floyd Redmond Wellness Center                     |
| 8) Official Publication Organ                          | Rome News-Tribune                                      |
| 9) Depositories & Investment Institutions:             |  |
| i. Bank OZK  |  |
| ii. Synovus  |  |
| iii. Greater Community Bank                            |  |
| iv. First National Community Bank                      |  |
| v. Regions Bank  |  |
| vi. River City Bank                                    |  |
| vii. Truist Bank                                       |  |
| viii. United Community Bank                            |  |
| ix. Wells Fargo  |  |
| x. Local Government Investment Pool – State of Georgia |  |
| xi. East West Bank                                     |  |
| 10) Auditor  | Mauldin & Jenkins<br>Certified Public Accountants, LLC |

**II. Management Staff**

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| 1) Assistant City Manager                          | Meredith Ulmer |
| 2) Assistant to the City Manager                   | Kelley Parker  |
| 3) Water & Sewer Division Director                 | Mike Hackett   |
| 4) Finance Division Director                       | Toni Rhinehart |
| 5) Public Works Division Director/Traffic Engineer | Chris Jenkins  |

**III. Department Directors**

- 1) Fire Chief – Troy Brock
- 2) Police Chief – Denise Downer – McKinney
- 3) Human Resources Director – Kristy Shepard

- 4) Community Development Director – Bekki Fox
- 5) City Clerk – Joe Smith
- 6) Solid Waste Director – Tim Garrett
- 7) Landfill Director – Lee Stone
- 8) Purchasing Director – Becky Smyth
- 9) Building Official – James Martin
- 10) Cemetery Superintendent – Jody Gonzales
- 11) Street Department Director – Chad Hampton
- 12) Transit Director – Kathy Shealy
- 13) City Engineer/Engineering Services Director – Aaron Carroll
- 14) City Arborist – Ernest Watson
- 15) Water Treatment Facility Director – Wayne Stanley
- 16) Water Reclamation Facility Director – Jeff Hill
- 17) Water Billing Director – Bryan Parris
- 18) Water/Sewer Operations Director – Brandon Cook
- 19) Office of Technology Services Director – Johnny Bunch
- 20) Downtown Development Director – Aundi Lesley
- 21) Rome/Floyd County Planning Director – Artagus Newell
- 22) Rome/Floyd E.C.O. Center/ Kept Rome-Floyd Beautiful Coordinator – Hannah Bagley
- 23) Rome/Floyd E.C.O Center Director – Ben Winkelman

#### **IV. Other Staff & Operators**

- 1) Greater Rome Convention & Visitors Bureau Executive Director – Lisa Smith
- 2) Rome Tennis Center/Downtown Tennis Center – Cliff Dysdale Tennis
- 3) Stonebridge Golf Course – Indigo Sports

Commissioner Doss moved to approve these appointments as recommended by Mr. Rich. Commissioner Bojo seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

#### **Hunker Down Day**

Commissioner McDaniel presented a proclamation proclaiming January 9, 2023, as Hunker Down Day in the City of Rome. Later this evening, the University of Georgia will play Texas Christian University for the National Football Championship.

### **2023 Election Qualifying Fee**

City Clerk Smith reminded the Commissioners that there will be an election later this year to select the Ward 1 and Ward 3 City Commissioners. Municipalities are required to set and publish their qualifying fees early in the year.

Commissioner Collins moved to adopt the resolution setting the 2023 qualifying fee at 3% of the annual City Commission salary. Commissioner Askew seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

It was noted that during 2022, the City Commission raised the City Commission salary from \$8,400 to \$12,000 per year effective January 2024. Those persons elected during the 2023 election, will receive the new salary, and the 2023 qualifying fee will be \$360.

### **Rezoning & Special Use Permits Requests - First Reading**

Secretary Smith announced that the following rezonings and special use permit requests were being placed on first reading:

- a) Z23-01-02 Request to rezone from Community Commercial to Urban Mixed Use for the property located at 1148 N. Broad Street. Floyd County Tax Parcel J13O-037. (Planning Commission recommends approval with conditions, 6-0).
- b) Z23-01-03 Request to rezone from High – Density Traditional Residential to Multifamily Residential for the property located at 2781 N. Broad Street. Floyd County Tax Parcels K13Y-028 and K13X-066A. (Planning Commission denied, 5-1).
- c) Z23-01-05 Request to rezone from Community Commercial to Urban Mixed Use for the property at 303 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Floyd County Tax Parcel J14E-003. (Planning Commission recommends approval, 6-0).
- d) SUP23-01-01 Request for a special use permit to construct a duplex on the property zoned Low Density Traditional Residential at 117 E. Main Street. Floyd County Tax Parcel J14L-167. (Planning Commission recommends approval with conditions, 6-0).
- e) SUP23-01-02 Request for a special use permit to construct a duplex on property zoned Low Density Traditional Residential at 115 E. Main Street. Floyd County Tax Parcel J14L-166. (Planning Commission recommends approval with conditions, 6-0).

