

**MONTICELLO CITY COUNCIL**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**January 12, 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 Clerk Karen Pennamon, City Manager Angela Redding was not present.

**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** – Mayor Standifer informed the City Council that the Downtown Development Authority requests to table Item #2 – DDA Presentation – Wendall Yoder under Agenda Items to next month’s regular meeting. Mayor Standifer requests to table Item #5 – City Manager’s Report under the Agenda Items to next month’s regular meeting. Motion by Councilmember Wease to remove Item #11 – Executive Session. Motion by Councilmember Miller to add Mine Lake under the Agenda Item #2. Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Councilmember Miller. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

**Citizen Comments**

**Gerri Yoder** – Mrs. Yoder presented the City Council with photos of deteriorating sidewalks and dilapidated buildings in the City of Monticello. She noted we have existing crumbling infrastructure, traffic issues that are not being addressed, and many abandoned houses that are not only an eyesore but a breeding ground for crime. Mrs. Yoder stated if we are not taking care of what we already have, why are we considering adding more? The City residents already have access to over 75,000 acres of staff and maintained land between Cedar Creek and Piedmont Wildlife Management areas with existing walking, biking, driving trails, picnic and camping areas, and accessibility to multiple lakes. We are a small town talking about spending big money to allow public access and adding amenities and walking trails on a remote 705-acre property with a huge lake. It will have to be maintained and policed, not to mention the significant liability issue it will add.

**Doug Currie** - stated he has been in Monticello for twenty years and was promised that the sidewalks on Forsyth Street would be fixed and drainage problems addressed, but nothing has been done. He noted we spent \$3.3 million on this property and pay approximately \$18,000.00 per month for it. That

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could pay for a lot of equipment and many people working on picking up debris and keeping the streets clean. Mr. Currie stated another issue is the sidewalks. The traffic light on Forsyth Street is the first place people stop when coming in from out of town, and the sidewalks are busted up. He noted that if you plan to spend \$3 million of taxpayers' money, it should be put to the taxpayers' vote.

**Roberta Anderson** - stated the Get Ahead House cannot meet the criteria of the current Memorandum of Understanding and will have to close. Mrs. Anderson requested a meeting with the City Council and City Manager to discuss Get Ahead House's liabilities. She stated they get \$2,815.00 from the City of Monticello, and the money received from the City will not support the Get Ahead House. Mrs. Anderson informed the City Council that equipment repairs and landscape materials for Funderburg Park are needed.

**Reverend Jimmy Horton, Springfield Baptist Church**, thanked the Mayor and City Council. Reverend Horton stated there are areas where the City that needs improvements. He is a member of the Get Ahead House board and does not want to see it close. Reverend Horton stated he has received numerous complaints about the electric bills and asked City Council to see if they can trim it down. We do not want new citizens saying the bills are too high and they cannot live here. He noted this is a great City, and we are one community.

**David Thompson** - stated that there are "cannot use air brakes" signs for big trucks coming into town on all the major roads. There has not been a single ticket written for the use of air brakes on the trucks. Every day there are from fifty to one hundred trucks coming down Forsyth Street. They use air brakes all the way to the red light, which is very loud and noisy. He asks the City Council to contact Jasper County Officials to enforce the regulation. Mr. Thompson stated we also have a problem with speeding on Forsyth Street. It is not uncommon for trucks coming north on Highway 83 to run 50 to 60 miles per hour. The speed limit sign is after the city limit sign, and I ask the City Council to consider moving it out toward the perimeter road, so they begin to see a speed change.

**Charles Forsythe** – stated the alternative to the electric cost to make it easier on many people, which is to have the cost be the actual cost. He noted the City could add this Valorem tax so the citizens can take it off their income tax. Mr. Forsyth stated the utility bills have been killing him for over fifteen years or twenty years. The utilities are the biggest drawback here. Mr. Forsythe said that the City used to pick up leaves and limb cutting if they were not too big. If the City does not have a truck to remove yard debris and rent one, it indirectly increases my taxes. He noted that the prior City Councils had not done due diligence on the lake development.

**Downtown Development Authority** – Michele Celani, Executive Director, gave an update on the Downtown Development Authority events. She stated the DDA had raised \$9,197.00 for the Four Corners Mural and Art Alley Project with an additional outstanding pledge of \$1,000.00. The Art Alley Project will be featured on the Roseline Carter Butterfly Trail. This trail receives statewide and national exposure and will increase tourism to our City and the scenic bypass located at the Trailhead. Mrs. Celani stated she is collaborating with the Garden Club to add small butterfly gardens to the area. DDA submitted a request to add plants to the City's courtyard behind the Monticello Governmental

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Complex. Two art selections were approved for installation at the Monticello Governmental Complex and Rusted Roots Salon. Our Commerce Mural has received a grant from the Go Georgia Arts for cities with populations under 10,000. We will be on the Georgia Mural Trail, which also receives statewide and national recognition. The mural will be on the Bank of Monticello Building's second story facing Highway 83 North and will feature images related to Monticello's commercial history. They will begin painting on the Welcome Mural featured by local artist Tamara Haase at 139 West Washington Street in April 2021. The D.D.A. has established two youth programs. The Youth Advisory Council will induct members on January 25, 2021, with their regular meeting beginning in February 2021. The Young Entrepreneurs Program is adding items and merchants inside the Shoppes of Monticello. They have reached out to schools about expanding the program. The Downtown Development Authority will be rolling out a new website and logo by the end of the month. We are in the process of planning a tour of homes and gardens and luncheon for Mother's Day on May 8, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We want to feature ten local homes and include a luncheon.

