

MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF RICHMOND HILL
Tuesday, January 05, 2016
7:30 P.M.

Richmond Hill City Hall Council Chambers

Present from City Council: Harold Fowler, *Mayor*; Russ Carpenter, *Mayor Pro-Tem*;
Councilmembers: Johnny Murphy, John Fesperman, Jan Bass

Staff Present: Chris Lovell, *City Manager*; Ursula Lee, *City Clerk*; Ralph Catlett, *Fire Chief*; Scott Allison, *Director of Planning & Zoning*; Randy Dykes, *Asst. Planning & Zoning Director*; Mark Long, *Code Enforcement*; Bob Whitmarsh, *Finance Director*; Charlie Heino, *Enviroworx*

Visitors: Jamie Parker, Teresa Fowler, Zach Crumley, Mary Arocha, Jitan Patel, Ron Elliott, Jason Bass

Mayor Fowler called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. Councilmember Carpenter gave the invocation.

Mayor Fowler explained the next item on the agenda was the swearing in of Councilmembers Jan Bass and John Fesperman as follows:

OATH OF COUNCILMEMBER
CITY OF RICHMOND HILL
2016

"I, **Jan Bass** do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the laws of the State of Georgia; I am qualified to hold the office of Councilmember for the City of Richmond Hill according to the Constitution and laws of the State of Georgia; I am not the holder of any office of trust under the government of the United States, any other state, or any foreign state which I am prohibited from holding by the laws of the State of Georgia; I am not the holder of any unaccounted for public money due this state of any political subdivision or authority thereof; and that I will well and truly perform the duties of Councilmember of the City of Richmond Hill to the best of my skill and ability, without favor or affection, so help me God."

"I, **John Fesperman** do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the laws of the State of Georgia; I am qualified to hold the office of Councilmember for the City of Richmond Hill according to the Constitution and laws of the State of Georgia; I am not the holder of any office of trust under the government of the United States, any other state, or any foreign state which I am prohibited from holding by the laws of the State of Georgia; I am not the holder of any unaccounted for public money due this state of any political subdivision or authority thereof; and that I will well and truly perform the duties of Councilmember of the City of Richmond Hill to the best of my skill and ability, without favor or affection, so help me God."

Mayor Fowler congratulated the Councilmembers on their term of four more years on City Council for the City of Richmond Hill.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given.

1. Approval of Minutes of Special Called Meeting of **December 14, 2015**

Councilmember Murphy made a motion to approve the minutes of the Special Called Meeting December 14, 2015. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Bass. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

2. Approval of Minutes of meeting of **December 15, 2015.**

Councilmember Carpenter made a motion to approve the December 15, 2015, City Council Minutes. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Fesperman. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

Administration and Personnel: Ursula Lee

Nothing to report.

Public Safety:

Police Department: Chief Billy Reynolds

Nothing to report

Fire Department: Ralph Catlett

Nothing to report.

Public Works: Charles Heino, Enviroworx

Nothing to report

Parks, Recreation and Culture: Harvey Lashley

Nothing to report

Planning, Zoning and Code Enforcement: Scott Allison

1. Approval/Disapproval of a petition filed by **Lots Pros, LLC**. requesting a variance to Article III, Section 68-33 (a) (2) of the City of Richmond Hill zoning ordinance for a 10 foot variance to the street yard buffer requirement to reduce it from a 25 foot buffer to a 15 foot buffer. The property is located in an R-3 Multi-Family Residential zoning district. The address is 1743 Harris Trail Road. Map 054 Parcel 054. Mr. Allison explained Council had all information in their packet, noting this was a piece of property that was recently annexed into the city. The property fronts on an arterial roadway. Mr. Allison stated the applicant wishes to

change the 25' buffer to a 15' buffer due to some geometrical restraints. There is a large overhead power easement along the front of the property and large oak trees on the side that city council asked the applicant to save. Mr. Allison noted Mr. Pittman was present to answer any questions Council may have. There was a brief discussion about the sidewalks and the buffer with existing buffers and the type of vegetation that would be in the buffers. Mr. Pittman stated they would meet with city staff to get input on types of vegetation for the buffer.

It was discussed that the developer create a berm in the buffer, build a fence and provide specific landscaping including pine trees and evergreen to adequately buffer the property from traffic on Harris Trail, while at the same time not overly exposing the rear of the townhomes to passing motorists.

