

ROME CITY COMMISSION

Monday, January 23, 2023

The Rome City Commission met at 6:45 p.m. this date in the City Commission Chambers of City Hall, 601 Broad Street. Mayor Stevenson presided with Mayor Pro Tem Cochran, and Commissioners Bojo, Beeman, Doss, Quick, Askew, Collins, and McDaniel present. Commissioner Doss opened the meeting with prayer and led in the salute to the flag.

Minutes – January 9, 2023

The Minutes of the January 9, 2023, meeting, as submitted in writing by the Secretary, were approved by unanimous consent.

Optimist Day

Commissioner Bojo presented a joint City/County proclamation, proclaiming the first Thursday in February as Optimist Day in our community. This proclamation was presented to 9 members of the local Optimist Club. Mr. Daniel Bosarge spoke about the mission of the Optimist Clubs.

US Small Business Administration – Disaster Loans

Mr. Matt Fulmer representing the US Small Business Administration was present and addressed the City Commission regarding the availability of disaster loans in Floyd County. Mr. Fulmer explained that in September 2022 there was extensive flooding in Chattooga County, GA and as a result of this disaster declaration, counties contiguous to Chattooga County are able to apply for disaster loans. The loan types available are home loans, business loans, and those for non-profit organizations. Businesses are also able to apply for economic injury loans.

Maggie Plammer

Ms. Maggie Plammer of Shorter Heights addressed the Commission. Ms. Plammer began her comments with a brief scripture reading and then announced that she was speaking regarding the City of Rome's water rate hike increase that was implemented in 2022. The majority of Ms. Plammer's comments surrounded Rome's issue with "forever chemicals". Ms. Plammer reminded the Commission that the City of Rome has acknowledged that the Oostanaula River is contaminated with PFAS chemicals from upstream polluters and that a lawsuit is now underway along with plans to build a reverse osmosis water filter plant. Ms. Plammer questioned why the public was not notified sooner and asked how long the Oostanaula River has been used as Rome's primary water intake with the knowledge of the PFAS chemicals present.

Ms. Plammer also directed some of her comments toward the Etowah River. Noting that Two Run Creek is a tributary of the Etowah River and maybe contaminated from industrial and commercial pollution contributing to contaminants in the Etowah River. Ms. Plammer questioned the viability of establishing a moratorium on construction until more research can be done regarding potential pollutants. Ms. Plammer referenced the planned battery factory scheduled for construction near Hwy 411 in Bartow County.

Employee Service Pins

City Manager Rich presented employee service pins to City employees who have attained 20, 25, 30, 35 or 40 years of service. The recipients were as follows:

Dept	First Name	Last Name	DOH	YOS
*Bldg Inspection	Jalene	Franks	9/4/2002	20
Bldg Inspection	Glen	Rubin	9/4/2002	20
Filter Plant	Steve	Baker	7/11/2002	20
*Fire	David	Fowler	7/8/2002	20
*Fire	Todd	Twilley	7/8/2002	20
*Fire	Steven	Williams	7/8/2002	20
*Human Resources	Kristy	Shepard	12/16/2002	20
*Street	Chad	Hampton	6/26/2002	20
Street	Danny	Marbury	5/6/2002	20
*Street	John	Mayfield	5/14/2002	20
*Commission	Bill	Collins	3/19/1997	25
Police	Rebecca	Martin	6/10/1997	25
*Solid Waste	Henry	Jackson	2/4/1997	25
Bldg Inspection	Brian	Roberts	9/8/1992	30
Engineering	Britt	Willingham	6/22/1992	30
Filter Plant	Earl	Whorton	9/30/1992	30
Police	Debbie	Burnett	2/28/1992	30
Police	Paul	Greene	2/28/1992	30
*Police	Mark	Tison	1/6/1992	30
W/S Operations	Richard	Penson	2/28/1992	30
*Water Billing	Tim	Wiggins	8/10/1992	30
*City Clerk	Joe	Smith	9/14/1987	35
Traffic/Electrical	Mark	Boozer	5/4/1987	35
*Water Reclamation	Jackie	Turpin	5/13/1987	35
Police	John	Walters	3/6/1982	40

*present to accept pin

The City Commission congratulated these employees for choosing the City of Rome for their career.

