

**Dawsonville City Council Retreat
Amicalola Lodge, Chestnut Room
418 Amicalola Falls Road, Dawsonville, GA 30534
Friday, February 7-8, 2025**

MINUTES

In Attendance:

John Walden, Mayor	Kevin Tallant, City Attorney
Caleb Phillips, Councilman	Jacob Barr, Utilities Director
William Illg, Councilman	Trampas Hansard, Public Works Director
Sandy Sawyer, Councilwoman	Robin Gazaway, Finance Director
Mark French, Councilman	Stacy Harris, Planning & Zoning
Bob Bolz, City Manager	Amanda Edmondson, Dir. of Downton Dev.
Beverly Banister, City Clerk	

Facilitators: *Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC)*

Heather Feldman, Executive Director
Adam Hazell, Planning Director
Gina Kessler, Executive Assistant

Friday, February 7, 2025

Call to Order, Roll Call, Invocation, and Pledge

Mayor John Walden called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and went through the roll call and everyone was present. Councilman Caleb Phillips provided an invocation and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introductions and Housekeeping

Mayor John Walden welcomed everyone and thanked the council for taking time out of their schedules to be at the retreat. Mayor Walden introduced Heather Feldman and Adam Hazell with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and stated that GMRC will be the facilitators for the retreat.

Heather Feldman, GMRC Executive Director stated that she appreciated the opportunity to facilitate the city's retreat and recognized Mayor Walden as serving on the GMRC Council. Mrs. Feldman commended the city for coming together for the retreat and went over the goals for the day.

Adam Hazell, GMRC Planning Director provided an overview of regional trends and issues affecting the Georgia Mountains Region. Mr. Hazell discussed the rapid growth in the region, the region serving as a tourist destination, the jobs/housing imbalance, electric vehicles and

E-infrastructure, maintaining and preserving greenspace and rural character, and overall quality of life.

Department Head Presentations

City Manager Report – Dawsonville City Manager Bob Bolz stated that he wanted to give a brief overview to show how the city got to hosting the retreat and thanked Mayor Walden for the vision he had to hold the retreat. Mr. Bolz stated that in his mind excellence is a moving target and the city is seeking continual improvement. Mr. Bolz stated that the mission, vision, core values, and guiding principles are directly linked to shape operational decisions and actions.

Mission Statement – *City employees are dedicated to serving the City Council by providing high quality; affordable, moral, ethical, and responsive services to city residents and to all who interact with our municipal government ensuring a safe and secure community; a dynamic competent, proficient and efficient organization; a clean environment; innovative regional leadership; the ability to plan ahead with wisdom; the dedication to provide the necessary resources for our customers, community, and employees; and a proactive approach to all issues.*

Vision Statement – *Dawsonville is a unique destination that will be a safe, attractive, and welcoming place to live, work, and play; Dawsonville will strive to enhance its downtown and other areas throughout the city with opportunities to become a viable destination for business and cultural activities, fostering a family-friendly, walkable environment that is characterized by a variety of historic and local destinations.*

Mr. Bolz mentioned that these statements are indicative of collective stakeholder input from the Comprehensive Plan and how they envision their community. Simply put, the city is the hometown of the county.

Mr. Bolz gave an overview of the city's core values which include the following: Integrity, Servanthood with Humility, Customer-Focused Service, Accountability, Stewardship, Innovation, and Pursuit of Excellence. Mr. Bolz further discussed the city's eight Guiding Principles and the city's Goals and Objectives in carrying out the city's mission.

Finance Director Report – Robin Gazaway, Finance Director provided a handout that showed how funds are being allocated and spent. Ms. Gazaway discussed what is collected for revenues as well as disbursements including SPLOST and T-SPLOST funding. The information provided also shows how she tracks revenues and expenses and looks for trends that would either positively or negatively impact the city. Ms. Gazaway had also provided the list of both SPLOST and T-SPLOST projects and stated that these funds come in monthly, and it is important for the council to focus on prioritizing projects as funds come in as all funding

won't cover all the projects listed. Ms. Gazaway also provided copies of financial statements and bank statements for the council to review.