Councilmember Fesperman made a motion to approve the petition filed by Lots Pros, LLC. requesting a variance to Article III, Section 68-33 (a) (2) of the City of Richmond Hill zoning ordinance for a 10 foot variance to the street yard buffer requirement to reduce it from a 25 foot buffer to a 15 foot buffer. The property is located in an R-3 Multi-Family Residential zoning district. The address is 1743 Harris Trail Road. Map 054 Parcel 054 with the stated conditions approved by staff. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Carpenter. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

2. Approval/Disapproval of a petition filed by **Dawson Architects** requesting a variance to Article IV, Section 12 (d) (6) and Table IV.1.3 of the City of Richmond Hill zoning ordinance for an 8 foot height variance to the 35 foot maximum building height requirement to allow a 4-story hotel to be constructed on the property. The hotel will be located at US Hwy 17 and Ponderosa Road in a C-4 Interchange Commercial zoning district. Map 0473 Parcel 025. Mr. Allison stated there is a lot of information from the application, the maximum building height in all districts is 35 ft.; we have been looking into this in the UDO process. This requirement was based on fire safety issues. Mr. Allison noted that now, with our ladder trucks, he didn't think it was as much a safety issue. We have approved a couple of other variances (such as CaesarStone received an 80 ft. variance and the Speir-Brogdon Building). This variance would make it 43 ft. height. The rooms would face Ponderosa and it would be approximately 120 ft. from Wiley Road and adjacent property; the lobby side would be facing U S Hwy. 17. The Planning Commission did recommend approval; there was a Public Hearing with one in dissent. Mr. Allison noted that a petition was received from Mr. Richardson a property owner on Ponderosa, who had gathered names opposing the four story variance and a copy was included in council's packet. Mr. Allison noted he did not see Mr. Richardson present tonight.

Councilmember Carpenter stated he went to the yard of the house on Wiley Road and there is no way you could even see the hotel and it is his understanding there would be no windows facing the residents on Wiley Road. Mr. Jitan Patel stated there would be no room windows facing the neighborhood, there could possibly be a window in a hallway but that would be for safety issue only.

Councilmember Carpenter asked Mr. Jitan Patel if they had a restaurant in mind and if it would be a sit-down restaurant. Mr. Patel stated it would be of the Hilton quality restaurants, not a fast food type restaurant. Mayor Fowler stated people keep asking about nice sit down restaurants and until you get more hotels in the city you are not going to see that happen. Councilmember Murphy asked what size restaurant would go in there. Mr. Kenny Patel stated it would probably be a 4,000 sq. ft. building in there. Mayor Fowler stated it would be a nice restaurant that would go in.

It was discussed that the tree buffer be maintained and the developer work with city staff to provide some additional buffering below the tree line.

Councilmember Murphy made a motion to approve the petition filed by Dawson Architects requesting a variance to Article IV, Section 12 (d) (6) and Table IV.1.3 of the City of Richmond Hill zoning ordinance for an 8 foot height variance to the 35 foot maximum building height requirement to allow a 4-story hotel to be constructed on the property. The hotel will be located at US Hwy 17 and Ponderosa Road in a C-4 Interchange Commercial zoning district. Map 0473 Parcel 025, with the condition of working with staff for buffer and vegetation. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Carpenter. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

3. Approval/Disapproval of the building sign for **Pride Auto Sales** to be located at 100 Edsel Drive, Suite C. Mr. Allison stated it does meet all sign ordinances and the ARB and Planning Commission did approve. It does match existing signs in the area.

Councilmember Bass made a motion to approve the building sign for Pride Auto Sales to be located at 100 Edsel Drive, Suite C. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Carpenter. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

4. Approval/Disapproval of the building sign for **Metro PCS** to be located at 9701 Ford Avenue, Suite 104. Mr. Allison stated this was located in the shopping center with Goodwill and Goody's. It does match the existing channel letter signs; the ARB did recommend approval with the condition that it be opaque if lighted. We did get confirmation from the Sign Company and applicant the box sign on the bottom would not be lighted.

Councilmember Bass asked what type company is it. Mr. Allison stated it is a cellular company.

Councilmember Carpenter made a motion to approve the building sign for Metro PCS to be located at 9701 Ford Avenue, Suite 104. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Bass. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

5. Approval/Disapproval of the building sign for **Vape Loft** to be located at 3741 US Highway 17, Suite 100. Mr. Allison stated this is in the shops at Harris Trail and U S Hwy. 17; a couple of doors down from Dominoes. The Vape Loft sign will be under lit and cranberry in color. It does meet the city's sign ordinance. The ARB and Planning Commission did recommend approval. It is a store similar to Blackbeard's Vapor.

Councilmember Bass made a motion to approve the building sign for Vape Loft to be located at 3741 US Highway 17, Suite 100. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Murphy. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

6. Approval/Disapproval of the project entrance signs for **Richmond Hill Plantation N, O, and P Pods** to be located on Sterling Links Way. Mr. Allison stated a few months back we had preliminary plat approvals for single family – residential development for N and O Pods these are the entrance signs that they wanted to match Richmond Hill Plantation. They would like to do brick from Old Carolina Brick Company, color would be Savannah Grey with sloppy grapevine ivory mortar. The community names on the plat are: Fairways at Ways Station and The Links at Ways Station. They will look more like the Richmond Hill Plantation main entrance signs. The Planning Commission and the ARB did recommend approval with a little more centering.