Education Accomplishments

City Manager Rich acknowledged the following employees for their education accomplishments:

*Fire	Michael	Davis	Associate of Science, Fire Science
*Fire	Matt	McAdams	Associate of Fire Science
Fire	Richard	DeBello	Bachelor of Science
Municipal Court	Madison	Adams	Associate of Arts, Criminal Justice
Police	Dow	Turrentine	BS in Criminal Justice
Police	Brandon	Brown	BS in Criminal Justice

Police	Danny	Story	Associate of Applied Science
*Solid Waste	Tim	Garrett	Bachelor of Business Administration
*Transit	Courtney	Griffin	Master of Business Administration

* present to accept pin

Alcohol Ordinance Amendment – Small Bars

Secretary Smith reported on the proposed alcohol ordinance amendment and the establishment of the small bar category of pouring license. Secretary Smith reviewed Rome’s current requirements regarding establishments that pour distilled spirits. Outside of private clubs, establishments that pour distilled spirits are required to meet Rome’s food/drink ratio. This ratio requires that establishments sell at least as much food as they do distilled spirits. This 50/50 ratio can be accomplished with products other than food if both the Alcohol Control Commission and the City Commission approve a variance. Currently, only the Old Havana Cigar Bar, 327 Broad Street, has this variance.

Smith stated that the ordinance before the commission tonight, would establish a category of small bars, which would be allowed to pour distilled spirits without needing to meet the food/drink ratio. These small bars would be subject to the following restrictions:

1. Contain a maximum of 1800 square feet of customer accessible interior space. If outdoor customer accessible space is provided, a maximum of 2200 square feet of total indoor/outdoor space is allowed.
2. These establishments may pour beer, wine, and liquor between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday. These establishments are restricted from selling alcohol after 10:30 p.m. and must be closed, with customers off the premises, by 11:00 p.m. No Sunday alcohol sales could occur.
3. These establishments may not obtain permits to pour liquor off premises.
4. Any type of admission fee is prohibited.
5. The Alcohol Control Commission must approve all entertainment.

Commissioner McDaniel made a motion to approve this ordinance as presented by the Alcohol Control Commission and Commissioner Doss seconded.

Monica Shepard, Chair of the Alcohol Control Commission, was present to provide comments and answer questions. Commissioner Collins expressed his opposition to the restricted hours citing the same license fee system for small bars as other pouring establishments. After a brief discussion by the City Commission, Commissioner Collins presented an amending motion to remove the restricted hours requirement from the proposed ordinance. Commissioner Cochran seconded the amending motion. There was discussion by the City Commission, including Ms. Shepard, who stated that the intent of the Alcohol Control Commission is to create operational separation from the small bar proposal versus the existing pouring establishments. Commissioner Doss indicated that removing the hour restriction would

remove a key component of the proposal. With this discussion concluded, the amending motion failed by the following vote:

YES: Cochran, Collins

NO: Bojo, Beeman, Doss, Quick, Askew, and McDaniel

There was continued discussion regarding the original motion, with Ms. Shepard indicating that the Rome Police Department expressed no concerns regarding the proposed ordinance to the Alcohol Control Commission.

The original motion to adopt the small bar ordinance as presented by the ACC was defeated by the following vote:

YES: Cochran, Doss, Quick, and McDaniel

NO: Bojo, Beeman, Askew, Collins, and Mayor Stevenson

Z23-01-02 Rezone 1148 North Broad Street

Commissioner Quick presented rezoning file Z23-01-02 the request to rezone property located at 1148 North Broad Street, identified by Floyd County Tax Map Number J13O-037, from Community Commercial to Urban Mixed Use. The Planning Commission has recommended approval of the rezoning request subject to conditions. Rome/Floyd Planner Artagus Newell reviewed this file, display maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding property.

Mayor Stevenson called a public hearing to order. Speaking in favor of the rezoning request was Mr. Walt Busby, 333 West 9th Street. Mr. Busby stated that he would like to tear down the existing funeral home and build townhomes at this site. Mr. Busby displayed drawings of the planned development. With there no one else to speak regarding this matter, the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Quick moved to approve the rezoning request from Community Commercial to Urban Mixed Use as submitted with the following conditions:

1. That the proposed development has no more than a 10-foot setback from any property line. This recommendation was changed to eliminate the 10-foot setback from Gibbons Street.
2. That the proposed development include street trees behind the sidewalk every 25 linear feet.
3. That the proposed development includes no frontage fences over 4 feet in height in an effort to prevent line of site issues.

Commissioner Bojo seconded the motion.