Ms. Gazaway provided an overview of the loan for the wastewater treatment plant. USDA's terms go out to 30 years and GEFA for 20 years. Water and sewer rate increases have been approved to offset some of the costs to help pay for the project.

Ms. Gazaway referred to the audit report and encouraged the council to review and should they want more information, she would provide this information. Councilman French asked if the audit report could be added to the website. Ms. Gazaway also discussed the downtown events and making sure that these are budgeted for adequately. Another item for discussion was the Assistant City Manager position that will be presented to the council for approval. The city currently has narrowed down the candidates and will be presenting one individual for consideration.

City Manager Bolz stated that it is time to start planning for the 2026 budget.

Utilities Report – Director Jacob Barr provided an overview of current utilities. Mr. Barr stated that the city maintains 25.5 miles of waterline, 1,819 water lines, 1,398 garbage customers, and 17.7 miles of wastewater collection system serving 1,927 customers. Mr. Barr stated that the current groundwater withdrawal permit is .750 MGD monthly average and .650 MGD annual average. The city has 1 million gallons in capacity. Mr. Barr stated that the water turnover rate target is three days and the city's is currently at 2.85. Discussion was had on what the turnover rate is and how that can factor in to the city's response to a severe disaster or situation. Councilman Illg asked if the city has enough water should there be a major fire situation and Mr. Barr stated that the city would be able to suppress the situation for 3-4 hours, but the city also has an emergency connection with the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority.

Mr. Barr discussed a proposed water tower at 557 Highway 9 north on approximately 1.5 acres on property that was purchased in 2023 that adjoins the city's existing .11 acres and is located on the highest point of elevation within the city's water service area. Additionally, another project for a new water source is a spring off Cleve Wright with a possible 100 GPM or more for production. Mr. Barr stated that the city is currently permitted to treat 400,000 gallons per day and the new plant would increase that limit to 800,000 gallons per day and hopes to bid this project out by Spring. Mr. Barr stated that the city will need a full-time plant operator.

Discussion was had on the levels of fluoride in the water and that they are submitted for testing to assess the content levels. On average, the city purchases 6-8 months' supply for all chemicals including fluoride, chlorine, etc. through Industrial Chemicals.

Mr. Barr stated that all new developments should be carefully considered when looking at capacity. Councilman Illg suggested that it would be good to have a list of all developments provided to the council for sewer especially since sewer is not a revenue generator for the city. Factoring in the rapid growth and putting in stipulations that would allow the city to say no is of paramount importance.

Public Works Report – Director Trampas Hansard stated that the department maintains 47 miles of Right-of-Way, 19 miles of city streets, 1.5 miles of dirt roads, 5.34 miles of state highway in addition to maintenance of all buildings and facilities, parks, and the city’s farmer’s market. Discussion was had on the city’s disc golf at Main Street Park and possible consideration of naming holes after three individuals.

Mr. Hansard stated that the city’s cemetery has a total of 2,462 graves and 975 are sold. Additionally, the city’s columbarium has a total of 72 niches and seven are currently sold with 65 available to be purchased.

Mr. Hansard provided an overview of infrastructure related projects:

Maple Street - \$555,000 - .0667 miles
Richmond Street - \$120,000; .196 miles
Pearl Chambers - \$242,000 – 0.356 miles

Mr. Hansard referred to a handout referencing estimates from BMK for projects and stressed that these were estimates only and real costs once bid out may be higher and should be taken into consideration when planning and making an approval.

Mr. John Walden stated that a concern is whether the city can complete all the projects that they promised the public that they would do with the T-SPLOST funds since the amount the city is receiving from the county is so small. In total, the city will only receive \$3.6 million from the County, which is approximately only 5% of T-SPLOST with the county receiving the other 95%. City Attorney, Kevin Tallant clarified that the 5% that the city will be receiving is for “city-only” projects. The 95% that the county will be receiving will be for county and county-city projects.

Discussion was had on T-SPLOST and SPLOST VII projects. Shoal Creek Road – This is a joint city and county project. The city is responsible for 4,433 feet and the cost should not exceed \$450,000 and will be LMIG funding with 30% local match.

