

## JOINT SERVICES COMMITTEE

August 4, 2020

The City/County Joint Services Committee meeting met at 8 a.m. this date in the Sam King Room of City Hall, 601 Broad Street. Present were:

County Commission Chair Scotty Hancock  
County Commission Vice-Chair Wright Bagby  
Mayor Bill Collins  
Mayor Pro-Tem Craig McDaniel  
County Manager Jamie McCord  
City Manager Sammy Rich  
Assistant County Manager Gary Burkhalter  
Assistant City Manager Patrick Eidson  
County Clerk Erin Elrod  
Special Projects Manager Bruce Ivey  
City Commissioner Jim Bojo  
City Commissioner Wendy Davis  
City Commissioner Mark Cochran.

Mayor Bill Collins called the meeting to order, and the minutes from the June 2, 2020 meeting of the Joint Services Committee were approved by common consent.

### **Chulio Hills/Shady Lane Update**

Jamie McCord commented on the progress of the Chulio Hills/Shady Lane SPLOST Project. Mr. McCord stated that this project is nearing completion and should be wrapped up before the end of 2020. There has been some delay regarding work on the project due to the COVID-19 and some delay attributed to acquiring right-of-way from property owners. The last signature from a property owner has been acquired, and a last step regarding a Georgia Power utility relocation matter are drawing to a close.

Everyone is glad to see this important project near completion.

### **Water and Sewer Update**

There was considerable discussion concerning water and sewer issues. Discussion began regarding sewer rates for unincorporated Floyd County. Since the City of Rome owns the sewer system county-wide, city residents pay a lower sewer rate than unincorporated Floyd County residents. Mr. Rich reminded everyone that the rate study, initiated in February 2020, should be completed soon. The COVID-19 issue has delayed the resolution of this study. Mr. Rich reminded everyone that it is very expensive to treat sewage – much more expensive than it was 30 years ago, and the City of Rome has to take the necessary steps regarding our rates to ensure this cost is covered and that there is a Fund Balance to address the ‘always unexpected’ infrastructure and operational needs.

The abundance of water in Floyd County and our sewer system are one of our recruiting tools for business and industry.

The Floyd County Commission expressed their concern regarding the sewer rates that are charged in unincorporated Floyd County, as well as the wholesale water agreement between the City of Rome and Floyd County. Floyd County would like to continue purchasing water from the City of Rome; however, they would like some resolution regarding the sewer rates that many feel are unfair.

Mr. Hancock emphasized that these two issues need to be resolved, and the City and the County need to continue their mutually, beneficial relationship regarding water and sewer. He acknowledged that there is some animosity between the City and County Water Departments, and that the City and County Commissions and Management should take the necessary steps to improve relations. Mr. Hancock questioned why the Floyd County Correctional Institute located on Blacks Bluff Road (in close proximity to the Waste Water Treatment Plant) was now being charged a higher unincorporated county sewer rate, even though the facility is close to the city limits. Floyd County indicated that they would be willing to buy more water from the City of Rome and less water from Calhoun if these issues can be resolved.

There was also some discussion regarding why Floyd County water bills are based on “gallons” and the City of Rome water bills are based on “units”. A city unit is equal to 750 gallons.

The topic of a combined city/county water billing office was discussed. There seem to be widespread support for such a measure which could result in operational efficiencies for both governments. Mr. McCord stated that he feels these two offices could successfully be combined; however, two questions that would need to be answered initially, 1) who would run the operation; and 2) where would the operation be located? After continued discussion, it was determined that the City and County Managers should study the concept of a combined City and County Water Billing Office initially. A consultant or other resources could be used to study this matter later, if needed. Mr. Hancock suggested that this matter could be discussed in more detail at the next Joint Services Committee meeting planned for October 6, 2020.

### **Trails Update**

Sammy Rich presented pictures of the recently paved Cantrell Connector. This Connector extends between the Kingfisher Trail and Cantrell Street. Mr. Rich also displayed several photographs of the recently paved Mount Berry Trail. This Trail extends from the trailhead located behind the Rome Post Office at Coligny Way, north along the Oostanaula River and Berry College property to its current termination point at Big Dry Creek. This freshly paved trail is approximately two miles in length and is one of the community’s most attractive trails. Eventually, this trail will cross Big Dry Creek and ‘link up’ to the Armuchee Connector.

Mr. McCord commented on the Redmond Trail, which is yet to be constructed. This Trail will extend to Berry College property and is expected to be put out for bid in

October 2020. Mr. McCord added that there are a couple of issues still to be resolved. This Trail will eventually connect with the Avenue A Levee Trail. A bridge crossing Little Dry Creek will be needed along with a railroad easement for a trestle crossing.

Mr. Rich added that one of our goals is to create a Loop so that trails will be connected, and this will be an advantageous feature for our community, and make our trails more marketable.

There was also some general discussion regarding the future Lindale Trail. This Trail will extend from the Floyd County Health Department on 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the recently completed Trailhead near the Railroad in Lindale. The Right-of-Way acquisition is currently underway, including property owned by Kerry Foods.

Mr. McCord reminded everyone that, in addition to the numerous benefits that come to a community with great Trail Systems, these trails do come with ongoing maintenance costs that must be funded annually.

#### **Walker Mountain Landfill**

Mr. Rich updated the group on the progress of Phase 8 at the Walker Mountain Landfill. This \$6.8M project is basically completed. Mr. Rich displayed an informative slideshow that displayed the site from the beginning through the various construction phases. This site is approximately 14 acres in size and is expected to last approximately 12 years.

It was suggested that various signage at the entrance area to the Walker Mountain Landfill be replaced.

#### **COVID-19 Facial Masks**

Mayor Collins reminded everyone of the ongoing COVID-19 issue and emphasized the importance of social distancing, hand washing, and the wearing of face masks. Erin Elrod stated that a public relations campaign is underway which will result in a video series and billboards regarding the importance of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The discussion now turned to statistics regarding COVID-19 cases and those hospitalized from this virus. Chairman Hancock and Mayor Pro Tem McDaniel emphasized that some of the statistics regarding COVID-19 cases can be misleading since a significant percentage of those persons in our local hospitals are from outside of Floyd County. It was suggested that the media is sensationalizing the statistics regarding this virus. Commissioners Davis and Cochran weighed in on this topic expressing their opinions regarding the seriousness of this virus. There was a difference of opinion regarding the media reporting of news related to this health pandemic and our hospitalization statistics.

#### **Current News Topics**

Mayor Collins announced that he is contacted regularly regarding the impact locally of national issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement, conservation easements, the local congressional race between Marjorie Taylor Green and Dr. John Cowan, and (locally) comments regarding the General Nathan Bedford Forrest Monument. Mayor

Collins announced that most of these inquiries appear to be looking for negativity associated with these topics.

**State of Georgia Executive Orders**

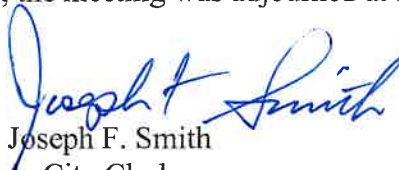
Vice-Chair Bagby suggested that our Local Legislative Delegation examine the use and limitations of State of Georgia Executive Orders. Currently, Governor Kemp's Executive Orders have typically prohibited local governments from establishing more restrictive measures than the State of Georgia.

**Electric Vehicle Charging Station**

Mr. McCord announced that Georgia Power would like to install an electric vehicle charging station at the Town Green parking area. This charging station will be installed at no cost to the City and the County; however, persons charging their electric vehicle would pay for that service.

**Adjourned**

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

  
Joseph F. Smith  
City Clerk