Commissioner Collins inquired regarding the 2017 SPLOST funds that had been designated for recreation improvements at this site. Mr. Rich stated that those funds will be used in another area of North Rome, yet to be determined. Mr. Rich suggested that the Redevelopment Committee discuss this issue. With there being no further discussion, the vote to approve the rezoning request was unanimously in favor.

Z23-01-03 Rezone 2781 North Broad Street

Commissioner Quick presented rezoning file Z23-01-03 the request to rezone property located at 2781 North Broad Street, identified by Floyd County Tax Map Numbers K12Y-028 and K13X-066A, from High-Density Traditional Residential to Multifamily Residential.

Rome/Floyd Planner Artagus Newell reviewed this file, display maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding properties. Mr. Newell stated that the Planning Commission and staff have recommended denial of the request. The staff's primary objective is due to the density involved and because the compressive plan has called for low density residential and agricultural zoning in this area. The staff also recommends that should the City Commission choose to approve this rezoning request, the following conditions should be attached:

1. Enforcing the self-created larger setbacks along the property line with the adjacent neighborhood, as shown on the proposed site plan.
2. Requiring the maintenance of the landscape buffer, shown on the proposed site plan, within the previously mentioned setback.
3. Reducing the massive parking lots in favor of more street parking, neighborhood atmosphere.

Mayor Stevenson called a public hearing to order. Speaking in favor of the rezoning request, was Mr. Walt Busby, 333 West 9th Street. Mr. Busby stated that he has changed his development plan for this tract of property. He no longer would like to build single family homes but would now like to build multifamily dwellings. He stated he plans a maximum of 325 units and this project is expected to total approximately \$60 million. He also stated he has been working with the North Pointe residents and feels that a plan is now in place that is acceptable to him and the neighborhood.

Also speaking regarding the proposed rezoning, was Mr. Sam Evans, 3 Indian Trace Drive. Mr. Evans reminded the commission he has been at previous City Commission meetings to speak regarding proposed developments at this site. The previous concerns voiced were infrastructure, roads, and sewer/storm water capabilities. Mr. Evans stated their concerns are still present, but he feels the existing proposal is the best plan to date. He further mentioned that the neighborhood has a commitment from Mr. Busby to address the detention pond issues. The City of Rome has allocated funds in the 2023 budgets to improve the road in this area and he encouraged the City to do that in 2023 and not wait until 2024 or 2025 for this construction. Also speaking was Ms. Jane Slickman, 2663 North Broad Street Extension. Ms. Slickman stated that while the neighborhood would prefer no further development, she understands that will happen and wants the best plan possible. She expressed the primary concerns of the residents as safety and improving the terrible road conditions. Speaking next was Norma from Shorter Heights (104 Westmore Road). Norma stated that with 325 residences and an average of 2 persons per residence, she questioned if the sewer infrastructure could accommodate an additional 650 residents in this area. Mr. Rich responded that the City of Rome has an approximate 17 million gallons per day sewer capacity and currently approximately 9 million gallons is required on a busy day. Mr. Rich has no concerns regarding our sewer capabilities. With there being no further comments and Mr. Busby not using his rebuttal time, the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Quick moved to approve the rezoning request for 2781 North Broad Street from High-Density Traditional Residential to Multifamily Residential as requested, with the staff recommend conditions as outlined by Mr. Newell. Commissioner Bojo seconded the motion.

There was lengthy discussion by the Commissioners concerning this proposal. Commissioner Cochran expressing concerns with the previous single-family residential development plan, stating that the City of Rome Engineering Department was requiring a 25-foot-wide street, however the Unified Land Development Code only stipulated a 24-foot-wide street. Mr. Cochran questioned Mr. Newell's staff recommendation that there now be more on street parking in light of the previous continuous issue regarding the street width. Mr. Newell stated that he cannot comment on the actions of the Engineering Department, however on street parking would allow better aesthetics with this development, including smaller parking lots.

Mr. Cochran spoke at length about his displeasure with the City of Rome Engineering Department, stating that they have allowed Mr. Busby's plans to languish in their department. He compared the City Engineering Department to the County Engineering Department, which he feels gives faster responses to developers and engineering related questions. Mr. Busby stated, during this meeting, that he waited for 4 months on a response from the City of Rome's Engineering Department regarding his development. Mr. Cochran continued to comment that the City Engineering Department is not carrying out the wishes of the Rome City Commission regarding developments and that shortcoming is delaying the construction of housing that the City Commission has expressed a desperate need for. Following Commissioner Cochran's continued comments regarding the Engineering Department, City Manager Rich interjected and stated that a City Commission meeting is not the appropriate venue to discuss a city department. Mr. Rich and Mr. Cochran had a difference in opinion regarding the appropriate venue for this type of discussion, however, Mr. Cochran did withhold further comments regarding the Engineering Department and the discussion regarding the specifics of this rezoning request continued. The other Commissioners made comments regarding our need for housing and their support for this project. They also expressed their concerns for the neighborhood and wanted the best possible solution for them as this development moves forward. There were also comments regarding the condition of the road and the pothole issues that exist and expressed their commitment to correct some of the infrastructure shortcomings in this area.