Councilmember Murphy made a motion to approve the project entrance signs for Richmond Hill Plantation N, O, and P Pods to be located on Sterling Links Way. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Fesperman. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

7. Approval/Disapproval of the landscape plan for **Dollar General** to be located on a 1.5 acre tract as part of parcel number 0472-001 at 4750 US Highway 17 across from KOA Campground. Mr. Allison stated we had site plan and building elevation plans from last year. It does meet all the requirements and actually exceeds some of the requirements. The ARB and Planning Commission did recommend approval.

Councilmember Murphy made a motion to approve the landscape plan for Dollar General to be located on a 1.5 acre tract as part of parcel number 0472-001 at 4750 US Highway 17 across from KOA Campground. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Fesperman. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

8. Approval/Disapproval of a request by **Ashley Ann Merson** for an alcohol license to sell beer and wine only for off premises consumption at Publix Supermarket located at 12800 Highway 144. Mr. Allison explained this is due to new manager and background check came back fine.

Councilmember Murphy made a motion to approve the request by Ashley Ann Merson for an alcohol license to sell beer and wine only for off premises consumption at Publix Supermarket located at 12800 Highway 144. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Carpenter. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Feserman, Bass and Murphy.

9. Approval/Disapproval of a request by **Xiao Yi Lin** for an alcohol license to sell beer and wine only for on premises consumption at Fuji restaurant located at 3748 US Highway 17. Mr. Allison stated this is a new manager and everything came back fine.

Councilmember Murphy made a motion to approve the request by Xiao Yi Lin for an alcohol license to sell beer and wine only for on premises consumption at Fuji restaurant located at 3748 US Highway 17. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Feserman. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Feserman, Bass and Murphy.

10. Approval/Disapproval of a request by **Kelli Ann Rose Lash** for a permit to dispense alcoholic beverages on Sunday at Melody's Coastal Café restaurant located at 2518 Highway 17. Mr. Allison stated at the previous meeting Ms. Lash received the license to sell alcoholic beverages but not for Sunday sales, this application is for Sunday sales at the restaurant.

Councilmember Carpenter made a motion to approve the request by Kelli Ann Rose Lash for a permit to dispense alcoholic beverages on Sunday at Melody's Coastal Café restaurant located at 2518 Highway 17. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Murphy. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Feserman, Bass and Murphy.

11. Approval/Disapproval of a Resolution in Support of Coastal Incentive Grant Funds for Implementation of a Coastal Access Plan for the Jerico River. Mr. Allison stated we applied for this same grant last year and didn't get it. This year we are working in conjunction with Bryan County, DNR, and Rayonier in a joint effort to receive funding. This boat ramp is actually no longer safe; and was part of property annexed into the city. The city's funding is not to exceed \$10,000.00. Bryan County has agreed to \$10,000 and Rayonier has agreed to \$5,000.00. We would be able to utilize that and in-kind services. It would be used to redo the Egypt Trail boat ramp off the Belfast/Keller Road where the new interchange would go. We would potentially get \$68,000 worth of engineering services. The grant total would almost be around \$90,000.00 with in-kind services and the cash match. Mr. Allison showed Council where the ramp is located on the Jericho River. If everything goes through we would use Thomas & Hutton Engineering. Copy Of Resolution as follows:

RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF RICHMOND HILL, GEORGIA IN SUPPORT OF GRANT FUNDS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF A COASTAL ACCESS PLAN FOR THE JERICO RIVER

WHEREAS, the City of Richmond Hill and Bryan County is situated on one of the States most significant natural resources – the Jerico River;

WHEREAS, the City and County are desirous of providing access for its growing population of over 22,000 people to the Jerico River and its tributaries;

WHEREAS, direct and convenient access is essential to the local eco-tourism industry and will ensure that the residents of Richmond Hill and Bryan County feel connected to the river and value its preservation;

WHEREAS, the City of Richmond Hill and Bryan County wish to jointly apply for a Coastal Incentive Grant to support the development of a plan for accessing the Jerico River;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Richmond Hill City Council does hereby endorse a joint application with Bryan County for grant assistance through the Department of Natural Resources – Coastal Resources Division and agrees to provide in-kind services and a cash contribution not to exceed \$10,000 to provide the matching requirements necessary to ensure grant implementation and completion.

Adopted, the ____ day of _____, 20__

Councilmember Murphy made a motion to approve a Resolution in Support of Coastal Incentive Grant Funds for Implementation of a Coastal Access Plan for the Jerico River. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Fesperman. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

Finance Department: Bob Whitmarsh

1. Approve/Disapprove Financial reports for October and November 2015. Mr. Whitmarsh stated we're into January and the city has had a good year. We received property tax checks in December and January. Mr. Whitmarsh stated he would be glad to answer any questions.

