

## **ROME CITY COMMISSION**

**Monday, April 25, 2022**

The Rome City Commission met at 6:30 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 – April 11, 2022**

The Minutes of the April 11, 2022 meeting, as submitted in writing by the Secretary, were approved by an unanimous consent.

### **National Therapy Animal Day**

Commissioner Beeman presented a proclamation recognizing April 30<sup>th</sup> as National Therapy Animal Day in Rome. This proclamation was presented to three ladies (and their therapy dogs) representing the Local Therapy Animal Association.

### **Georgia Cities Week**

Mayor Pro Tem Cochran presented a proclamation recognizing the week of April 24<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> as Georgia Cities Week in Rome. This proclamation was presented to City of Rome Public Information Director Kristi Kent. Ms. Kent outlined the events that are scheduled for this week.

### **National Crime Victims Week**

Commissioner Askew presented a joint City/County proclamation proclaiming the week of April 24<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> as National Crime Victims Rights Week in our community.

This proclamation was presented to District Attorney Leigh Patterson, Victims Witness Assistance Program Director Sandi Kunneman and Victims Compensation Advocate Julie Tomlin.

### **Certificates of Appointments**

Commissioner Collins announced that Certificates of Appointments have been created for Kelli Duncan, David Clonts, and J. R. Davis who were appointed to City Committee positions at the April 11<sup>th</sup> City Commission meeting. These persons were not present tonight, and Commissioner Collins spoke briefly about the process for citizens to volunteer for committee assignments.

### **GMA Lease Resolution**

Commissioner Collins moved to authorize the City Manager to sign a resolution regarding Lease Supplements for the Georgia Municipal Association. Specifically, this lease will be for a Fire Pumper Truck and the amount of the lease is \$634,794. This truck will be housed at Fire Station # 7 in the Coosa Community. Commissioner Bojo seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

**Alcohol Sales Permit Ordinance Amendment – First Reading**

Secretary Smith announced that an amendment to Rome’s Alcohol Ordinance is being placed on First Reading. This ordinance amendment will require security guards working at alcohol establishments to obtain a City of Rome Alcohol Sales Permit. Second Reading for this proposed ordinance amendment is scheduled for the May 9<sup>th</sup> City Commission meeting.

**Sewer Ordinance Amendment – First Reading**

Secretary Smith announced that an amendment to Rome’s Sewer Discharge Ordinance was being placed on First Reading. This ordinance will reestablish Rome’s limits for discharges into our public sewers. This ordinance amendment will be scheduled for Second Reading at the May 9<sup>th</sup> City Commission meeting.

**A22-04-01 Annex 75 Huffaker Road**

Annexation file A22-04-01, the request to annex 75 Huffaker Road, identified as Tax Map # H13X-180 with Community Commercial zoning (no change) was presented. The Planning Commission and Staff have recommended approval of this annexation request.

Assistant Rome Planner Brice Wood reviewed this file, displaying maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding properties. Mr. Wood stated that this property is currently used as the Classic Bowling Center.

Mayor Stevenson called a Public Hearing to order concerning the annexation request. There was no one to speak in favor or opposition, and the Public Hearing was closed.

Commissioner Collins moved to approve the annexation of 75 Huffaker Road with Community Commercial zoning as requested. Commissioner Bojo seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

**ULDC Text Amendment – Subdivision Plat Approval**

Brice Wood introduced the proposed ULDC Text Amendment, which would remove the requirement that the Rome/Floyd Planning Commission approve any and all final subdivision plats and allow administrative approval. The Planning Commission has recommended approval of this ULDC Amendment.

Mayor Stevenson called a Public Hearing to order. There was no one to speak in favor or opposition to the proposed ordinance amendment, and the Public Hearing was closed.