**Chamber of Commerce** – Brandi McMichael, Visitor's Center Manager, gave an update on the Chamber of Commerce events. She stated the Annual Chamber of Commerce Dinner Meeting is on April 21, 2021, at the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center. The 2020 visitor count is 6,942.

**Historic Preservation Commission** – **David Thompson** stated the Historic Preservation Commission approved window replacements at 448 College Street. A request was presented to the City Manager to conduct a new survey of the historic area. There are no plans to enlarge or change the district, but this would update the photos of the properties and conditions of the properties for an accurate record of the historic district. He stated he met with Mr. McGinnis and reminded him that anything in the historic district needed to go through the approval process. The HPC will be glad to meet with anyone looking at buying, renting, or renovating anything in the historic area. Mr. Thompson noted that he had discussed the HPC guidelines with someone remodeling the old hot dog stand on Highway 83.

**Approval of Minutes** - Mayor Pro Tem Harrell made a motion to amend the December 28, 2020 minutes. Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell to approve the following minutes: Work Session of Mayor and Council – December 3, 2020, Regular Meeting of Mayor and Council – December 8, 2020, Amended Called Meeting of Mayor and Council – December 28, 2020, seconded by Councilmember Murphy. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

**First reading to consider the adoption of an amendment to the City Code, Section 42.1 – Construction and Yard Refuse.** City Attorney Joe Reitman gave a brief update on the amendment to the City Code, Section 42.1. He stated the sole purpose of this is to take out the following language, “so long as not greater than five feet in length and 50 pounds in weight”. Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell to approve the first reading of the ordinance to amend the Monticello ordinances with the language that is constructed in Exhibit A, Section 42.1- Construction and Yard Refuse, seconded by Councilmember Wease. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

#### **Agenda Items**

1. Consider a Resolution for the 2021 Appointments:

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- City Manager – Angela Redding
- City Clerk – Karen Pennamon
- City Attorney – Joe Reitman
- City Engineer – Robert Jordan

Motion by Councilmember Wease to approve the 2021 appointments, seconded by Councilmember Murphy. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

2. Mine Lake - Councilmember Miller address some of the issues discussed during the citizen comments. She stated that the City Council purchased the Mine Lake property under the impression that they could use the water, but they cannot because it would take a lot to use it. She noted they were approached by someone to purchase the property, but it would have been at a loss, and she did not want to see the citizens paying for something they no longer had. Her idea was to make it something all the citizens could enjoy. They have set aside \$150,000.00 to make walking and biking trails around the lake. The property would be protected, so we will be able to use the water in the future. Our attorney has stated that we have a Recreation Property Act and what we would do is post a sign letting everyone know about the dangers. Georgia Interlocal Risk Management has visited the property and only required a fire extinguisher in the property's cabin. You can do several things on the property, and one is to have a recreational vehicle to rent out. You want to have something available for people to come to the City. We need to start thinking about the future of Monticello. Some may think that \$150,000.00 is a lot, but it comes from Blockstream, something you have already purchased. She is looking at taking money the citizens have paid and reusing it. Councilmember Miller made a motion to move forward with the proposal by the City Engineer, Robert Jordan. The motion failed due to a lack of a second. Councilmember Murphy stated that we would need a project coordinator and get bids. Councilmember Miller noted that the City Engineer would do that. Mayor Pro Tem Harrell stated that the project would have to be put out for bids. Councilmember Wease asked for clarification on conducting a public hearing. Mayor Standifer said we would not hold a public hearing due to COVID-19 restrictions. He recommends that the City Council find out what their constituents want and bring it back to the Council. The City Council consented to table the agenda item until February Regular Meeting.
3. Discussion of Roads in Oak Ridge Subdivision – Attorney Reitman stated the subdivision roads are in disrepair. The expenses and liability would be on the taxpayers. He recommended that the owner bring the roads into compliance with the City codes and get an engineer to certify them before the City takes them over. Councilmember Murphy stated the subdivision was built in 2004 before the subdivision policy was implemented in 2008. The consensus of the City Council was to have Attorney Reitman contact the owner with the recommendation.
4. Consider a Resolution to Set and Publish Qualification Fees for the 2021 General Election for the Offices of Mayor, City Council - District 1, Post 1 and City Council -

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District 2, Post 1. Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Harrell to approve the Resolution seconded by Councilmember Murphy. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

5. City Manager's Report – N/A

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

12. Comments by the Governing Body

Mayor Standifer stated the City Manager is doing well, in good spirits, and sends everyone her best. She hopes to be back with us soon. Mayor Standifer introduced Sheila Pounds, who is running for a County Commission seat. City Council will discuss the new evaluation process at the February meeting or work session.

Mayor Pro Tem Harrell had no comments.

Councilmember Wease stated thank you all for coming to give your reports and for the citizen concerns. I hope everyone has a great 2021.

Councilmember Murphy stated that citizens should contact their appropriate council with their ideas for the Mine Lake property.

Councilmember Miller had no comments.

Councilmember Thurman had no comments.

13. Meeting adjournment at 7:05 P.M.

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