

ROME CITY COMMISSION

Monday, June 12, 2023

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

Minutes – May 22, 2023, and May 30, 2023

The Minutes of the May 22, 2023, meeting and the May 30, 2023, Special Called Meeting, as submitted in writing by the Secretary, were approved by unanimous consent.

Employee Scholarship Recipients – 2023

City Manager Rich reviewed the City of Rome’s Employee Scholarship Program. He reminded the Commissioners of the origin of this program and that it is and always has been 100% funded by employee donations.

The 2023 recipients are as follows:

- Ashby Carter – Amanda Carter / Community Development
- Isaac Collier – Grant Collier / Fire Department
- Braiden Parris – Suzanne Parris / Community Development
- Nora Stone – Jamie Stone / Fire Department

The first scholarships were awarded in 2006 – 2007 and to date there have been 100 scholarships awarded with an amount totaling \$65,750.

Ken Wright

Mr. Ken Wright addressed the City Commission and read the following statement:

“I fear that if we do not stop and change the current direction we are traveling that Rome GA is headed toward a fate like Detroit, Baltimore, New Orleans and other poverty – stricken inner cities with blight, high crime and fleeing business and industry.

This is intentionally being created by this current City Commission and other government entities that are serving to harm the Community. Leading the path to destruction is the Northwest Georgia Housing Authority. While I previously worked to raise per capita income in Rome, it was a constant battle with the housing authority, which encourages poverty, unemployment and being “less than you can be”. The housing authority basically promotes slavery by enslaving their tenants to suppress their income – or their housing will be taken away. To ensure they maintain a steady stream of residents they can control, suppress, and enslave – they provide nicer housing than these same individuals could have working.

With regard to suppressing individuals in Rome, business is booming! Low income housing has exploded across the community which restricts income and now includes housing development groups and LLC's. At least these owners will pay property taxes since the residents don't. However, for the Housing Authority no property taxes are received from this rapidly growing group of citizens. Is it any wonder that property taxes are increasing exponentially?

In the end, the remaining residents, businesses, and industries within the City that are footing the bill for those not paying their fair share – will be forced to shutter or move.

We are supposed to learn from bad things in history rather than repeat them. However, in Rome we are hellbent on a path to destroy this city after other cities have followed the same disastrous path. It is time to act NOW (if not already past the point of no return). We can't afford to promote no continue projects and entities that lose money. Our survival as a city depends on it. Shutter the housing authority. Shutter the Rome Transit Dept. (which just spent millions on new buses for a failing transit system that has never been profitable and depends on subsidies). Sell the Roman Holiday.

In the interest of fiscal responsibility for taxpayer dollars, there are lots of logical, sensible and analytical solutions.

We don't necessarily need less schools, we need less school systems. Floyd County Schools manages 4 high schools. It is time to add their 5th high school and absorb the Rome City Schools. In fact, we duplicate numerous departments and costs where it may not be necessary. Perhaps as a community rather than continual exponential increases in property taxes with resulting higher crime rates, arrests and fights within Rome City Schools, roads and bridges in disrepair along with higher utility costs – perhaps the community suggestion would be for ALL of Rome City Government to be absorbed by Floyd County Government. YES, that includes police and schools while dissolving the nine (9) City Commissioners. This City Commission has become dysfunctional and represents the downfall and decline of Rome GA. This community deserves better. Please come together, resolve differences and truly work together for what is best for citizens and community – as designated in the Rome City Charter oath that you took when accepting office.

Speaking of the Rome City Charter, it specifies that the City Commission shall have the power and authority to pass all laws and ordinances necessary for peace, good order, health, prosperity, comfort and security in the City that may be necessary to foster VIRTUE, GOOD MORALS, SUPPRESS LEWDNESS, etc. and to enforce such laws and ordinances by penalties as they are authorized. Is there a single Commissioner present that believed the PRIDE event last year represented VIRTUE, GOOD MORALS or SUPPRESSED LEWDNESS? You as a City Commissioner have the power and authority to stop this from happening in the future and to prosecute, fine and penalize those involved in the violation of multiple ordinances required of sexually related businesses and laws prohibiting lewdness. Per the Charter, the City's legal counsel is hereby authorized to institute civil proceedings to enforce and prosecute these violations. Don't forget this is PRIDE month. Don't forget to thank a straight person for your existence.”

Norma Reboredo

Ms. Norman Reboredo addressed the City Commission concerning economic issues. Ms. Reboredo spoke concerning the Rome Board of Education and the \$1.2 million increase in funding for employee insurance. Ms. Reboredo also expressed her concern about the demolition of existing school buildings and the construction of new school buildings, that not all agree are needed. Ms. Reboredo also congratulated the City for pursuing the water lawsuit and receiving a settlement that will provide funding for the new water treatment plant. Ms. Reboredo concluded her comments by addressing nationwide inflation concerns.

Board of Adjustments Resolution - Petition Review Officer

Assistant Rome/Floyd Planner Brice Wood was present to explain a joint City/County resolution that has been recommended for adoption by the Planning Commission. This resolution would designate the officers for the “perfection of a petition for a review of the decisions of the Rome/Floyd County Board of Adjustments”. This resolution clarifies that the Rome/Floyd Planning Director would be the position to which the petition should be filed.