Commissioner Quick moved to approve the ULDC Amendment regarding subdivision plat approvals as presented. Commissioner Askew seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

**Z22-01-01 Highway 411 at East Rome Bypass**

Assistant Floyd Planner Brice Wood introduced and reviewed rezoning file Z22-01-01 to request to rezone 290 acres of property located on Highway 411 at the East Rome Bypass and identified by Tax Parcels K15W-002, K15W-004, K15X-259, K15X-262, K15X-264, K15X-266, and K14Z-001, from Suburban Residential and Community Commercial to Multi-Family Residential. Mr. Wood stated the request is to construct a residential development at this site.

This file is a development of regional impact (DRI) and has been appropriately reviewed. Mr. Wood reviewed the file, displaying maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding property.

The Planning Commission and Staff have recommended approval of the rezoning request. The Staff recommended the following conditions:

- A) That the ingress/egress, closest to the Walmart, be a left turn only, sending traffic back towards the redlight at Highway 411 and Callier Springs Road.
- B) That the second point of egress, located further up Callier Springs Road, be a one-way point of ingress only.

Mayor Stevenson called a Public Hearing to order concerning the rezoning request. Speaking in favor of the rezoning request was Mr. Norman White, 1192 Long Court Drive, Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. White represents Fall Leaf Residential LLC, the developer of the proposed housing project. Mr. White explained that the goal is to build affordable houses in the \$190 – \$230K range. This development will occur in five phases over a 6 – 7-year period. They plan to have a density of 4.52 units per acre. Once the development begins, they expect to deliver 200 units in year one. Also speaking in favor of the rezoning was Mr. Jimmy Byars, 19 Rock Ridge Road. Mr. Byars represents the owners of this property. He stated that our community has work force housing needs that will be met by this development. There is not a product similar to this currently available in our community.

Speaking in opposition to the rezoning request was Grant Miller, 2653 Callier Springs Road and owner of Callier Springs Country Club; Brad Lawrence, 10 Argon Drive; and Shemi Kumar, 928 Turner Chapel Road and owner of the Montessori School located on Dodd Boulevard. Mr. Miller spoke about the dangers of Callier Springs Road. This is a small and very curvy road with a narrow roadway and deep shoulders. Mr. Miller stated he has been discussing improvements needed to Callier Springs Road with the Floyd County Commission for several years. He feels that this is too much development and will create too much traffic for the current infrastructure. He also stated that the plan for a left-turn only at the ingress/egress point is to Walmart will not be followed and that some residents will turn right and use Callier Springs as their access method to Rome.

Mr. Lawrence encouraged the Commission to think about long-term growth and what our community should be. Mr. Lawrence spoke about the negative effects of unregulated sprawl. He feels that sprawl makes communities unlivable and encouraged the Commissioners to act in the best interest of the residents who live in this community as opposed to out-of-town developers. Ms. Kumar expressed her concerns about traffic issues on Callier Springs Road and Dodd Boulevard. She feels this is a development that is much too large for the existing infrastructure. She encouraged the Commissioners to find a way to take a slower approach to such a large residential development.

Mr. White used his remaining time for rebuttal comments. He emphasized that the primary entrance will be off of Hwy 411, and that this will be a slow developing residential community

that will be constructed in phases. He also spoke about the property taxes that will be generated from this development.

With there being no further comments, Mayor Stevenson closed the Public Hearing.

**Commissioner Quick moved to approve the rezoning requests as submitted with the recommendations suggested by the Planning Commission Staff – a) that the point of ingress/egress closest to the Walmart be a left-turn exit only, sending traffic back towards the redlight at Highway 411 and Callier Springs Road; b) that the second point of ingress, located further up Callier Springs Road, be a one-way point of ingress only. Commissioner McDaniel seconded the motion.**

There was considerable discussion by the City Commissioners regarding this rezoning request. The consensus is that there are infrastructure deficiencies in this area, and in general, roadways need to be improved before developments occur. This is not only a city issue, but a county issue since the roadways in question are located in both the City and the County. Commissioner McDaniel spoke about the very slow growth in our community over the past decades. He noted that 40% of the city school students currently live in public housing. The Housing Summit that the City held over the past two years has produced good results with several residential developments now being planned. The Rome City School System has reported to the City Commission that they constantly plan for growth and can accommodate student growth in this area.