A public hearing for these items, is scheduled for the January 23, 2023, City Commission meeting.

### **Re-Adopt the Unified Land Development Code and Zoning Maps – First Reading**

Secretary Smith announced that the annual re-adoption of the Unified Land Development Code and Zoning Maps is being placed on first reading. A public hearing for this item is scheduled for the January 23<sup>rd</sup> City Commission meeting.

**Comprehensive Plan – Short Term Work Update – First Reading**

Secretary Smith announced that the five-year update to the Short Term Work Plan found within the Rome/Floyd/Cave Spring Comprehensive Plan is being placed on first reading. Action for this item is scheduled for the January 23<sup>rd</sup> City Commission meeting.

**Alcohol Ordinance Amendment – Small Bars – First Reading**

Secretary Smith announced that an alcohol ordinance amendment, as recommended by the Alcohol Control Commission, is being placed on first reading. This ordinance, if adopted, would establish a new category of small bars. A second reading for this amendment is scheduled for the January 23<sup>rd</sup> City Commission meeting.

**SUP22-12-05 Special Use Permit Request – Westside Industrial Blvd (Cryptocurrency Mining)**

It was noted that Special Use Permit request file SUP22-12-05, regarding the request for a cryptocurrency mining operation permit on property zoned Heavy Industrial and located on Westside Industrial Blvd. (tax map number H13W-034A), was tabled following the public hearing at the December 19, 2022, City Commission meeting.

Commissioner Beeman moved to remove this item from the table, making it available for discussion tonight. Commissioner Doss seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Assistant City Attorney Frank Beacham clarified that although a public hearing is not being held tonight, the City Commission could ask questions of the applicant.

The City Commission discussion began regarding noise associated with this proposed operation. Ms. Olivia Wang stated that she did not have any additional data to present tonight that was not previously covered by her and her attorney at the December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. There were numerous questions asked by the City Commission involving several concerns of this operation. It was asked if cryptocurrency mining operations had been prohibited in any other areas. Ms. Wang stated that there was a moratorium on these types of businesses in at least two areas in the United States, and in China. Ms. Wang stated that her assumption was that the reason for the prohibition in China was the cost and availability of energy needed for this operation. She is aware of an area near Niagara Falls that has prohibited these types of operations. She summarized the reason for that prohibition due to electrical costs in the Niagara Falls area were less expensive than most areas, however the electrical needs of the cryptocurrency mining operation had driven up the cost of electricity. Ms. Wang was questioned regarding the size of her corporation, and she stated that her corporation was very small compared to the publicly traded companies. When asked about potential sound nuisances, Ms. Wang stated, once again, the sound that would project from her operation would be a constant sound primarily from the cooling fans, however, her structure would mitigate 50 – 80% of this sound. She also reminded the commission that the noise in the nearest residential areas will not exceed the current base line background level if her operation moves forward.

There was at least one question for Rome/Floyd Planner Artagus Newell regarding noise. Mr. Newell stated that based on data currently available, Ms. Wang’s operation would provide a constant noise, however, it does not appear it would not exceed the current baseline sound levels. Assistant City Attorney Frank Beacham was questioned on the scenario of this operation moving forward and later becoming a nuisance with louder than expected noise. Mr. Beacham stated that unless a decibel level has

been set, increased noise may be difficult to mitigate. Ms. Wang added that if unexpected complaints arise, she will take additional steps to further mitigate her sound. Ms. Wang was also asked about her statement regarding a similar cryptocurrency mining operation in Cedartown, GA. Ms. Wang stated that her Cedartown proposal had been approved. She also reminded the commission of the letter from the Georgia Power Company stating that her power consumption on Westside Industrial Blvd. would not pose a problem or stress on the local power grid. When asked about her capital investment, Ms. Wang stated that approximately \$6 million has been spent on the equipment that will be used at this site. She also stated that the public comments at the December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting regarding Sequoia Capital were not applicable to her. There is another Olivia Wang that has a different middle name than her and is older than her that may be associated with Sequoia Capital. She stated that all her money is from private investments. Ms. Wang was questioned about the PCB contamination on this site. She is aware of the General Electric settlement, and Attorney Sid Wright stated that the Title Insurance Company is aware that PCBs are present on this site, but this property is not on the hazardous site list. The topic of vibrations from her business was discussed, and Ms. Wang informed the Commission that there would be no additional vibrations from her business that would exceed those from the local vehicle traffic. She stated that the nearest residence is in excess of 1200 feet away and the Garden Lakes community is at least 1400 feet away. Mr. Wright added that there have been no objections presented by any of the adjoining property owners or business operators. Ms. Wang added that her business will always produce some noise and it is impossible to reduce her decibels to zero, however her noise will not cause a problem for her neighbors. She stated that she has a solid plan and has researched this situation to ensure that her sound is mitigated.

