

**MONTICELLO CITY COUNCIL**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**February 9, 2021**  
**MINUTES**  
**6:00 P.M.**

**Members Present** – Mayor Bryan Standifer, Mayor Pro Tem Gail Harrell, Councilmembers David Wease, Cynthia Miller, Jennifer Murphy, and Larry Thurman were present.

**Staff Present** – City Manager Angela Redding, Clerk Karen Pennamon

**Media Present** – Susan Jacobs - The Monticello News

**Called Session** – Mayor Bryan Standifer called the meeting to order. The Invocation was given by Reverend Jimmy Horton, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. City Clerk Karen Pennamon called the roll.

**Agenda Approval** – Motion by Councilmember Wease to remove Item #11 – Executive Session. City Manager Redding requested to remove Item #7 - Chamber of Commerce. The City Manager request to add Item 5a – Rules of Conduct and Item 5b – First and Second Reading to the agenda. Motion by Councilmember Wease to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

**Citizen Comments**

**Gerri Yoder** – discussed her concerns with the GEFA Loan for Mine Lake property and Mine Lake water usage for citizens. Mrs. Yoder stated that at the City Council Regular Meeting on January 12, 2021, Councilmember Miller had requested money for Mine Lake to make it a recreational property because they could not use the water. She said there is nothing wrong with the water, but we cannot afford to use it. Mrs. Yoder noted that a 2005 engineering study estimates the cost at \$2 million to get the water from this property into the City. In a 2017 engineering report, the amount tripled to \$6.4 million. She added that 2,700 citizens are stuck paying the note for water they cannot use. Mrs. Yoder noted that the Mayor challenged each Councilperson to reach out to their constituents to ask how they felt about the City ciphering \$150,000.00 from the City’s Electric account to add walking and biking trails. She stated no one on Eatonton Street or East Greene Street had heard from anyone. Mrs. Yoder stated there is no recreational area expert on this Council, nor has this Council commissioned a feasible study. She does not want one more dollar of her tax money spent on something that someone on the Council thinks may be a good idea. She said the \$150,000.00 could be used to offset utility bills, install traffic signs, repair sidewalks, and on abatement of dilapidated houses.

**Adam McGinnis** – presented a handout to the City Council. Mr. McGinnis discussed several budget line items in the City’s FY 2021 budget. He stated the City gave a help campaign for the citizens

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totaling \$240,000.00 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that the City has multiple vehicles in every department, which are all new. Mr. McGinnis questioned the salaries and budgets in the City Electric Department. Mr. McGinnis said the Council unanimously voted and passed this budget, and it is not about the citizens or what the community wants; it is what they want. He said it is time for us all to do something about what is going on in this City. Let us move forward, not backward.

**Reverend William Gibson** – informed the City Council that Deacon Joe K. Davis had passed and inquired about the street naming on Blue Ruin Street. Mayor Standifer replied that Blue Ruin Street is on the agenda for discussion.

**David Thompson** – thanked the City for repairing the potholes at Highway 83 and Webb Street. Mr. Thompson stated the City needs a public relations campaign on the roles each department plays. Mr. Thompson encouraged the City to act on code enforcement because they have been without it for more than five years. He said the City Council needs to decide on the Mine Lake property and the first thing that needs to be done is to evaluate what it would take to utilize the water. If it cannot be usable at any cost selling the property would be his recommendation.

**Reverend Jimmy Horton**, Springfield Baptist Church - stated that the City Council approved the renaming of Blue Ruin Street to Joe K. Davis Street at their Regular Meeting on September 8, 2020. Reverend Horton said that Deacon Joe K. Davis deserves recognition and asked the Council to act on this issue. He informed the Council that the church received a \$469.17 light bill even though their services are outside. Reverend Horton asked the City Council to check on this matter.

**Roberta Anderson** – stated she did not understand why the contract with MEAG could not be broken because the electricity is expensive. She said people could not survive if they receive a check for \$700.00 and their utility bill is \$400.00. Mrs. Anderson informed the City Council that her electric bill is \$1,000.00 this month. She suggested that the City separate the water, electric, and gas bills. Mrs. Anderson stated that she had contacted the City about Frobel Street's drainage issues, but nothing has been done.