With the discussion concluded, Commissioner Quick's motion for rezoning approval with conditions was adopted by a unanimous vote.

Z23-01-05 Rezone 303 East 1st Avenue 27:47

Commissioner Quick presented rezoning file Z23-01-05 the request to rezone property located at 303 East 1st Avenue, identified by Floyd County Tax Map Number J14E-003, from Community Commercial to Urban Mixed Use.

Rome/Floyd Planner Artagus Newell reviewed this file, display maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding properties. The Planning Commission and staff have recommended approval.

Mayor Stevenson called a public hearing concerning the rezoning request. There was no one to speak in favor or opposition and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Quick moved to approve the rezoning request of 303 East 1st Avenue from Community Commercial to Urban Mixed Use. Commission Cochran seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

SUP23-01-01 – 117 East Main Street

Commissioner Quick presented special use permit request file SUP23-01-01. The request for a special use permit to construct a duplex on property located at 117 East Main Street, identified by Floyd County Tax Map Number J14L-167, and zoned Low Density Traditional Residential.

Rome/Floyd Planner Artagus Newell reviewed this file, display maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding properties. The Planning Commission and staff have recommended approval of the request with the recommendation that at least one of the proposed duplex units fronts on Jervis Street.

Mayor Stevenson called a public hearing to order. There was no one speaking in favor or opposition to the request and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Quick moved to approve the special use permit request to construct the duplex at 117 East Main Street with the condition that at least one of the proposed duplex units fronts on Jervis Street. Commissioner Bojo seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

SUP23-01-02 – 115 East Main Street

Commissioner Quick presented special use permit request file SUP23-01-02. The request for a special use permit to construct a duplex on property located at 115 East Main Street and identified by Floyd County Tax Map Number J14L-166 and zoned Low Density Traditional Residential.

Rome/Floyd Planner Artagus Newell reviewed this file, display maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding property. Staff and the Planning Commission have recommended approval of the SUP with the condition that at least one of the proposed units on the parcels front on the property's frontage.

Mayor Stevenson called a public hearing to order. There was no one speaking in favor or opposition to the request and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Quick moved to approve the request for a special use permit for construction of a duplex at 115 East Main Street with the condition that at least one of the proposed units front on the property's frontage. Commissioner Askew seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Re-Adopt Unified Land Development Code and Zoning Maps

Commissioner Quick stated that once again, it is time for the annual practice of re-adopting the City of Rome's Unified Land Development Code and Zoning Maps. While the amendments to the ULDC and the Zoning Maps become effective during the year as adopted, the City Commission, traditionally, re-adopts those documents each year.

Mayor Stevenson called a public hearing to order concerning this process. There was no one to speak in favor or opposition and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Quick moved to re-adopt the Unified Land Development Code and Zoning Maps and Commissioner McDaniel seconded. Mr. Newell stated that there was a total of 85 applications during 2022, 5 of which were for annexation, 18 for special use permit request, and 62 rezoning request. Commissioner Quick's motion for approval was adopted by the following vote:

YES: Bojo, Beeman, Doss, Quick, Askew, Collins and McDaniel
NO: Cochran

Short Term Work Plan Update

Commissioner Quick stated that the City of Rome is scheduled to adopt the 5-year update to the Short-Term Work Plan found within the Rome/Floyd/Cave Spring Comprehensive Plan.

Artagus Newell reviewed this document and the 6 pages of updates to the Short-Term Work Plan.

Mayor Stevenson called a public hearing to order. There was no one to speak in favor or opposition to the proposal and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Quick moved to adopt the 5-year update to the Short-Term Work Plan found within the Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Bojo seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

City Manager Vehicle – Decal Exemption

Secretary Smith reported that each year the City of Rome takes action to exempt the City Manager's vehicle from the State of Georgia decal requirement and a resolution has been prepared for 2023.