Commissioner Askew moved to approve the special use permit request for the cryptocurrency mining operation on Westside Industrial Blvd. with the following three conditions:

1. If there are unexpected future noise complaints, that additional steps be taken by Ms. Wang to reduce that level of noise.
2. The proposed development be required to install sound dampening walls to reduce the noise within the property (as recommended by the Planning Commission).
3. A vegetative buffer of evergreen trees, no less than 6 feet tall at the time of planting, be installed and maintained along any/all front property lines (as recommended by the Planning Commission).

Commissioner Quick seconded the motion, but it was defeated by the following vote:

**YES: Doss, Quick, Askew and Collins**

**NO: Cochran, Bojo, Beeman, McDaniel and Mayor Stevenson**

It was noted that since this motion was not made “without prejudice”, this request could not be resubmitted to the Planning Commission within a year unless a variance is granted.

### **Riverside Parkway Property Acquisition**

City Manager Rich recommended that the City move forward with acquiring 47 acres of property located on Riverside Parkway. These two tracts of property are identified as tax map number J13X-050

and J13X-051, and these properties belong to Environmental Rehab, LLC. This property is located near existing City of Rome property on Riverside Parkway and Blossom/Jackson Hill. The purchase price for this property will be \$400,000.

Commissioner Quick moved to approve the acquisition of this property as described by City Manager Rich, Commissioner McDaniel seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday**

City Manager Rich announced that City Offices will be closed on Monday, January 16<sup>th</sup> in observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. Solid Waste Collection routes will be altered on Monday and Tuesday due to the holiday.

**2023 Rome City Commission Meeting Date Changes**

Mayor Stevenson announced there will be two changes to the 2023 Rome City Commission meeting dates. The first will be due to the Georgia Municipal Association Conference. The meeting scheduled for Monday June 26<sup>th</sup>, will be moved to Tuesday, June 20<sup>th</sup>. Due to Christmas, the Monday, December 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, will be rescheduled to Monday, December 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Rome/Floyd County Development Authority**

Mayor Stevenson announced that the Rome/Floyd County Development Authority will have its Strategic Planning Session on Friday, January 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Schedule – Alvin Jackson**

Mr. Alvin Jackson was present to outline the activities planned during Rome’s four-day Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday celebration.

**Finance Committee**

Mayor Pro Tem Cochran announced that the Finance Committee will meet on Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. in the Sam King Room.

**Public Works/Traffic/Transit Committee**

Mayor Pro Tem Cochran announced that the Public Works/Traffic/Transit Committee will meet on Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in the Sam King Room.

**Transportation Policy Committee**

Commission Bojo announced that the Transportation Policy Committee will meet on Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in the Carnegie Training Room.

**Alcohol Control Commission**

The Alcohol Control meeting scheduled for Tuesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers, has been canceled.

**Historic Preservation Committee**

Commissioner Beeman announced that the Historic Preservation Committee will meet on Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m. in the Sam King Room.

**Keep Rome/Floyd Beautiful Commission**

Commissioner Beeman announced that the Keep Rome/Floyd Beautiful Commission will meet on Monday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 4:00 p.m. at the ECO Center.

**Trail Staff Person**

Commissioner Doss announced that the City of Rome now has a designated Trail staff member. Ms. Julie Smith assumed that position for the City of Rome beginning January 3, 2023

**Downtown Development Authority**

Commissioner Quick announced that the Downtown Development Authority will meet on Thursday, January 12<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 a.m. in the Carnegie Training Room.

**Community Development Committee**

Commissioner Collins announced that the Community Development Committee meeting scheduled for Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> has been canceled.

**Northwest Georgia Regional Commission**

Commissioner McDaniel announced that the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission will meet on Thursday, January 19<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. at the Rome Civic Center.

**Rome/Floyd Parks and Recreation**

Commissioner McDaniel announced that the Rome/Floyd Parks and Recreation Board will meet on Tuesday, January 17<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 p.m. at the Gilbreath Center.

**Parks Hoke Park Ribbon Cutting**

Commissioner McDaniel announced that the Parks Hoke Park Ribbon Cutting/Dedication will be held on Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m.

**Northwest Georgia Regional Hospital Property**

Commissioner Collins congratulated Mayor Stevenson for her role in helping to secure \$5.1 million in federal funding to be used at the Northwest Georgia Regional Hospital site.

**Adjourn**

With there being no further business, Mayor Stevenson adjourned the meeting at 7:48 p.m.

Joseph F. Smith  
City Clerk