

ROME CITY COMMISSION

Monday, May 8, 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, Collins, and McDaniel present. Commissioner Bojo opened the meeting with a moment of silence for the passing of Bill Byington, then the invocation and pledge to the flag.

Minutes – April 24, 2023

The Minutes of the April 24, 2023, meeting, as submitted in writing by the Secretary, were approved by unanimous consent.

Salvation Army Week

Commissioner Doss presented a joint City/County proclamation proclaiming the Week of May 10 – 16 as Salvation Army Week in our community. This proclamation was presented to Captains Paula and Tim Blevins of the Rome Salvation Army chapter. Accompanying Commissioner Doss with the presentation of this proclamation was Assistant City Manager Meredith Ulmer, who serves on the Advisory Board and Assistant to the City Manager Kelley Parker, who serves on the Women’s Auxiliary.

Captains Paula and Tim will be transferred to the Warner Robbins chapter of the Salvation Army in June 2023. Mayor Stevenson presented a farewell gift and thanked the Blevins for their enormous contributions while serving in Rome.

Peace Officers Memorial Day

Commissioner Askew presented a joint City/County proclamation proclaiming May 19, 2023, as Peace Officers Memorial Day in our community. This proclamation was presented to Rome Police Chief Denise Downer – McKinney and Officers Stacey Kidd and John Giles.

On Friday, May 19th at 11:00 a.m. the annual Law Enforcement Day Service will take place at the Law Enforcement Center.

Carey Jones

Ms. Carey Jones addressed the City Commission concerning national and local financial matters. Ms. Jones was speaking on behalf of Ms. Norma Reboledo who had registered as a guest but was unable to attend tonight due to a family emergency.

Ms. Jones briefly spoke regarding financial issues facing the United States including our debt ceiling, various banking institutions at risk, and the cryptocurrency impact on our financial system. On a local level, Ms. Jones commented on the increase in Rome’s water rates and the intention to issue bonds for the construction of a Rome middle school later this year.

Tom Couch

Mr. Tom Couch, 521 E. 9th Street, addressed the City Commission regarding the ethics complaint filed against Commissioner Mark Cochran. Mr. Couch questioned the ethics complaint and the Archer Report. Mr. Couch said the ethics complaint is unclear and questioned how the Archer Report could be considered during the deliberations of this ethics matter. Mr. Couch stated that the ethics violation is not clearly defined and does not appear to be a violation of the items stated in the Rome Code of Ethics. Mr. Couch quoted a small portion of the Rome Ethics Code.

Advent Hospital Bonds

Assistant City Attorney John Hawkins explained that a resolution is before the City Commission tonight to express support for the planned \$200 million in bonds regarding Advent Hospital (formerly Redmond Regional Medical Center). Mr. Hawkins further explained that the City of Rome in no way has any financial obligations or risks associated with these bonds. However, an IRS regulation requires municipal support before the bonds can move forward.

Commissioner McDaniel moved to approve the Advent Hospital bond resolution as presented. Commissioner Quick seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Park Court Closing Ordinance – First Reading

Secretary Smith announced that the ordinance to close a portion of Park Court is being placed on First Reading tonight. The resolution to initiate this closing occurred in April 2023. A second reading for this ordinance will be scheduled for the May 22nd City Commission Meeting.

Annexation & Rezonings – First Reading

Secretary Smith announced that the following annexation and rezonings were being placed on first reading:

- a) A23-05-01 – Request to annex the property located at 7 Billy Pyle Rd., Rome, GA 30165; Floyd County Tax Parcel H13O – 182. (Planning Commission recommends approval, 7-0).
- b) Z23-001-04 – Request to rezone from Light Industrial to Heavy Industrial for the property located at Technology Parkway NW, Rome, GA 30165; Floyd County Tax Parcels H12W-016F and H12Z – 006A. (Planning Commission Motion to Deny was Defeated, 5-2, Resulting in Recommendation of Approval).
- c) Z23-05-05 – Request to rezone from Community Commercial to Light Industrial for the property located at 1219 East 2nd Ave. SE, Rome, GA 30161; Floyd County Tax Parcel J14J-328. (Planning Commission recommends approval, 7-0).

A public hearing on these three matters is scheduled for the May 22nd City Commission Meeting.

Broadband Ordinance

Commissioner Quick moved to adopt the Broadband Ordinance and Commissioner Askew seconded. City Manager Rich explained that this ordinance would declare Rome a Broadband Ready Community and would benefit our area with certain State of Georgia departments.

The vote to adopt the broadband ordinance was unanimously in favor.

GMA District 1 Officers

Secretary Smith announced that the Georgia Municipal Association is asking Rome to vote on the slate of District 1 Officers. Rome Commissioner Quick is intended to become the first Vice President. Commissioner McDaniel moved to approve the slate of officers as submitted. Commissioner Doss seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

SPLOST Update

City Manager Rich updated the Commissioners regarding the process for the 2023 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum ballot. The appointed Citizens SPLOST Committee is meeting each Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the Emergency Operations Center at 409 East 12th Street. The committee will hear both government and citizen suggestions for projects between now and June 8th. The committee will then narrow the projects down to a ballot for the November election.

Rome/Floyd Development Authority

Mayor Stevenson announced that the Rome/Floyd Development Authority will meet on Tuesday, May 16th at 10:00 a.m. in the boardroom at 800 Broad Street.