With the discussion concluded, the motion to approve the rezoning request, with conditions, was unanimously approved.

#### **Z22-03-05 Rezone Dodd Boulevard Property**

Assistant Rome Planner Brice Wood introduced and reviewed rezoning file Z22-03-05, the request to rezone 34 acres of property located off of Dodd Boulevard and identified by Floyd County Tax Map #s J15W-455, J15W-456, K15X-021, and K15X-027 from Community Commercial to Multi-Family Residential. Mr. Wood explained that the developers of this property intend to construct a mix of townhouses and apartments and plan for a total of 395 units. Mr. Wood displayed maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding area. He reported that the Planning Commission and Staff have recommended approval of the rezoning request. Staff recommends approval on the condition that the exit onto Dodd Boulevard be constructed to be a left-turn only, thus directing traffic back toward Highway 411 and away from Callier Springs Road, or that Dodd Boulevard be an entrance only. Mr. Wood added that the topography of this property does not make it as desirable for commercial development.

Mayor Stevenson called a Public Hearing to order concerning this rezoning request. Speaking in favor of the rezoning was Mr. Daryl Edwards, 272 J Slage Road, Calhoun, Georgia. Mr. Edwards stated that his original plan was to develop townhomes and storage units on this property; however, after further consideration and encouragement by the Planning Commission, this has been redeveloped into a residential development only. He expects the buildout to take approximately four years with construction being divided into three phases. He plans a total number of units 395, approximately 123 townhomes, and 272 apartments. The plan is to construct approximately 120 units in year one of development. The entrance ways will be from

Dodd Boulevard with the primary entrance from Hobson Way. These units expect to be priced in the \$175K - \$250K range.

Speaking in opposition to the rezoning request was John Headrick, 13 Breckinridge Road; Shemi Tumar, 928 Turner Chapel Road; and Grant Miller, 2653 Callier Springs Road.

Mr. Headrick stated he is also a business owner on Dodd Boulevard, and while he is in favor of the residential growth, he commented on the infrastructure problems in that area. Specifically, there is a road failure on Dodd Boulevard due to a dilapidated corrugated metal drainpipe. This infrastructure issue is affecting his parking lot, and he is concerned about the added issues with this development. He encouraged the City Commission to take action to correct the infrastructure deficiencies in this area. Ms. Kumar also spoke about the infrastructure problems on Dodd Boulevard as it relates to safety particular towards school operations. She encouraged the city to consider sidewalks in this area for the safety of the pedestrians, many of whom come from the Callier Forrest Housing Development on Dodd Boulevard. Furthermore, she commented on flooding issues in the area during times of heavy rain. She favors growth; however, this growth should be managed with proper infrastructure support. Mr. Miller, once again, commented on the aging infrastructure in this area, particularly stormwater issues, which have impacted his property at the Callier Springs Country Club.

Speaking in rebuttal was Mr. Edward's business partner, Darren Hardin. Mr. Hardin stated that their residential development will help with some of the problems in this area, particularly stormwater management. He also reminded the Commission that the primary entrance and exit to this residential development will be from Highway 411 (Hobson Way).

With there being no further comments, Mayor Stevenson closed the Public Hearing.

**Commissioner Quick moved to approve the rezoning request as submitted with conditions.**

There was discussion regarding the Planning Commission Staff's recommended conditions since it was a choice of two stipulations. During the discussion regarding Staff recommendations, Mr. Wood stated that the City of Rome Traffic Engineering and Public Works Departments made no negative comments toward their option. Commissioner Quick clarified that his motion to approve included the option that Dodd Boulevard be used as an entrance only. Commissioner McDaniel seconded the motion. Commissioner Cochran addressed our ULDC Land Development Code and stated that it is anti-growth in some ways, and work is underway for the development of a new Land Development Code and that the City and County must be proactive regarding infrastructure improvements. City Manager Rich stated that, in the City of Rome's 2022 Capital Budget, there are funds allocated to replace the failing stormwater drain across Dodd Boulevard. This is an expensive project estimated to be approximately \$750,000. Commissioner Askew encouraged development to be in all parts of town rather than the developments on the East side of town that the City Commission has been addressing recently.

