

ROME CITY COMMISSION

Tuesday, June 20, 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 Mayor Pro Tem Cochran and Commissioners Bojo, Beeman, Doss, Quick, Askew, and Collins present. Commission McDaniel was absent. Jody Hagerty, Chaplain of the Rome Police Department opened the meeting with prayer and led in the salute to the flag.

Minutes – June 12, 2023

The Minutes of the June 12, 2023, meeting, as submitted in writing by the Secretary, were approved by unanimous consent.

Angela Rubino

Ms. Angela Rubino addressed the City Commission and read the following statement:

“I’m here tonight to address a topic many are afraid to speak out against, maybe due to their jobs, friends, business - what have you, but I’m not. We are all to be servants of Jesus Christ and we are all to protect the children.

But we are so sick and tired of all the Commissioners, City and County, with your condescending ways. An absolute embarrassment to Rome and it’s people. You have done nothing last year and continue this year to do nothing to protect our children from what is pride today. Are we not thinking of the effect this will have on our children or how it is currently effecting children and adults who have been sexually abused? Yet you allow pride to continue. You have all violated your local charter and oath to protect the innocent from being exposed to indecency, immoral lewdness.

The Rome PD blames the people for not calling them at the right time. We don’t wear the badge; they do to protect and serve. They failed to protect and not really clear who they serve. They refuse to look back at the events from last year, sounds a lot like the same issues we have with elections.

Rome PD is telling us that they (Pride) want to be part of the community, but that argument falls short when the LGB community had always been accepted. The acceptance changed the moment our children were forced to partake in this mental illness, being forced in our schools, our churches, our jobs with our commodities, politics, and now children on autism.

So may God have mercy, but may he send us true God fearing, American loving patriots to replace each and every one of you.”

Ms. Rubino also distributed a document concerning Happy Autistic Pride Day.

Z23-06-02 Rezone 410 East 1st Street

Commissioner Quick presented rezoning file Z23-06-02 the request to rezone property located at 410 East 1st Street and identified by Tax Map Parcel J14C-150, from Office Institutional to Neighborhood Office Commercial. The Planning Commission and staff have unanimously recommended approval of this rezoning request.

Rome/Floyd Planner Brice Wood reviewed this file, displaying maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding property. Mr. Wood indicated that the owner feels this property maybe more useful as residential rather than office.

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

Commissioner Quick moved to approve the request to rezone 410 East 1st Street from Office Institutional to Neighborhood Office Commercial. Commissioner Askew seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Z23-06-04 Rezone Old Lindale Road, Ford Street, and Blackwelder Lane Properties

Commissioner Quick presented rezoning file Z23-06-04 the request to rezone property located on Old Lindale Road, Ford Street, and Blackwelder Lane, and identified by Floyd County Tax Parcels J15Y-013, J15Y-006 (portion of parcel), and J15Y-011, from Multifamily Residential to Heavy Industrial. The Planning Commission and staff have unanimously recommended approval of this rezoning request.

Rome/Floyd Planner Brice Wood reviewed this file, displaying maps and photographs of the subject and surrounding properties. Mr. Wood indicated that the Heavy Industrial zoning is being requested to allow access to larger adjoining tracts of Heavy Industrially zoned properties. The owner has indicated this is for speculative use.

Mayor Stevenson called a public hearing to order. Speaking in favor of the rezoning request was Mr. Jimmy Byars, 19 Rockridge Road. Mr. Byars represents the owner of the property and stated that the rezoning is to allow access to the larger Heavy Industrial zoned property to the rear of this site. There was no one else to speak in favor or opposition and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Quick moved to approve the request to rezone this property from Multifamily Residential to Heavy Industrial as requested and Commissioner Askew seconded. Commissioner Cochran requested that the City Commission specify that this property can only be used ingress/egress and not for construction. Mr. Byars indicated he is agreeable to that request, since these properties are so small, construction upon them will likely be difficult, if not impossible. The motion, with the ingress/egress stipulation, was approved by the following vote:

YES: Cochran, Bojo, Beeman, Doss, Quick, and Askew
Abstain: Collins (owns property in this area)

ULDC Amendment – Public Hearing Notice

Commissioner Quick introduced an amendment to the Unified Land Development Code regarding the advertising notice for public hearings.

Rome/Floyd Planner Brice Wood reviewed this document stating that this will allow our ULDC to be in compliance with state law regarding the time requirements for public hearing notices. Mr. Wood added that Rome and Floyd County are already following this new state requirement.

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

Commissioner Quick moved to approve the ULDC Amendment regarding public hearing notices as presented. Commissioner Collins seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Brice Wood – Planning Director

City Manager Rich noted that with the recent resignation of former Planning Director Artagus Newell to accept employment in Atlanta, the City and County have been searching for a new Planning Director. Mr. Rich recommends that Assistant Planning Director Brice Wood be promoted to City/County Planning Director. Mr. Rich reviewed Mr. Wood’s resume and work experience with the Regional Commission, the Georgia Department of Revenue, and within the Rome/Floyd Planning Department.

Commissioner Collins moved to appoint Mr. Wood as City/County Planning Director. Commissioner Quick seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

4th of July Holiday

City Manager Rich stated that City offices will be closed on Tuesday, July 4th in observance of the holiday. Garbage and trash schedules will be amended next week due to this closing.