Mayor Standifer stated that the City Council hears its citizens' concerns and will meet to discuss the electric rates.

Mayor Pro Tem Harrell presented a letter from Monticello citizen Candice Mock addressing small businesses in the City of Monticello. Ms. Mock wrote that she has concerns that Monticello needs more small businesses and more options for citizens. Small businesses come and go, and the lack of community support being a primary reason. Ms. Mock proposed two solutions; the first proposal is to offer incentives for new and existing businesses. By giving discounted rates for "X" amount of months, the new business owner could have some time to get their feet on the ground and business running before being stuck with the blow of the "normal" utility rates. Her second proposal is to gather all the local small businesses in town to offer incentives for consumers to shop locally.

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**Downtown Development Authority** – Michele Celani, Executive Director, gave an update on the Downtown Development Authority events. Mrs. Celani and Mayor Pro Tem Harrell attended a conference call with the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission who offer bike and pedestrian pathway, street planning, and identify eligible funding. The Downtown Development Authority is inviting local and State shareholders to participate in a phone conference with the NEGRC Principal Planner John Devine to determine the best course of action. We have a new identity and logo, domain name, website, and the new tagline is “Opening the Door to Opportunity.” The DDA is moving to 351 South Forsyth Street. We will present The Four Corners Mural Project and Art Alley plans to the Historic Preservation Commission on February 25, 2021. The DDA has applied for additional grant funding from the Georgia Council of Arts for the mural project. Mrs. Celani stated they request permission to add plants to the courtyard to create a butterfly garden behind the Monticello City Complex. This project will be eligible for inclusion on the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail. The Commerce Mural project at the Bank of Monticello has begun, and the Bank of Monticello is interested in portraying Native Americans on the mural. The DDA has reached out to the Muscogee Creek Nation in Oklahoma, Atlanta History Center, The Center for Public History, University of West Georgia, and the Georgia Historical Society seeking recommendations and feedback. The DDA Board has approved artist Tamala Hoss for the mural paintings. They have requested delegates from 22 African American churches throughout Jasper County to assist with the Funderburg Mural. The delegate appointments are due by February 15, 2021. This project's representatives will gather feedback from the community and share it with the DDA by February 22, 2021. Mrs. Celani stated the NEGRC commended the Downtown Development Authority for being the only downtown development association in Georgia known to have created youth programs. The Youth Advisory Council was appointed on January 25, 2021.

**Historic Preservation Commission – David Thompson** - gave an update on the Historic Preservation collaboration with the Downtown Development Authority and Certificate of Appropriateness received. Mr. Thompson stated the HPC is partnering with the DDA for a grant to preserve historic properties. He noted the Historic Preservation Commission had scheduled a meeting with the City Manager, Downtown Development Authority, and a potential buyer of the Ford Building to discuss HPC guidelines. The HPC approved Certificates of Appropriateness for a restaurant at 187 Madison Road and a demolition at 918 Funderburg Drive. An application for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 1271 Forsyth Street is under review. Mr. Thompson stated part of the historic preservation guidelines is that natural brick cannot be painted. He said the HPC is working with property owners on guideline requirements in the historic district.

**Approval of Minutes** - Mayor Pro Tem Harrell made a motion to approve the following minutes: Regular Meeting of Mayor and Council – January 12, 2021, seconded by Councilmember Wease. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

**Second reading to consider the adoption of an Amendment of an Ordinance to the City Code, Section 42.1 – Construction and Yard Refuse.** Councilmember Murphy made a motion for approval of the second reading, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