City Manager Bob Bolz stated other projects including: a request for streetlights at Allen and Perimeter Roads; lights for basketball courts, a 4th picnic shelter and restrooms, resurfacing Memorial Garden parking, re-roofing city hall and replacing HVAC units, upgrading sidewalks from Robinson Elementary School to Highway 9, shade for playground, and the amphitheater.

There was a request to get quotes for these items so that the council can be thinking about these projects and needs.

Planning and Zoning Report – Director Stacy Harris provided a thorough overview of home development and neighborhoods:

Cornerstone: Zoned R-3; 219 lots; 1.81 acres; 25 % will be 1,600 square feet; 35% will be 1,800 square feet; 45 % will be 2,000 square feet. This development is next to Thunder Ridge. There will be only one entrance for Cornerstone Development off Highway 9.

Cottages at Dawsonville: Zoned R-6; total of 195 units with 1,2,3 rental units; maximum of 700 square feet; total area 33.98 acres (Perimeter Road and Highway 9).

Creekstone Phase 2: 87 lots, 80 permitted, Creekstone Phase 3 townhomes; PUD 27 units.

Dawsonville Pointe: Piedmont residential; zoned R-3 at highway 53 and admin campus east of Howser Mill subdivision; 97-101 units, minimum 1,800 square feet; total area 37.53acres/32.8 acres disturbed.

Fausett Development: 24 lots and nine lots permitted – across from Junior High School.

Silver Leaf (Maple Street): 43 lots and 12 are currently permitted.

Thunder Ridge Phase 2: Garden Street; 18 lots; zoned R-3; 5.9 acres density and 1.58 acres; minimum of 1,600 square feet.

Thunder Ridge Phase 3: Zoned R-3; total 91.4 acres; density 1.64 acres; minimum of 1,600 square feet.

Uptown Harden: Development off Highway 9 North past Dawson Junior High; zoned R-6; 25 lots, total 4.68 acres; density 5.34; minimum of 1,600 square feet.

Village at Maple Street: Zoned R-6; 31 townhomes and eight permitted; 6.12 acres, minimum of 1,200 square feet.

Villas at Dawsonville: Located just north of Highway 53 West; total 38.55 acres, 20.9 disturbed; home sizes per ordinance, stipulations, open space 20.30 acres.

Villas at Gold Creek: Fisher Homes; PUD, 32 townhomes; 5.73 acres.

Break for lunch.

Downtown Development Report – Director Amanda Edmondson stated that the “What” of what the city does is downtown Dawsonville and referenced the small-town feel and the sense of place. How do we connect that feeling with Dawson County? The strategic mission is how do we associate with what Dawsonville is to the city’s brand reflects what the city is.

Director Edmondson stated that for the Strategic Planning Process – the Four-Point approach was used and recognized by Main Street America, Department of Community Affairs-Economic Vitality, Promotion, Design, and Organization. Ms. Edmondson provided an overview of demographic data and how information was pulled and stated that the largest demographic data living in the city is females between the ages of 30-34.

The process started with public participation over a nine-month period and then utilized this critical data to incorporate this into methodology of the strategic planning document. There were three main focus areas of the Strategic Plan including the historic downtown, civic center, and the 17-acre site.

The next process was the downtown branding process, and a committee was formed to start the public participation process to assess what uniquely Dawsonville is. It was important to hear from community leaders and entrepreneurs in the city that can best support business creation and expansion.

Ms. Edmondson discussed the community-focused self-guided map of Dawsonville. Ms. Edmondson referenced the brochure that was handed out and explained the emphasis on supporting locally owned businesses. The brochure is designed with a QR code to link to an interactive map of downtown. Ms. Edmondson further stated that the brochure has a sticker program, and participating locations will provide a sticker for shopping local. After receiving 15 stickers, the individual can trade it in for a free Dawsonville T-shirt.

Discussion was had on the Advertisement Co-Op Program and stated that a full-page ad was recently in a NASCAR publication, and includes things like a shared billboard contract, and newspaper co-op advertisement. An overview of events was discussed and included the 2nd year of Light Up Dawsonville Event, Food Truck Fridays, and the Christmas Tree Lighting Event. Bike Ride Across Georgia (BRAG) will be coming to Dawsonville on June 4th through 5th.

