

**City of Varnell
Council Meeting Minutes
March 20, 2018**

Members Present: Mayor – Tom Dickson
Council Members: Mayor Pro Tem – Ashlee Godfrey, Bill Caylor,
Bob Roche, Clyde Williams & David Owens

**City Administrator: Mike Brown
City Clerk: Pam Garrison**

The City Council meeting was called to order at 5:50 pm and a quorum was confirmed by Mayor, Tom Dickson.

Invocation was given by Reverend Steven Street from Varnell United Methodist Church. The Pledge to the Flag was given by local Boy Scout, Mason Whitmire.

Reports from City Administrator

City Administrator Mike Brown gave update on the following projects:

- PA system is now operational with a few minor adjustments to take place.
- Contact with property owner Laura Hammontree, located at the 4-way stop in Varnell has been made to see if she was interested in selling her parcel of property. She stated that she would be interested but no price was discussed at this time.
- Rezoning issues may be brought to the Council from Mr. John Davis, property owner of a parcel of property on the corner of Main Street and Hwy. 2. The rezoning will be going to the Planning Commission on April 23, 2018 and then will be presented to our council the following month for final approval.
- The playground grant that has been applied for has passed the first step has been approved By Land Water Conservation grant.
This step will be one a many before the approval of the \$25,000.00 matching fund grant which will probably be towards the end of October 2018.

AGENDA, MINUTES AND FINANCIAL REPORT

A motion was made by Ashlee Godfrey to approve the Agenda, Minutes and Financial reports for February 20, 2018. The motion was seconded by Clyde Williams, and the motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Finance & Budget – Expenses were down for month of February with the Police Department as well as the Administration Department both falling under budget.
- Charter & Long-Range Planning – the “Views & Values” video is being reviewed and will be presented possibly at the May 2019 meeting.
- Annexations - Bob Roche and David Owens are trying to get a meeting lined up to meet with the HOA president from Highland Forrest as well as the HOA president from Mountain Oaks. Results will be presented at the next Council meeting.

- Recreation & Community Outreach – Bob Roche & David Owens met with Whitfield County Recreation Director, Brian Chastain, to discuss ways to utilize our ball fields behind the Elementary School. The fields are in need of some work as in re-leveling the fields.
- Public Safety - Clyde Williams & Chief Lyle Grant presented figures of local arrest for the Months of January thru March 2018 (see attached). Also presented in the report is information regarding the arrest of two individuals who were wanted by the US Marshals for burglary at the Harvest Baptist Church.

Mayor Dickson stated that all of the Committee meetings will be posted in the appropriate places for public knowledge in order for the public to attend the meetings if they choose to do so.

Mr. Ethan Calhoun with Dalton-Whitfield County Planning Commission presented details regarding the Special Use Permit for the Cricket Field (see attached). Mr. Alpesh Patel is requesting a special use permit to allow an athletic field within an existing R-5 residential zone district. When the cricket fields were initially proposed to the Planning Commission, it was proposed to be developed for residential housing to be built once the housing market improved. Eventually the request was presented for a Special Use Permit to be used as the cricket field games for “family and friends”. The games would be held every Saturday and Sunday, from April through October with practice during the week in the afternoon to early evenings. Mr. Calhoun discussed with the Council the different types of restrictive options that could be placed on the parcel of property as well as certain criteria that the owner would be responsible for enforcing. If restrictions are placed on the property, any time zoning issues come up, this would alert Whitfield County and the Planning Commission as to what the property could and could not be used for. If adjoining parcels to the cricket field went up for sale and the cricket fields have restrictions, the new property owners would have to abide by same restrictions as the former property owner.

Mr. Ethan Calhoun presented a recommendation regarding the Unified Zoning Ordinance amendment for the Whitfield, Dalton and Varnell Planning Commissions proposed Unified Zoning Ordinance text amendments dated 8/28/17. Under the recommendation, it will allow homeless facilities in the Non-Historic downtown via special use review. Such facilities are permitted as a special use in the C-3 Central Business District and C-4 transitional commercial district provided that: use is prohibited in the local historic district boundary designated within the C-3 zone district. Also any homeless facility planned to redevelop & occupy an existing nonresidential structure must submit a preliminary site plan. A motion was made by Ashley Godfrey and seconded by David Owens to unanimously approve the recommendation regarding text amendment presented for the proposed Unified Zoning ordinance amendment.

Mr. Calhoun presented a text amendment to allow group homes in a mixed use (MU) district. This review requires the applicant to submit preliminary site plans as part of their application. There might be instances where the use may be applicable within the district given the proper circumstances. David Owens made a motion to allow group homes in this mixed use district. A second to the motion was not given, therefore the item was tabled.

The mutual aid agreement between City of Varnell and City of Cohutta was presented as a continuing agreement. Police Chief Ray Grossman is back to work on light duty now. A motion was made by Bob Roche and seconded by Bill Caylor to continue forward with the agreement. David Owens would like it noted in the minutes that proper signature by Ray Grossman needs to be updated on the agreement. This has been noted and proper action will be made to take care of this.

The meeting was opened up for public comment. Mayor Dickson opened the floor first from City of Varnell residents regarding the proposed cricket field. None came forward. The invitation was then extended to non-residents of City of Varnell. We have several who commented about crowds, noise, long hours, lighting and the fact that the games are held every weekend from April through October. Mr. Alpesh Patel had originally purchased the property to develop housing but due to the drop in the housing market, Mr. Patel is requesting the use of the property to host Cricket games. He stated that only there could only be two teams per field at

any given time. With the two fields, there would be a total of 4 teams per game. Further discussion will be held by the City Council to set some type of guidelines that will be presented to the County Planning Commission to establish these guidelines as a special use item.

There being no further business, Bill Caylor made a motion to adjourn. A second was given by Clyde Williams and the vote was unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by

Pam Garrison
City Clerk