Commissioner Quick moved to adopt the City/County resolution concerning this matter as explained. Commissioner Askew seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Rezoning and ULDC Amendment – First Reading

Assistant Rome/Floyd Planner Brice Wood stated that the following rezonings and ULDC Amendment had been acted upon by the Planning Commissioner and were being placed on first reading tonight:

- a) Z23-06-02 – Request to rezone from Office Institutional to Neighborhood Office Commercial for the property located at 410 E. 1st Street, Rome, GA 30161; Floyd County Tax Parcel J14C-150. (Planning Commission recommends approval, 8-0)
- b) Z23-06-04 – Request to rezone from Multifamily Residential to Heavy Industrial for the property located at Ford Street, Old Lindale Road, and Blackwelder Lane, Rome, GA 30165; Floyd County Tax Parcels J15Y-013, J15Y-006 (portion of parcel) and J15Y-011. (Planning Commission recommends approval 8-0)
- c) ULDC Amendment – Public Hearing Notice

There was no objection to the request/motion and by unanimous consent this was done. A public hearing on each of these three matters is scheduled for the June 20th City Commission Meeting.

Courtney Griffin – Transit Director

Mr. Sammy Rich stated that with the retirement earlier this year by long serving Transit Director Kathy Shealy, the City of Rome has searched for her replacement. Mr. Rich is recommending that Ms. Courtney Griffin be appointed as the new Transit Director. Ms. Griffin has been working as the Assistant Transit Director and Mr. Rich commented on her resume and her 8 years of experience with the City of Rome. Mr. Rich described Ms. Griffin as the future of the Rome Transit Department.

Commissioner Collins moved to appoint Ms. Griffin as the City of Rome Transit Director. Commissioner Doss seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor. Each of the Commissioner congratulated Ms. Griffin for this promotion and she spoke briefly regarding the present and future plans for the Transit Department.

Juneteenth Holiday

City Manager Rich announced that the City Administrative offices will be closed on Monday, June 19th in observance of the Juneteenth holiday. Garbage, yard waste, and recycling schedules will be amended next week as a result of the holiday.

Rome/Floyd Development Authority

Mayor Stevenson announced that the Rome/Floyd Development Authority will meet on Tuesday, June 20th at 10:00 a.m. at 800 Broad Street.

June 20th City Commission Meeting

Mayor Stevenson announced that due to the Georgia Municipal Association Conference, the Rome City Commission meeting originally planned for June 26th will take place on Tuesday, June 20th at 6:30 p.m.

Penguin Project – Annie Jr.

Commissioner Bojo thanked the Rome Little Theater and Ms. Mandy Maloney for the Penguin Project production of Annie Jr.. This special performance took place in the Rome City Auditorium. Mr. Bojo stated that each of the participants in the Annie Jr. program are special needs children.

7-7-7 Trail Event

Commissioner Doss reminded everyone of the annual 7-7-7 (Lucky 7) Trail event that will take place on Jackson Hill. Each year a 7k trail event takes place on July 7th at 7:00 p.m.

First Friday

Commissioner Quick thanked the Downtown Development Authority and other city staff members for their efforts in the June First Friday event. Commissioner Quick stated this was a very well attended event that occurred at the Towne Green.

Public Works/Traffic/Transit

Commissioner Beeman announced that the Public Works/Traffic/Transit meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 14th has been cancelled.

Fire Overview

Commissioner Askew announced that the Fire Overview Committee will meet on Tuesday, June 13th at 10:30 a.m. in the Sam King Room.

Recycling Center Deficits

Commissioner Askew moved for the City of Rome to approve payment of the recycling center deficit invoices for the first quarter of 2023. The City of Rome, the Floyd County Commission, and the Joint Solid Waste Commission will each pay \$38, 316.99 for this operating deficit. Commissioner Quick seconded the motion for approval of payment and the vote was unanimously in favor.

2022 Budget Revisions

Commissioner Collins announced that the City of Rome needs to approve budget revisions for the 2022 budgets. The General Fund and the Special Revenue Fund budgets are amended. This matter had been discussed in detail at the Finance Committee. Commissioner Collins's motion to approve the budget revisions was seconded by Commissioner Askew and was approved unanimous vote.

General Administration Committee

Commissioner Collins announced that the General Administration Committee will meet on Tuesday, June 13th at 9:00 a.m. at the Rome Tennis Center at Berry College.

Committee on Committees Nominations

Commissioner Collins announced that the Committee on Committees had met prior to tonight's meeting and made the following recommendations for appointment:

- Downtown Development Authority – appoint Kevin Dillmon
- Rome/Floyd County Planning Commission – appoint Ford Knight and reappoint Charles Love
- Historic Preservation Commission – appoint Cameron Abney

A vote on these nominations is scheduled for the June 20th City Commission Meeting.

Alcohol Control Commission

Commissioner McDaniel announced that the Alcohol Control Commission will meet on Tuesday, June 13th at 5:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers.

Rome/Floyd Parks and Recreation

Commissioner McDaniel announced that the Rome/Floyd Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will meet on Tuesday, June 20th at 12:00 p.m. at the Gilbreath Center in Lindale.

Desoto Theater Grant

Mayor Stevenson announced that the Desoto Theater has received notification that a \$35,000 grant is being provided by the Fox Theater Association.

Juneteenth Program

Commissioner Beeman outlined the events planned in association with the Juneteenth 2023 holiday celebration. Commissioner Beeman outlined the events that will take place on Friday, June 16th through Monday June 19th. As part of this celebration, there will be a parade on Board Street on Saturday, June 17th.

City Employees

Commissioner McDaniel expressed his appreciation for the City of Rome employees. He reminded the commissioners that the City of Rome accomplishments are the result of the dedicated service by the outstanding employees that work for the City of Rome.

Adjourn

With there being no further business, Mayor Stevenson adjourned the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Joseph F. Smith
City Clerk