Councilmember Fesperman made a motion to approve the Financial reports for October and November 2015. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Carpenter. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

2. Approve/Disapprove lease of new fire truck with SPLOST funds. Mr. Whitmarsh stated Chief Catlett had requested a new fire truck in his 2016 Capital Budget and we have a proposal for the truck in Appleton, Wisconsin. We have dealt with these folks before and they have always done a great job for us. We were able to get some additional discounts by tacking it onto the Florida Sheriffs Association. Mr. Whitmarsh recommended we purchase the truck by paying \$42,471.00 down and borrowing \$400,000 from lease-purchase program from GMA. The payments would begin in January 2017 and continue for about nine years at \$50,000.00 a year. Mr. Whitmarsh stated he would be glad to answer any questions. There was a brief discussion about the SPLOST Funding. Mr. Whitmarsh noted that if we stay in budget we should be able to pay this off early in the middle of year 2018.

Councilmember Fesperman made a motion to approve the lease of a new fire truck with SPLOST funds. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Carpenter. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

3. Recap of projects paid for in 2015 with SPLOST funds. Mr. Whitmarsh stated he had placed a report in council's packet for what they had originally designated for SPLOST. We had planned on Eleven Million dollars over the six year period and we are under what we stated we would spend on a percentage basis. This report is just to give you a general idea on where we spend and this report was published in the newspaper as well. The big projects included the sidewalks, General Administration software, Fire Department and debt service.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

CITY MANAGER TOPICS: Chris Lovell

Nothing to report.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Mary Arocha for the YMCA to address Council regarding a fundraising event they wish to host in Richmond Hill.

Ms. Arocha told Council they should have the routes in their packets and what they are proposing is to have the very first Triathlon in the city. We have a lot of Tri athlete's and they travel to different places so we thought we should have one here. The transition area would be in the parking lot where the pool is located behind the yogurt shop. We have spoken with Mr. Brogdon about the parking lot and he has approved that. The children's run/bike route would begin on Edsel Drive and end up in the parking lot. Then the adult bike route would go from parking lot down Hwy. 144, toward Timber Trail, then down Harris Trail, then back to Hwy. 17 and would actually go twice. The race would start at 7:00 a.m., everything would start getting setup by 5:00 a.m. Ms. Arocha stated the bike portion would be finished before 9:00 a.m., the run would be done on the sidewalk. We have already presented it to Police Chief Reynolds and he suggested coming before Council. This would be a fundraiser for our Summer Camp Program.

Mayor Fowler asked what Chief Reynolds told her as far as escort. Ms. Arocha stated Chief Reynolds stated she could hire off duty officers at \$25.00 per person per hour to be posted at each of the transition areas. We're hoping to do this the first part of May before school lets out for the summer vacation. Team Endurance would be helping us put this on, they do several events like this.

Ms. Arocha stated they are hoping to get between 50 and 75 bike riders. The lane on Hwy. 17 should not be blocked off for very long. Mayor Fowler stated Hwy 17 is a Federal Hwy. and Hwy.144 is a State Hwy. so I think you may need approval from them.

Mayor Fowler said to let them check into this and we would get back with them.

Councilmember Carpenter made a motion to approve a permit for the Triathlon as long as the State and Federal Highways give their approval. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Fesperman. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Carpenter, Fesperman, Bass and Murphy.

Ms. Arocha thanked Mayor and Council for their time.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor Fowler told Council that Phase I of sidewalk project is almost completed and we need to come up with what we're going to do for Phase II.

Scott Allison stated we do have a meeting for January 19th, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. by the Core MPO for the Metropolitan Transportation Plans. We have the overall Master Plan and costs so we can look at it to see what we want to do. Mayor Fowler asked Mr. Allison to get with them and let's get this out of the way. There was a brief discussion about the transportation count.

Councilmember Carpenter stated they had a strategy discussion about bringing in some different restaurants; Chick Filet in particular. Mr. Allison has had some conversations with them and asked Mr. Allison to speak on that.

Mr. Allison stated he talked with Mr. Jim O'Brien of Georgia EMC economic developer for retail retention and recruitment and he stated he would like to come down and have a strategy meeting with Mayor and Council as well as the Development Authority and to see what we have to offer and what we have up against us. Mr. Allison stated he would get that setup.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Councilmember Carpenter made a motion to take a recess for refreshments only. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Murphy. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Murphy, Carpenter, Bass and Fesperman.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:59 P. M. in a motion by Councilmember Carpenter. Motion was seconded by Councilmember Murphy. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Fesperman, Carpenter, Bass and Murphy.

Respectfully submitted,

Ursula Lee

City Clerk