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## Agenda Items

1. Consider DDA request to add plants to the Government Complex garden. Motion by Councilmember Wease to approve the request, seconded by Councilmember Thurman. Voting for the motion was unanimous.
2. Consider MEAG Off-System Sales and Voluntary Deposits. Motion by Councilmember Murphy to deposit the credit back to the MEAG power bill, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell. Voting for the motion was unanimous.
3. Consider a Resolution by Mayor and City Council of Monticello, Georgia pursuant to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 Authorizing Adoption of the Jasper County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell to approve the Resolution, seconded by Councilmember Murphy. Voting for the motion was unanimous.
4. Consider a Resolution by the City Council of Monticello authorizing the Mayor to Execute a License Agreement with Piedmont Academy to use the tennis courts at Funderburg Park from February 1, 2021 – April 16, 2021 for practices and home games. Practices are Monday through Friday from 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM with two home games on March 19, 2021 and April 12, 2021; to provide for severability; to provide an effective date; and for other purposes. City Manager Redding stated that Piedmont Academy request to change the original game date from March 11, 2021, to March 19, 2021. Motion to approve the Resolution by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell, seconded by Councilmember Wease. Voting for the motion was unanimous.
5. Consider the Request to Voluntarily Provide Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) Leave to Eligible Employees until December 31, 2021. Motion by Councilmember Miller extending the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) until December 31, 2021, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell. Voting for the motion was unanimous.
  - a. Consider the Resolution of Mayor and Council of Monticello establishing Procedures, Rules and Regulations of Conduct – TABLED until the February 15, 2021, Work Session
  - b. First and Second Readings Code Section 2-29 – Motion by Councilmember Thurman to approve the Resolution of the Mayor and Council of the City of Monticello to remove the Code Section 2-29 and its requirements, seconded by Councilmember Wease. Councilmember Murphy recused herself from the vote because she is an employee at the Monticello News. Councilmember Wease rescinded his motion. Motion fails due to a second.

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6. Discussion of Blue Ruin Street – Mayor Standifer stated that the City of Monticello mailed surveys to Blue Ruin Street residents concerning renaming Blue Ruin Street. City Manager Redding stated there were 22 surveys mailed to the residents. Nine surveys were returned opposing renaming Blue Ruin Street, three were in favor, five were returned undeliverable due to it being vacant property or unable to forward, and five were not returned. Councilmember Murphy recommended that a street dedication be done instead of renaming the street. City Manager Redding stated that a few of the residents' comments were that they would have to change their driver's license, social security cards, and other information. Some residents said that they are not leaving their homes due to the pandemic, and some agency employees are still teleworking, which makes it hard to get in touch with them. Motion by Councilmember Wease for City Manager Redding to resurvey Blue Ruin Street residents to see if a memorial dedicated to Joe K. Davis will suffice, seconded by Councilmember Murphy. Councilmember Wease rescinded his motion, and Councilmember Murphy rescinded her motion. Motion fails due to a second. Motion by Mayor Pro Tem to move forward with a memorial sign for Joe K. Davis on Blue Ruin Street, seconded by Councilmember Miller. Voting for the motion was unanimous.
  
7. Discussion of Code Enforcement Options – City Manager Redding stated that City Attorney Reitman presented the following options to the Mayor and Council during the February 2, 2021, Work Session: 1) Blighted Property Tax Ordinance, 2) Utilizing Superior Court. She noted the Blighted Property Tax Ordinance only addresses vacant homes and handles other violations related to safety, including abandoned cars and appliances left outside where a child could get hurt. She said the City Attorney has reservations about the second option because the City of Monticello would have to eliminate the City Ordinances. It could be reinstated with a first and second read and would not have to go to General Assembly. City Manager Redding stated that in a follow-up conversation with Jasper County Magistrate Judge Tim Lam, there was confusion regarding whether the City could hire a code enforcement officer or utilize and provide funds to the County. She noted the City could have a City code enforcement officer take complaints and prepare reports but would turn them over to the County to present to Judge Lam. The City code enforcement officer could also be a witness to provide additional testimony on the property. She noted the violation letters provide a certain number of days to address the issue, and if not addressed, additional steps are taken. Motion by Councilmember Wease to eliminate the City Code Enforcement Ordinances, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell. Councilmember Wease amended his motion to add on a year-to-year agreement with Jasper County, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

8. City Manager's Report

Electric Utility Rates – Announced that October, November, and December electric rates were billed erroneously at the Summer rate instead of the Winter rates. For the

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first 650 kilowatts, the Summer and Winter are the same. However, the Winter rate for usage over 650 kilowatts is lower than the Summer rate. Customers will receive a credit on their bills. The finance department is recalculating the bills to compare October, November, and December. January billing goes out the last week of this month, so the adjustment has already been made.

Park/Sidewalk Project – To close this project, striping work must be done. Georgia Department of Transportation did not approve the subcontractor provided by the contractor. The contractor submitted another subcontractor and is waiting on approval from the Georgia Department of Transportation.