With the discussion concluded, the motion to approve the rezoning to Multi-Family Residential, with the condition that Dodd Boulevard be used as an entrance only, was unanimously approved.

**Z22-04-01 Rezone Division Street at John Davenport Drive**

Assistant Rome/Floyd Planner Brice Wood introduced and reviewed rezoning file Z22-04-01, the request to rezone property located at the corner of Division Street and John Davenport Drive, identified by Tax Map # I13Z-031, from Heavy Industrial to Light Industrial. The Planning Commission has unanimously recommended approval. Mr. Wood reviewed this file, displaying maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding area.

Mayor Stevenson called a Public Hearing to order. Speaking in favor of the rezoning request was Mr. Mark Brewster, 2400 Garden Lakes Boulevard. Mr. Brewster stated that they would like to rezone a portion of this property from Heavy Industrial to Light Industrial. This site is approximately 3.5 acres in size. Mr. Brewster clarified that there is not a specific use planned at this time for this site. There was no one else to speak in favor or opposition regarding this matter, and the Public Hearing was closed. Commissioner Quick moved to approve the request to rezone this property from Heavy Industrial to Light Industrial. Commissioner Askew seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

**Z22-04-06 Rezone 145 John Davenport Drive**

Assistant Rome/Floyd Planner Brice Wood introduced and reviewed rezoning file Z22-04-06, the request to rezone property located at 145 John Davenport Drive and identified by Floyd County Tax Map # I13Z-093, I13Z-094, and I13Z-094A from Community Commercial to Light Industrial. The Planning Commission has recommended approval with a 6-1 vote. The Planning Staff has also recommended approval with the following conditions:

- A) The proposed storage unit developments only point of ingress/egress will be with the existing curb cut on parcel I13Z-094A.
  
- B) Any/all proposed development, to include grading and soil displacement, will occur outside the limits of the flood plain as currently mapped.

After the conclusion of Mr. Wood's review of the file and photographs, Mayor Stevenson called a Public Hearing to order. Speaking in favor of the rezoning request was Mr. Chuck Hardin of Southern Engineering Services and representative of the property owner. Mr. Hardin clarified that, as recommended by Planning Staff, the existing curb cut will be used for ingress and egress, and there will be no development or soil disturbance in the flood plain area. With the public comments concluded, Mayor Stevenson closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Collins moved to approve the rezoning request from Community Commercial to Light Industrial as requested with the conditions that the proposed storage unit development's only point of ingress and egress be with the existing curb cut on parcel I13Z-094A and any and all proposed development, to include grading and soil displacement that will occur outside of the limits of the flood plain as currently mapped. Commissioner Quick seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

**Z22-04-08 Rezone the Former Northwest Georgia Regional Hospital Site**

Assistant Rome/Floyd Planner Brice Wood introduced and reviewed rezoning file Z22-04-08, the request to rezone the former Northwest Georgia Regional Hospital Site located at Division Street and 100 Marable Way and identified by Floyd County Tax Map #s I13X-015, I13X-016,