Economic Development – Strategic Plan

Amanda Edmondson presented information from the city’s Strategic Plan and stated that the purpose was to identify the right problems and opportunities (data and public participation), changing the problems into goals (visioning), and determining a critical path forward (incrementalism). Ms. Edmondson stated that the value in a public participation process is taking a bystander and making them an engaged stakeholder.

The goals for the future of downtown identified in the Strategic Plan include:

- Economic Investment
- Placemaking
- Mixed-Use Development
- Connectivity and Accessibility
- Public Spaces
- Promote Tourism
- Sustainability

The focus areas included in the plan are the historic downtown, civic center area, and the 17-acre site. Looking at the big picture, the historic downtown area goals are to preserve and restore historic buildings, provide opportunities for infill and future development in underutilized spaces, and enhance the sense of place with short-term projects like landscaping, public art, and public spaces.

Goals for the civic center area include the creation of trail connections that link the civic buildings and Main Street Park to a larger trail system and future development and to create a safe pedestrian connection across Highway 53 with a bridge or tunnel. Ms. Edmondson referenced the BUILD grant recently submitted by GMRC.

Creating a foundation for big projects relies on the public participation process, branding process, Historic Resources Study, Rural Zone Designation, Strategic Plan, Comprehensive Plan, Hotel Feasibility Study, Cannery Feasibility Study, Impact Fees, and the SPLOST and T-SPLOST.

Outsourcing Planning and Zoning

City Manager, Bob Bolz stated that there was a change in the agenda and Ms. Allison Martin, City Manager for the City of Dahlenega, was going to present on the pros and cons of outsourcing some of the planning and zoning responsibilities.

Ms. Allison Martin, City Manager, City of Dahlenega discussed the process of how the City of Dahlenega went about changing to a consultant specifically to provide services as it relates to Planning and Zoning. Ms. Martin provided information on the response to the new process from both the staff and council perspective.

Economic Development – 17-acre site

The proposed 17-acre site will provide connection between the historic district and other downtown areas. This future development would serve to create a centralized hub for residents and visitors to experience dining, shopping, recreation, and housing. Ms. Edmondson referred to page 57 of the Comprehensive Downtown Strategic Plan that was passed out to everyone. Proposed uses include greenspace and trails, potential for a hotel, central public plaza, additional parking, and business incubation spaces.

Regional Economic Success

Dawson County Chamber of Commerce

Amanda Edmondson stated that there may be a need to reexamine the city's relationship with the Chamber of Commerce as the city has evolved and is continuing to grow and change. The need for a shared vision for the chamber, county, and the city is needed for a community that continues to grow – what role does each play in the promotion for the county and the city. The need for increased collaboration between the city and chamber is important to complement each other and not work against each other or duplicate efforts. The city should review its agreement with the Chamber of Commerce.

The city is required to spend the amount they collect beyond 3% on a select type of entity. The City Attorney clarified the nature of State code that defines conditions for collection and uses. Some general discussion held about the options of agencies available for Dawsonville. Part of the concern is that the city's businesses are not getting their share of needs for the amount of funds that the city provides to the Chamber of Commerce. Most efforts seem to be going to the outlets at Georgia 400.

Discussion was had on the best course of action on how to move forward with the relationship between the city and the chamber of commerce. Changing the mindset of not being in competition with the chamber, but a partner and recognizing there is a difference in focus between the area of Georgia 400 and downtown Dawsonville. It should be outlined what the expectations are about priorities and what the deliverables are.

Mountain Moonshine Festival

Discussion was had regarding staff running the festival. Staff that ran the event separate from the city in the past have left and everyone is trying to fully understand how to run the event. The suggestion is to meet with the Committee early to discuss the issues that have occurred in the past and how to best plan. The city may want to consider having a designated person to attend committee meetings and to take notes and make observations for future planning efforts.