Executive Session

Mayor Stevenson announced that an Executive Session was held prior to the beginning of tonight's meeting on the motion of Commissioner McDaniel, seconded of Commissioner Bojo, and a unanimous vote. One real estate matter and one litigation matter were discussed. No votes were taken. Commissioner Doss moved to adjourn Executive Session, Commissioner Quick seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Library Board

Mayor Pro Tem Cochran announced that the Library Board will meet on Thursday, May 18th at 4:00 p.m. at Rome/Floyd County Library.

Historic Preservation Committee

Commissioner Beeman announced that the Historic Preservation Committee will meet on Wednesday, May 17th at 2:30 p.m. in the Sam King Room.

Keep Rome/Floyd Beautiful Commission

Commissioner Beeman announced that the Keep Rome/Floyd Beautiful Commission will meet on Monday, May 22nd at 4:00 p.m. at the Floyd County Administration Building.

Public Works/Traffic/Transit Committee

Commissioner Beeman announced that the Public Works/Traffic/Transit Committee will meet on Wednesday, May 10th at 10:00 a.m. in the Sam King Room.

Downtown Development Authority

Commissioner Quick announced that the Downtown Development Authority will meet on Thursday, May 11th at 8:30 a.m. in the Carnegie Training Room. Commissioner Quick also commended the

Downtown Development Authority for the very successful Broad Street arts festival that took place on Saturday, May 8th.

Public Safety Committee

Commissioner Askew announced that the Public Safety Committee will meet on Tuesday, May 16th at 2:00 p.m. in the Sam King Room.

Police Officers' Memorial Service

Commissioner Askew reminded everyone that the Peace Officers' Memorial Service will be held on Friday, May 19th at 9:00 a.m. at the Law Enforcement Complex Memorial Plaza.

Taylor McMichael – Alcohol Control Commission

Commissioner Collins moved to appoint Ms. Taylor McMichael to serve on the Alcohol Control Commission, Commissioner Quick seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Finance Committee

Commissioner Collins announced that the Finance Committee will meet on Wednesday, May 17th at 9:00 a.m. in the Sam King Room.

Peaches – Revocation of Liquor Pouring License

Commissioner McDaniel introduced the matter concerning Peaches, 325 Broad Street. On May 1, 2023, in a special called meeting (and hearing), the Alcohol Control Commission voted to recommend to the City Commission that the liquor pouring license at Peaches be revoked. The motion also stated that Peaches will be allowed to reapply for a liquor pouring license after 90 days, if she can bring evidence back to the ACC confirming that she has established food service at the level necessary to meet Rome's food/drink ratio requirement. The motion further stated that the City Commission was encouraged to reexamine Rome's food/drink ratio to determine if any change should be implemented.

Mayor Stevenson invited Peaches licensee Stephanie Shaw to the podium. Ms. Shaw addressed the Commission stating that she is trying to improve her food service at Peaches. She said that she has discussed her kitchen operation and the possibility of allowing Ms. Natalie Wood, owner of Jazzy Hot Wings in Rome, to begin operating her kitchen. She stated that this arrangement would allow her offer expanded kitchen hours, an expanded menu, and a chance to meet Rome's ratio. She also asked for leniency from the Commission and stated that if her liquor pouring license was suspended for 30 days or more, she would have to reapply for her State license.

Commissioner McDaniel moved to approve the Alcohol Control Commission recommendation for revocation of the liquor pouring license at Peaches, along with the other conditions recommended by the ACC. Commissioner Beeman seconded the motion.

There was considerable discussion by the City Commission members. Commissioner Collins stated that he would prefer a 30 day suspension with an ability to reapply at that time, rather than a 90 day revocation and reapplication requirement. He also encouraged the City to examine the food/drink ratios of other similar communities around the State and compare their ordinance requirements to Rome's. Commissioner Collins seemed to express support for removing or significantly amending Rome's food/drink ratio. The City of Rome has approved variances over the past few years. Three

establishments have been granted a variance to use products other than food to achieve their food/drink ratio, however these three establishments are all small in nature, are not entertainment venues, and close by 11:00 p.m. (unless given special temporary permission to be open later on a limited basis). Rome's proposed small bar ordinance was recommended by the Alcohol Control Commission but defeated earlier this year by the City Commission. At least one member of the Alcohol Control Commission has expressed their opinion that it may be time to change Rome's food/drink ratio. Commissioner Collins attempted to call the ACC member to the podium, however it was determined by the remaining Commission that that was not appropriate at this time. The Alcohol Control Commission will review the findings of the food/drink ratio survey that the City Clerk's Office will perform. This will likely be done over the next 90 days. With the discussion concluded, the motion to suspend the liquor pouring license at Peaches was unanimously approved. The beer and wine pouring, restaurant, and entertainment license remain in place.

Commissioner McDaniel made a motion that this liquor pouring revocation would not become effective immediately, but would be effective on May 15th, giving Peaches an additional week to sell some of their existing liquor inventory. Commissioner Doss seconded the motion. Commissioner Cochran expressed his opposition to this motion, questioning Commissioner McDaniel as to whether or not there was a problem at Peaches, and if there is a problem, why delay the remedy.

Commissioner McDaniel's motion to delay the effective date of the revocation until May 15th was approved by the following vote:

YES: DOSS, QUICK, ASKEW, COLLINS and McDANIEL

NO: COCHRAN, BOJO, and BEEMAN

Northwest Georgia Regional Commission

Commissioner McDaniel announced that the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission will meet on Thursday, May 18th, at 11:00 a.m. at the Rome Civic Center.

Rome/Floyd Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Commissioner McDaniel announced that the Rome/Floyd Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will meet on Tuesday, May 16th at noon at their main office.

Adjourn

With there being no further business, Mayor Stevenson adjourned the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

Joseph F. Smith
City Clerk