and I13X-017, from Office Institutional to Heavy Industrial. The Planning Commission has unanimously recommended approval of the rezoning, and Planning Staff has recommended approval also, with the condition that the applicant/owner create a barrier to reroute commercial truck traffic north towards the bypass, which is intended for such trips and thus avoiding Charlton Street (east of North Division Street) and other inner-city streets. This site is approximately 132 acres. Following Mr. Wood's review of this rezoning file, Mayor Stevenson called a Public Hearing to order. Speaking in favor of the rezoning request was Missy Kendrick, Rome/Floyd County Development Authority, 800 Broad Street; Jimmy Byars, 19 Rockwood Road and Chairman of the Rome/Floyd County Development Authority; Allison Watters, 1225 Mt. Alto Road, vice-chair of the Floyd County Commission; Doc Kibler, Cave Spring, Georgia; and Chris Smith, VT Industries. Ms. Kendrick stated that, after many years of study and negotiations, the City and County were eventually able to buy this site from the State of Georgia with local economic development funds. The intention has been to redevelop this very important site for industrial needs within the City of Rome. Ms. Kendrick commented on the homes that are at this site stating that the homes are in very poor condition and after evaluation by housing experts, they have been told that it is not feasible to move the homes off of this site. Ms. Kendrick also commented that there have been concerns about potential truck traffic into this area via Charlton Street through the Summerville Park Neighborhood. Ms. Kendrick stated that, the plans will be for no truck traffic on Charlton Street east of North Division Street. Charlton Street on the west side of North Division would be used for ingress and egress to this site. The intention will be for traffic entering and exiting this site to use Division Street to Redmond Road and the Rome Bypass.

Mr. Byars commented on the importance of this site and the effort and funding that has been dedicated to acquiring the property. This is a rare opportunity for an additional industrial site in the City of Rome. Commissioner Watters reminded the City Commission of the City/County partnership in acquiring this property. Mr. Kibler commented on the negotiations with the State of Georgia, which eventually facilitated the sale of the property to Rome and Floyd County. The Governor approved the sale of the property because the property was going to be used for economic development. Mr. Smith of VT Industries indicated that their desire to expand their industrial site eastward into the property being discussed tonight.

Speaking in opposition to the rezoning request was Ms. Penny Evans-Plant, 511 Charlton Street and President of the Summerville Park Neighborhood Association; Jordan Webber, 509 Charlton Street; Chris Reyes, 202 Oakwood Street; Jessica Vihon, 621 Briarwood Circle; and Carrie Nobles, 209 Timothy Avenue. Ms. Evans-Plant expressed her opposition to the rezoning request on behalf of the Summerville Park Neighborhood. The residents feels that this will be a detriment to their quality of life. Heavy Industrial will bring more negative issues such as traffic and pollution. The neighborhood does favor a mixed-use zoning for this site. They are not in opposition to VT Industries and Lewis Chemical expanding on the west side of this site; however, they are in favor of the mixed-use plan as originally outlined on the consultant's rendering. Ms. Evans-Plant also asked for more stop signs in the neighborhood to slow the traffic down, and she referenced the unpleasant Atlanta Gas Light experience with the pipeline replacement project that impacted their neighborhood. Mr. Webber also opposes this heavy industrial zoning listing several possible uses allowed in a HI Zone that would be a detriment to the neighborhood. Mr. Reyes primarily commented on traffic in the neighborhood stating that, even if trucks are routed away from the neighborhood, employees working at the site will use the

Summerville Park neighborhood as a transportation route to and from work. He encouraged the city to correct this infrastructure matter before rezoning to Heavy Industrial. Ms. Vihon also expressed opposition to the Heavy Industrial zoning favoring Light Industrial zoning with noise restrictions, or a Mixed-Use zoning with buffers. Ms. Nobles commented on the detrimental impact to schools and neighbors in this area if Heavy Industrial is allowed with noise and air pollution as the concerns.

With rebuttal time remaining, Ms. Kendrick stated that, according to the Georgia Power Economic Impact Study, there could be 500 jobs created (long-term) at this site. Ms. Kendrick reminded everyone that, when the former hospital was in operation, there were approximately 1,000 employees at that site, and that industrial redevelopment in this area could have less impact than the hospital previously did. She also reminded everyone that their goal is to keep both employee and truck traffic out of the Summerville Park Neighborhood. With the public comments concluded, Mayor Stevenson closed the Public Hearing. **Commissioner Quick moved to approve the rezoning request with the condition that the applicant/owner create a barrier to reroute commercial traffic north towards the Bypass, which is intended for such trips, thus avoiding Charlton Street (east of North Division Street) and other inner-city streets. Commissioner McDaniel seconded the motion.**