Prep Discussion – Development Regulations

Adam Hazell, GMRC Planning Director asked members what types of regulations the city wants to review or think about in preparation of the next day's discussion. Topics that came up included parking on the street in residential areas, garages, city-wide zoning, and variances in development reviews.

Board and Commissions Discussion

Mayor John Walden stated that there needs to be clear and consistent communication around how council members are chosen to serve as representatives on boards and commissions.

Going forward, the process should be whoever's post the designated person is in should be notified first and that council member will do the vetting prior to voting on the individual at a council meeting. Discussion was had on general procedures reviewed for appointments to boards and commissions.

City Manager Bob Bolz stated that currently there is one vacancy on the Historic Preservation Commission and there will be two more at the end of this year. Additionally, the city needs to reactivate and find members to serve on the Animal Control Board. Two of the members must live in the city and the other should have experience with animals, but does not have to be a vet.

Dawsonville is a designated City of Ethics and part of this requirement is to have an Ethics Board. Positions are for two-year terms and should include three people of which two are residents and one is an attorney.

The suggestion was made to provide names for interested individuals to the City Clerk by the end of February to serve on any of these boards so that they can be properly vetted and voted on by the city's March 3rd meeting.

Mayor John Walden asked for a motion to go into recess and reconvene on Saturday, February 8, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. William Illg made the motion, and Caleb Phillips seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Saturday, February 8, 2025

In Attendance:

John Walden, Mayor	Kevin Tallant, City Attorney
Caleb Phillips, Councilman	Jacob Barr, Utilities Director
William Illg, Councilman	Trampas Hansard, Public Works Director
Sandy Sawyer, Councilwoman	Robin Gazaway, Finance Director
Mark French, Councilman	Stacy Harris, Planning & Zoning
Bob Bolz, City Manager	Amanda Edmondson, Dir. of Downton Dev.

Mayor John Walden asked for a motion to come out of recess at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 8, 2025. Councilman Mark French made the motion and Councilman Willian Illg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Review of Intergovernmental Agreement with Sheriff's Office

City Manager Bob Bolz explained that since 2021 the city has paid the Dawson County Sheriff's Office to employ two additional deputies. At that time, the county already provided basic law enforcement services to the city, and under the contract the two additional deputies were to be assigned to the city to perform additional services such as patrol of the high

school, Jr. high school, and city park areas, attend council meetings or public hearings, as well as enforce city ordinances. However, the city has since become aware that the sheriff's department removed the deputy that was assigned to the city and the deputies that were meant for extra duties are now the primary call when there is any need for law enforcement within city limits. Zone 5 remains a vacant position within the sheriff's office. If one of the two deputies paid for by the city cannot attend a meeting or hearing the sheriff's office does not send another officer, and the sheriff's office will not enforce city ordinances. The sheriff's office has violated the agreement more than once, and requests to schedule a meeting with Sheriff Jeff Johnson have gone unanswered for over a year.

City Manager Bolz asked if the council wishes to continue to pay the county to have additional deputies, or if they would like to explore other options.

Discussion was had on several topics of concern:

- Citizens being put into a double taxation situation
- Breach of contract – do not pay if the city is not truly receiving the extra services
- Additional cost of hiring private security if a deputy is unavailable to attend a meeting
- Thousands of dollars in property damage could go unpunished if a deputy isn't present for extra patrols
- Child welfare issues- young teens unsupervised in the park
- Coverage level provided by the county if the city removes the two additional officers (animosity)

Kevin Tallant will review the contract to help identify violations and the city will continue to try to schedule a meeting with Sheriff Johnson.

Adam Hazell recommended the following if the city chooses to remain under contract with the county for the time being:

- Identify and create an inventory of locations in need outside of the general areas covered by the sheriff's office.
- Work in conjunction with schools to identify the times and events that need additional security and tally up a calculation of man hours needed.
- Include an appendix to contract with performative expectations putting an officer at the location and times identified.
- Update as needed based on growth.