Executive Session

Mayor Stevenson announced that an Executive Session was held prior to the beginning of tonight’s meeting on the motion of Commissioner Doss, seconded of Commissioner Beeman and unanimous vote. A water litigation update was received, and no votes were taken. Commissioner Doss moved to adjourn the Executive Session, Commissioner Quick seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Water Lawsuit Resolution

City Attorney Andy Davis stated that 32 of the 37 defendants in the water litigation matter concerning PFAS and other “forever chemicals” have settled and the agreements are in hand. The remaining 5 agreements are expected in September. All 37 settled this matter without a court trial being necessary.

Commissioner Bojo moved to approve a resolution concerning settlements of Rome’s lawsuit about PFAS in Rome’s water supply, designation of funds, and rollback of water and sewer usage rates.

Specifically, this resolution will do the following:

Section 1. That the Rome City Commission hereby authorizes, approves, and ratifies the negotiated, formalized, finalized, and others agreed to settlements with the named companies above.

Section 2. That the Rome City Commission hereby declares and resolves that any and all funds received by the City of Rome from the Settlements approved, finalized, and ratified herein shall be used exclusively within the water and sewer designated funds for the design, construction, installation, operation, and maintenance of a closed – circuit reverse osmosis water treatment facility and related water and sewer operations.

Section 3. That the Rome City Commission hereby declares and resolves that the PFAS related rates (effective January 1, 2019, January 1, 2020 and March 1, 2022) are rolled back to the “Existing” rates immediately prior to January 1, 2019, as shown in the Resolution adopted on November 26, 2018, and attached and incorporated by reference as Exhibit “A” hereto.

Section 4. That the Rome City Commission hereby declares and resolves that at this time it will not consider any refunds or rebates of the PFAS rates, and will await the outcome and results of the putative class action case seeking reimbursement of said rates, among other things, pending in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, Rome Division, entitled *Johnson v. 3M, et al.*, Civil Action File No. 4:20-cv-0008-AT.

Section 5. That it is found and determined that all formal actions of the Commission relating to the adoption of this resolution were adopted in an open meeting of the Commission, and that all deliberations of this Commission and any of its committees that resulted in such formal action, were in meetings, open to the public, in compliance with all legal requirements.

Section 6. this Resolution is hereby declared to be necessary for the preservation of the public health, welfare and safety of the citizens of the City of Rome, Georgia.

Commissioner Quick seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

The City Commission felt that it was especially noteworthy to point out that the water and sewer rates would be rolled back to the December 30, 2018, level, and the rates cannot be increased in the future for the purpose of PFAS elimination.

GMA Conference

Mayor Stevenson announced that the Rome City Commission will be attending the Georgia Municipal Association annual training conference in Savannah June 23rd – 27th.

Tourism Committee

Mayor Stevenson announced that the Tourism Committee will meet on Wednesday, June 28th at 11:45 a.m. in the Rome Area History Center.

Community Redevelopment Committee

Commissioner Bojo announced that the Community Redevelopment Committee will meet on Wednesday, June 28th at 2:30 p.m. in the Sam King Room.

Water and Sewer Committee

Commissioner Bojo announced that the Water and Sewer Committee will meet on Thursday, July 6th at 9:00 a.m. in the Sam King Room.

Historic Preservation Committee

Commissioner Beeman announced that the Historic Preservation Committee will meet on Wednesday, June 21st at 2:30 p.m. in the Sam King Room.

Liter Index Program

Commissioner Beeman announced that Keep Rome/Floyd Beautiful will be conducting their next Liter Index Program in the near future.

Trails and Rivers

Commissioner Doss reminded everyone that summer is a great time to enjoy our trails and rivers. However, he encouraged everyone to use our rivers in a safe manner and wear life safety devices when on the rivers.

Rome/Floyd Planning Commission

Commissioner Quick announced that the Rome/Floyd Planning Commission will meet on Thursday, July 6th at 2:30 p.m. in the Sam King Room.

Kevin Dillmon – Downtown Development Authority

Commissioner Collins moved to appoint Mr. Kevin Dillmon to serve on the Downtown Development Authority. Commissioner Askew seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Ford Knight and Charles Love – Rome/Floyd Planning Commissioner

Commissioner Collins moved to appoint Mr. Ford Knight and reappoint Mr. Charles to serve on the Rome/Floyd Planning Commission. Commissioner Askew seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Cameron Abney – Historic Preservation Commission

Commissioner Collins moved to appoint Ms. Cameron Abney to serve on the Historic Preservation Commission. Commissioner Askew seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Finance Committee

Commissioner Collins announced that the Finance Committee meeting scheduled for June 21st has been canceled.

General Administration Committee

Commissioner Collins reported that a productive General Administration Committee meeting was held this month at the Rome Tennis Center at Berry College. In addition to staff reports, there was detailed information given about Stonebridge Golf Course and the Tennis Centers.

Juneteenth Celebration

Commissioner Beeman reported on the activities that occurred during the four day Juneteenth celebration. Commissioner Beeman thanked the City of Rome for their tremendous efforts in helping with the celebration and especially regarding the Carnegie Freedom Garden.

Adjourn

With there being no further business, Mayor Stevenson adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Joseph F. Smith
City Clerk