Commissioner Quick stated that the Rome/Floyd Development Authority has a good record of bringing the right type of industrial development to our community. Ms. Kendrick adding that today's manufacturing is green and clean and not the stereotypical industry of previous years, which could produce more noise and pollution. There are lots of low-impact industries now with advanced manufacturing. Commissioner Collins stated that the plan the consultant drafted called for a mixed use on this site and not all industrial. He emphasized the importance of the surrounding neighborhoods and the family values that have developed in those locations over many decades. He asked the Rome/Floyd Development Authority to rethink their industrial plans for this site since no one knows the eventual actual use. The lack of clarity at this point is a major concern.

Commissioner McDaniel spoke regarding the matter and about the previously referenced plan. The consultant's plan that was developed and distributed, generating no interest in this property. The City and the County were eventually able to take action to purchase the property with the help of the State of Georgia. Economic development and industrial uses were the primary focus. He also reminded everyone that our current industrial property is located in unincorporated Floyd County. This is a great opportunity for an industrial tract inside the City of Rome, and our Rome/Floyd Industrial Development Authority will bring the right type of industry to this site. He referenced the former Northwest Georgia Regional Hospital, which operated at this site for decades, and this operation had over 1,000 employees and created a lot more traffic than an industrial development at this location will. He concluded his comments by emphasizing our need for additional jobs. Commissioner Beeman asked that we consider involving the Housing Authority with this site and also that she prefers mixed-use. She stated that not everyone needs to work in industry. Commissioner Cochran spoke at length expressing his opposition to Heavy Industrial rezoning for this site. He also referenced a serious fire that occurred at the Bekaert Plant several years ago and that there was an evacuation within one mile of the plant due to that toxic danger. Commissioner Cochran referenced many businesses, institutions, and homes that would be impacted if there was an evacuation order within one mile of this site. Commissioner

Cochran also expressed his opinion on the type of economic development that we need to appeal to the workforce of tomorrow. After continued discussion, Commissioner Doss stated that the City Commission is obviously split on this issue, and the Commission needs to be unified on such an important matter. **Commissioner Doss moved to table this rezoning request. Commissioner Cochran seconded, and it was approved by the following vote:**

**YES:** Cochran, Bojo, Beeman, Doss, Quick, Askew, and Collins

**NO:** McDaniel

### **Joint Services**

Mayor Stevenson announced that the Joint Services Committee will meet on Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 8:30 a.m. at the Floyd County Administration Building.

### **Riverside Parkway and East First Street Paving**

Commissioner Cochran moved to award the contract for the paving of Riverside Parkway and East First Street to Northwest Georgia Paving Incorporated. The amount of this contract will be \$1,555,540. Northwest Georgia Paving was the low bid for this project, and the work is to begin by June 15<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Askew seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

### **Redevelopment Committee**

Commissioner Bojo announced that the Redevelopment Committee scheduled for Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m. in the Sam King has been postponed.

### **Water and Sewer Committee**

Commissioner Bojo announced that the Water and Sewer Committee will meet on Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m. in the Sam King Room.

### **Tourism**

Commissioner Doss announced that the Tourism Committee will meet on Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 11:45 a.m. at the Rome Area History Center.

### **Development Oversight Committee**

Commissioner Quick reported that the Development Oversight Committee will meet on Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10 a.m. in the Sam King Room.

### **Rome/Floyd County Planning Commission**

Commissioner Quick announced that the Rome/Floyd County Planning Commission will meet on Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m. in the Sam King Room.

### **General Administration Committee**

Commissioner Collins announced that the General Administration Committee will meet on Tuesday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at 11 a.m. in the Carnegie Training Room.

**Atlantic Coast Conference Tennis Championships**

Commissioner Doss announced that the Atlantic Coast Conference National Tennis Championships were held last week at the Rome Tennis Center at Berry College, and the event was a huge success.

**Adjourn**

With there being no further business, Mayor Stevenson adjourned the meeting at 9:06 p.m.

Joseph F. Smith  
City Clerk