Discussion was had about the possibilities of the city creating a police department with one full-time and one part-time officer that would be on the city payroll and the rest of the time that cannot be covered falling back to the sheriff's office. Expenses outside of personnel would be a building/location for the police department, vehicles, and other needed equipment (guns, vests, uniforms). Mayor Walden mentioned grants as a possible funding source, and Kevin Tallant mentioned that in the State of Georgia citizens can donate to a

police foundation and receive matching credit towards what they pay in state taxes. That money can be used to purchase vehicles, etc. SPLOST A can also be used to purchase vehicles. Mr. Hazell recommended that the city reach out to GMA to ask what other cities their size have recently created police departments and contact to those cities for ideas. Councilman Illg recommended beginning the research now by reaching out to other communities so that the city can begin to budget for this.

Discussion on Development Regulations - GMRC Planning Director Adam Hazell shared the following information:

Review of Ethics and Best Practices

"All government, of right, originates with the people, is founded upon their will only, and is instituted solely for the good of the whole. Public officers are trustees and servants of the people and are at all times amenable to them (Ga. Const. Art. I, § 2 ¶1)."

- Never Discriminate – All citizens must be treated equally regardless of personal experiences, feelings, or knowledge of the individual.
- Make No Private Promise – Do not make promises on behalf of the city that you are not empowered to do on your own.
- Don't Engage in Business with the Government – This creates an appearance of a conflict of interest.
- Never Use Confidential Information – Elected officials cannot use confidential city information for personal gain, or the personal gain of friends, family, business partners, etc.
- Expose Corruption – As a city official you are obligated to expose corruption.

Process of Development

Know Your Roles

- Staff – 95% of the work should be done by staff.
 - Completeness & Accuracy of Applications
 - Compliance w/ Local Code
 - Compliance w/ State/ Federal Law
 - Compliance w/ Local Comprehensive Plan
 - Validates Conditions
 - Provides Report
 - Implement Policy
- Planning Commission
 - Validate Staff Report
 - Conduct Discussion & Analysis
 - Issues the Recommendation
- City Council
 - Validate Reviews to Date
 - Final Discussion

- Approval, Denial, Approval w/ Condition
- Direct Updates to Policy
- Confirm Vision & Goals
- Make Appointments
- Review Performance
- Enact Legislation

Formalize Communication

- Have & abide formalized communication policies
- Simplify communication channels
- Minimize the extent of “anyone anywhere” speaking for the office/ government
- Regularly have policies reviewed for legal concerns and effectiveness
- Mr. Hazell recommended having a business card with a general contact email where citizens can submit their questions to ensure everything flows through the proper channels. This allows the time for all members of the council to review as well as provides the ability to show that a request was made, and what steps were taken by the council to address it

Stick to the Script

- Rules of Order rule the day!
- Prepare in advance (know the nature of business before meeting)
- Stick to the agenda
- Be civil in discourse; Defer to facilitator
- Key staff participation: Manager, Attorney, Clerk
- Have structured opportunities for public comment
- Decisions by local government must be:
 - CLEAR and based on established criteria
 - CONSISTENT with established precedent
 - Failure to be clear and consistent renders the government subject to legal challenges

Monitor Your Performance

- How many variances are you getting?
- How many applications received are pushing the limits of codes/ordinances?

Discussion on Development Regulations Cont.

The plat approval process is an area of concern. There was much discussion on when the plat should be presented to the council to vote and the problem of the public not understanding the process due to the inconsistencies of voting when there is little difference between the preliminary plat and final. Adam Hazell referred the council back to the “Knowing Your Roles” portion of the conversation. However, because of inconsistencies within the ordinance, the

lack of a clear definition of major versus minor changes, and too much being left up to interpretation, there seems to be confusion around the process.

All in attendance agreed that the ordinances are not user friendly and need to be updated. Stacy Harris suggested a third party come in to review the ordinance and get them streamlined. Kevin Tallant suggested a table within the ordinances that shows what is allowed in each situation (lot size, buffers, etc.) would be much more user friendly. Then when changes are made, update the table to keep everything current in one section. Adam Hazell noted that the updates could be done in two phases, in the first phase, staff could go through the ordinances and identify what is lacking, what is duplicates, or contradicting to come up with draft with immediate fixes. The second phase would be to have the third party then come complete a bigger study and re-write.