Mayor Stevenson called a public hearing to order concerning this matter. There was no one to speak in favor or opposition to this subject and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Collins moved to adopt the resolution to exempt the City Manager's vehicle from the State of Georgia decal requirement. Commissioner McDaniel seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Rome/Floyd County Development Authority

Mayor Stevenson announced that the Rome/Floyd County Development Authority will have its Strategic Planning Session on Friday, January 27th from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Joint Services Committee

Mayor Stevenson announced that the Joint Services Committee will meet on Tuesday, February 7th at 9:00 a.m. at the Floyd County Administration Building.

Cities United Conference

Mayor Stevenson announced that most of the City Commissioners attended the Georgia Municipal Association's Cities United Conference in Atlanta over the past weekend. Legislative updates and City Commissioner training are the key components of this conference. She expressed her appreciation to the City of Rome residents for allowing the Commissioners to attend this important training.

Commissioner Collins was recognized for achieving the Certificate of Dedication, which is the highest level of commissioner training achievement through the Georgia Municipal Association.

Rome Middle School – School Bonds

It was noted that the City Commission spent extra time during caucus tonight to continue discussing the concept of the construction of a new Rome Middle School.

Commissioner Cochran made the following statement: **“I make a motion that we approve moving forward with the bond process to fund the local portion required by the School district to build the new middle school. Current estimates are for a \$119,735,000 project; State funding is projected to be \$16,097,783, leaving local funds required in the amount of \$103,637,217. We want the bond issue to maximize the principle to be paid off in the first 5 years (during ELOST VI). We understand we will design the first 5 years to leave a reasonable amount of “excess” SPLOST in each year for other Board of Education capital needs. In years 6 – 20, debt service (principle and interest) will be level. The plan will be to seek voter approval of continued ELOST, as necessary, to fully fund the project.”** Commissioner Collins seconded the motion. There were brief comments by the Commission including Commissioner Doss expressing his concerns regarding the potential difficulties and cost of constructing additional road access to the proposed middle school site (at the end of Three Rivers Drive). Mr. Doss also expressed concerns of a millage rate increase that will be necessary if future ELOST referendums are not approved. The need for Rome Middle School improvements/expansion are not disputed but the cost of the project is of a concern.

City Manager Rich and the Finance Department were thanked for their diligence regarding this project.

Commissioner Cochran’s motion was unanimously approved.

Transit Ribbon Cutting

Commissioner Cochran announced that the Transit Department will have a ribbon cutting to launch the new bus fleet at the Midtown Transit Station on January 31st at 2:00 p.m.

Public Works/Traffic/Transit Committee

Commissioner Cochran announced that the Public Works/Traffic/Transit Committee will meet on Wednesday, February 8th at 10:00 a.m. in the Sam King Room.

Water and Sewer Committee

Commissioner Bojo announced that the Water and Sewer Committee scheduled to meet on Thursday, February 2nd at 8:30 a.m. has been rescheduled for later in the month.

North Rome Grant

Commissioner Beeman announced that the City of Rome has received a grant in the amount of \$30,000 from the National Park Service. This grant will be used for research regarding the North Rome area and including the urban renewal redevelopment that occurred in the North Rome area in the late 1960’s. The City of Rome has 3 interns that will be assisting with this project.

Library Grants

Commissioner Beeman announced that the Rome/Floyd County Library has received 2 grants. The first grant in the amount of \$10,000 is to assist with the Story Walk that has been installed. The second grant in the amount of \$50,000 is to be used to help with financial literacy skills.

Tourism Committee

Commissioner Doss announced that the Tourism Committee will meet on Wednesday, January 25th at 11:45 a.m. at the Rome Area History Center.

Development Oversight Committee

Commissioner Quick announced that the Development Oversight Committee will meet on Tuesday, February 7th at 10:00 a.m. at the Floyd County Administration Building.

Downtown Development Authority

Commissioner Quick announced that the Downtown Development Authority will meet on Thursday, February 9th at 8:30 a.m. in the Carnegie Training Room.

Solid Waste Commission

Commissioner Askew announced that the Solid Waste Commission will meet on Tuesday, January 24th at 8:30 a.m. in the Sam King Room.

Executive Session

Mayor Stevenson announced that an executive session was held prior to the beginning of tonight's meeting, on a motion of Commissioner Doss and a second of Commissioner Bojo. Two property matters were discussed, no votes were taken. Commissioner Bojo moved to adjourn the executive session, Commissioner Quick seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Adjourn

With there being no further business, Mayor Stevenson adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Joseph F. Smith
City Clerk