Advanced Disposal Annual Rate – The annual rate adjustment due to changes in the consumer price index is 1.7% this year.

Funding for Sidewalks – The City of Monticello has applied for funding to repair sidewalks in the City. The City Manager will provide an announcement of the grant amount awarded when it is available.

CVS – The store manager, Bernard Kennedy, has been notified about a retaining wall, which is continuing to slip down the hill at this location. Mr. Kennedy has reported the problem to his district manager.

Get Ahead House – The Get Ahead House roof needs to be replaced. In December 2020, the roofing estimate was \$18,151.00. The vendor has reduced the price to \$17,940.00.

Website – The City Manager and City Clerk have met with three companies via Zoom regarding website hosting. They will review the information and provide a recommendation to the City Council regarding the vendor selected to update the website.

Ford Building – A meeting was finalized with the potential buyer for the Tucker Ford Building. Keller Williams was contacted because no one had contacted the City regarding the usage of that building. A copy of the Central Business District's allowable uses was provided to the real estate agent to make sure the potential buyer had this information.

Work Session – The Mayor and City Manager are working to finalize the date for a work session to discuss utility rates. They received the last information required to analyze the electric rates. When the work session's date is confirmed, the information will be distributed on how the City of Monticello compares to other electric cities. It will explain kilowatts, therms, and tips for residents on how to insulate their homes and utilize energy-efficient appliances.

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New Employees – There are two new employees in the Electric Department, the approved budget was with the addition of employees in the Electric Department. Joining us are Myles Campbell, Groundman/Operator, and Danny Chandler, Lineman Apprentice, and with these additions, we will have five employees in the Electric Department.

Mayor Pro Tem Harrell inquired about the process for streaming City Council meetings for citizens who cannot attend the meeting. City Manager Redding replied if it is the will of the Council, we can work on streaming the Council meetings via Facebook Live. It will require an additional employee staying after hours and overtime to work the camera on the tripod. Mayor Standifer stated this item would be on the next work session agenda.

11. Executive Session for Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate, and Legal Matters – N/A

12. Comments by the Governing Body

Mayor Standifer thanked the City Council and citizens for attending the meeting. He encouraged the citizens to attend the upcoming work sessions on code enforcement and electrical rates. Mayor Standifer expressed his condolences to the family of Joe K. Davis.

Mayor Pro Tem Harrell thanked everyone for coming out and said it is great to see citizen involvement and have everyone engaged in what is going on. I hope we can work something out to stream on Facebook so that others can participate. There will be a combined effort between the City of Monticello, Jasper County, Shoppes of Monticello, Chamber of Commerce for a Trash Clean-Up Day on Saturday, February 27, 2021. Restaurants in the City of Monticello will provide breakfast for everyone at the City Square at 7:30 a.m., and everyone will disburse for trash pickup at 8:30. Trash bags are available at City Hall for trash pick on the City streets. The City Street Department will pick up the trash bags. It is an excellent way for the City and County to get together to clean up and beautify the City and County. Everyone is welcome to participate.

Councilmember Wease thanked the Citizens for coming out to voice their concerns. He noted that one thing left out of the discussion on the electric utility rate conversation is that in 2020 the City gave back \$300.00 to the residents. The credit is equivalent to 2 1/2 cents per kilowatt-hour, which puts us right there with the best in the State of Georgia. You could not have gotten electricity any cheaper. The average resident usage rate is equivalent to between \$9.50 and \$11.00 a month. We have been concerned, and we have given back. The City gave it back this way because it can be budgeted. May God bless you every day, and Happy Valentine's Day.

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Councilmember Miller stated that on January 29, 2021, a majority of the City Council participated in a conference call with EPDA regarding the water at Mine Lake. She noted that we must show that we need water for us to get a permit. You can fix it up and go in and do repairs, but if there is no need for that water in the City, they will not give you a permit. They are trying to move away from giving permits to individual cities to giving permits to three or more cities that all have a central location and are disbursing the water. It is possible that the water could be usable, but we must show a need for it.

Councilmember Murphy had no comment.

Councilmember Thurman had no comment

City Manager Redding stated she is glad to be back.

13. Meeting adjournment at 7:56 P.M.

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