Councilman Illg would like to have a training or retreat for the Planning Commission once everything has been updated and create a clear process of how the approval should work moving forward.

Zoning Regulations: Define Standard and Sub-Standard

The current zoning regulations read as if a road is not up to standard; the developer must bring it up to standard. However, those definitions are not defined in the ordinances. Adam Hazell asked if the ordinances are strong enough to deny development without making the improvements and Kevin Tallant answered that they are not strong enough to deny but are strong enough to require the upgrade. Kevin Tallant noted that the city does have standards for the streets. Bob Bolz stated that if a subdivision connects to a city road the developer is responsible for bringing that road up to standard, but some developers are pushing back on that. For example, when the Silver Leaf development was built, it required two additional feet of road width at the property frontage.

Adam Hazell recommended that the city create an inventory of what existing conditions are on all roadways, how many meet standards, how many are sub-standard, and what conditions restrain a road from meeting standards. An engineer can rate the roads by a classification system to get a base line of what the city has and then balance what the infrastructure can handle based on those results to help determine what development can go where.

Mr. Hazell also noted that the Federal Highway Association (FHWA) has formulas that calculate trips per day, and you cannot request bringing a road up to standard if that count is less than 200.

Ordinances

Setbacks – Parking on the right-of-way has become a problem in certain areas around the city, including subdivisions. At present, the setbacks are 50 ft. in R-1, 40 ft. in R-2, and 30 ft.

in R-3. Councilman Mark French suggested increasing the front setbacks to allow for longer driveways to eliminate parking on the street. Councilman Illg asked if the setbacks can be considered based on the size of the house.

Adam Hazell commented that depending on design, setbacks alone may not resolve the issue. The ordinances need to be clear about where roadside parking is allowed and where it is not, as well as what factors are used to determine that. Sidewalks should always remain accessible. Private roads should also be held to the ordinances due to public safety.

Cars that are blocking the sidewalk or road cannot be towed without an ordinance. The sheriff can make the determination if a state law is being violated (traffic hazard) if a vehicle needs to be towed. The concern is that the sheriff's office is not enforcing parking violations. Adam Hazell suggested keeping a log of the incidents to have when renegotiating the contract with the sheriff's office.

Driveways – Adam Hazell asked the council what they would like to see regarding driveway regulations. Some options to help eliminate street parking would be rear loading parking or driveways on the side of the homes. Mr. Hazell noted that there could be a larger range of housing styles and accommodations for parking that keep the sidewalks clear if those options were considered.

Amenities – This should be clear in the ordinances when subdivisions are being built. To make it clear in the ordinances, there needs to be a clear definition of what an amenity is. Is it an active use amenity (swimming pool or tennis courts) or a passive use amenity (garden or walking path). Councilman Mark French would like to have an ordinance or regulation that specifies at what point in the construction phase amenities are required to be completed.

Other – Councilman Illg felt that getting the ordinances and regulations updated should be the council's priority. Others in attendance also agreed that due to the number of inconsistencies, the ordinances do need to be a priority. Councilman French agreed but also felt that the contract with the sheriff's office with the appearance of double taxation should also be priority. Kevin Tallant will research to get more information about that but does not feel it is double taxation if the deputies the city has contracted are used for non-emergency situations.

Code Enforcement

City Manager Bob Bolz would like to see the city be more proactive than reactive when identifying code enforcement violations. This will require more coordination with the sheriff's office and must be streamlined and consistent.

Amanda Edmondson recommended documenting the code in a central location as it could potentially help with grants down the road.

Zoning Map

Define Zoning District Area - After review of the zoning maps, Councilman Caleb Phillips would like to see Parcel #092001 changed to R-3, the councilman would also like to look into doing away with the islands. Mayor Walden has spoken to the county and there are islands they need to get exact boundaries on. Trampas Hansard mentioned that if the city takes the island, they are responsible for taking the whole road. Adam Hazell recommended putting an Annexation Policy into the next Comprehensive Plan that would work for the city.

Councilman William Illg asked if there are regulations that allow residential in areas zoned for office space. The Central Business District overlay of the historic district allows housing and offices, but all residential building must follow the historic building guidelines. The councilman liked the idea of businesses downstairs with living space upstairs.

It was discussed that the use table for Town Business needed to be re-evaluated.

Discussions were had about holding parcels to be used for green space, biking trails, etc. Amanda Edmondson explained that a potential trail to connect between parks within the county and city is already in the Comprehensive Plan and grants may be available for funding options. Adam Hazell suggested that the best way to capture what you want to see is to put policies in place now to preserve land for green space. Ask yourself what you want to see for future land use and once achievements are made know what you want to see next.

Mr. Hazell also suggested that when rezoning the city should have a set unit per acre, but roads, wet lots, net destiny, and unbuildable lots should be factored in when setting that limit. The net number of units needs to be based on buildable lots to prevent it from becoming a point of contention and to cut down the urgency to request variances.

Discuss R-6 Multiple Family District – Councilman William Illg would like to see a square footage increase in R-6. Once the new townhomes being built are completed it would be easier to determine if a higher rate of architectural standard or the amount of square footage is the true concern.

Mayor John Walden had concerns that the city does not have a tree ordinance. Several large trees were taken down at the site of the townhomes with no requirements to replant anywhere on the property.

Councilman Illg likes the conservation neighborhood concept where homes are built on a percentage of the acreage and the other acres are reserved for green space, or trails.

Amanda Edmondson noted that the City of Madison, Georgia has done a very good job with their city regulations and encouraged the council to look at the regulations they have put in place for this type of zoning.

Industrial – During zoning map discussions the topic of industry came up. Council Member Mark French has concerns that if the city does not recognize the value in retaining citizens by bring in industry to create jobs, property and other taxes will continue to rise to support the needs of the city. Amanda Edmondson discussed concerns that the focus has been on promoting and expanding local business instead of bringing in new businesses. This is good for local business but does not necessarily create new jobs that would provide the quality of life that homeowners look for when locating. Mayor Walden suggested identifying a designated area to allow business to come in for the creation of jobs and Amanda Edmondson pointed out the business incubation projects in Town Center could be considered an Industrial Park of sorts. Adam Hazell encouraged the council to not only think city wide, but county, and region wide as well when considering industry. Consider where would be the best place and how accessible that would be. Working with the county on the building off Georgia Highway 400 would be beneficial so the city's input could be included when deciding what should go in there.

Recap/Wrap Up/Next Steps

- The city should compile a list of metrics it wants to see from the sheriff and chamber and make amendments to those contracts as needed.
- Identify the items that are considered easily obtainable in the regulations and ordinances that can be fixed immediately and then make recommendations to have by the summer or fixes to the zoning maps that go along with those recommendations.
- Field test other communities that have regulations the city would like to consider.
- Keep an inventory of everything that may need to be purchased, replaced, or require maintenance and/or repairs to budget future funding.
- Create an inventory of road classifications and sidewalks.
- Amanda Edmondson asked that the council provide her with any thoughts or feedback that they may have that did not get mentioned in the retreat.
- Any additional thoughts or questions about ordinances, regulations, zoning , etc. that did not get covered in the retreat should be emailed to Beverly Bannister.

William Illg thanked the staff for participating in the retreat, and asked if there was anything that the council could do to help more. Mr. Illg also asked if it would be considered a benefit if after 10+ years of employment with the city to be given a piece of property at the city cemetery. This is an asset that the city already has that could be a benefit of employment.

Mayor John Walden thanked the staff and council for attending the retreat, and thanked GMRC for facilitating.

Mayor John Walden called a special called meeting of the City Council on Tuesday, February 18 p.m. 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Mayor John Walden asked for a motion to adjourn. Councilwoman French made the motion and Councilman Phillips seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m.

Approved this 3rd day of March 2025


By: CITY OF DAWSONVILLE


John Walden, Mayor


Caleb Phillips, Councilmember Post 1


William Illg, Councilmember Post 2


Sandra Sawyer, Councilmember Post 3


Mark French, Councilmember Post 4

Attest:


Beverly A. Banister, City Clerk



