**CITY OF BROOKLET**

Planning & Zoning

104 Church Street

Brooklet, GA 30415

(912) 842-2137

**Melissa Pevey, Debra Alexander, Rene Keene, Ginny Macaluso, Nathan Nall, David Bircher**

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**May 14, 2024**

**6:00 PM**

**AGENDA**

\* Not attending meeting-Melissa Pevey

**1. Call to order and welcome- Chairman Debra Alexander**

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE- Rene Keene**

**3. Approval of minutes from APRIL 9, 2024**

**Consideration of a motion to approve the agenda**

**Motion to Approve**

**MOTION:** Rene Keene

**SECOND:** Nathan Nall

**AYES:** Debra Alexander, Ginny Macaluso, David Bircher

**NAYES:** None

**Motion carried 5-0**

**4. COMMISSION ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Not spoken aloud

**5. ZONING ITEMS**

**A. APPLICATION RZ 2024-018:**

Weyerhaeuser Company submitted an application to rezone 25.87 acres, located on Brooklet Leefield Road, map/parcel# 136 000024 001, the property is presently zones A-1 (Agricultural), in connection with the annexa􀆟on of 278.13 acres located on Brooklet Leefield Road map/parcel# 136 000024 000, the property is presently zone AG-5/R-80 (Bulloch County). The proposed zoning a􀅌er annexa􀆟on is R-3 (Mul􀆟-Family Residential District). The primary purpose of the rezone is to establish a residential subdivision. It is expected that lots will vary in size. The minimum lot size will be 10,000 square feet with a minimum frontage of 80’.

**DISCUSSION FROM THE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**

**This request has been moved to June 11th due to a scheduling conflict**

**Debra Alexander-** Any questions or concerns about that? No.

**B. APPLICATION : TA2024-019:**

An amendment to the code of ordinances of the City of Brooklet to require that members appointed to the Planning Commission be residents of the City of Brooklet; to define cause for removal of a Planning Commission member; and to utilize compensation for Planning Commission members.

**Debra Alexander**- this is actually from section B I believe it is Article 15. Sec 15-1 that outlines the reasons for dismissal. We can now open this up for discussion and questions from the public.

**Speaker: Bobbie Howard:**

When I read this in the paper the other day, I became concerned because I am a retired executive director for the American Cancer society. I’ve also worked for other nonprofit organizations as executive director and I’ve worked with as many as 1600 volunteers at one time giving them direction and leadership and many educated people that volunteer, do not understand what a volunteer is. A volunteer is a person who performs or gives his services of his own free will, a person who renders aid, performs a service or assumes an obligation voluntarily giving time, service and money. They give and they do not take anything for their service or time and they should not expect to be given anything to them of valuable consideration. You can not be called a volunteer and receive money. If a person is paid, they are considered an employee which requires by state for the town to follow state law requirements and benefits. They have to be given a W-2 for their wages and taxes have to be paid. Any payment given is a liability for the citizens of Brooklet. Regardless of where the money comes from it belongs to the town not to the volunteers. We are top heavy in employment in the administration side of the town of Brooklet, we only have 2300 citizens. There are a lot of senior citizens here that do not have the funds to keep paying taxes and more and more and more. There are actually not enough people that work to maintain our town to keep our town the way it should be going. If a person can not volunteer without thinking they need to be paid they need to resign. In my opinion, if you care about this town and its citizens to accept a volunteer position then you should not count on being paid. I was just wondering why a committee of this nature that supposed to be a zoning committee is changing ordinances when I thought that was the duties and responsibilities of what we are paying city council for.

**Debra Alexander:** Would you like each of us to address that to you? This ordinance was not brought up by this committee but by the City Council and was given to us to look at and review. We did not offer any input into that at all. It is my understanding that the City Council looked at that and decided that is what they wanted to do and make an offer to us. This committee was just following through and looking at it, we have not totally decided. I know personally that I prefer not to be paid because I did offer as a volunteer and I volunteer in other organizations and do not get paid, so I feel the same as you feel. In saying that its not to say that the people that follow us may prefer to be paid so how do we look at that?

**Bobbie Howard:** What I would like to comment about that is, when anyone accepts a responsibility of being a volunteer they have to understand what a volunteer is, what a volunteers responsibility and duty is for what they are accepting and what is involved and if they can’t fulfill that obligation then they do not need to accept being a volunteer. **Debra Alexander:** I think too, one of the things you had mentioned that it would make us an employee of the city and I slightly disagree with you there. That would be supplemental funds given to us and it would be given with a 10-99 form for miscellaneous income. Its not employment but a consulting kind of fee where we would be required to pay out own taxes, the city would not be paying any taxes for that. I’m not saying that’s what I want, I’m saying having worked with accounting issues before when we hired consultants that’s how we typically paid them and made them responsible for their own taxes. It was a contractual matter. **Bobbie Howard:** a contractual matter has to be made based off the amount that they want to be paid and it has to be comparable to what they are getting paid in other areas. **Debra Alexander:** Like I said, this was brought to us, I have not heard an amount only a suggested amount of like around $25.00 and I know that this is not anything that I, myself am considering and if I were to be paid I would like to just give that back to the city because I think like you (Bobbie) we need the money back in the city budget. **Bobbie Howard:** we do need the money back into the city but once you get into the realm of being a volunteer and start getting paid, you are no longer a volunteer, period. **Rene Keene:** I would just like to say that none of us had any expectation of being paid when we volunteered. This is something that came up after we were appointed. **Debra** **Alexander:** We do thank you for coming forward and bringing to our attention your concern about the money the city has and our current status, I appreciate that. **Bobbie Howard:** we’ve already got other issues where we are top heavy with employees being paid and its going to be more taxes, we have 2300 citizens. **Debra Alexander:** it takes a lot to run a city and when you have a city that is growing and bursting out at the seams, it takes a lot to do that and a lot to grow. **David Bircher:** I would like to commend you showing up tonight and sharing your concerns. Everything that you said tonight was exactly what I was going to say however, you said it better than I would have. I do agree with you 100%. A volunteer is a volunteer and we are not obligated to city council, we’re not obligated to anybody but the people and we’re doing it volunteer so I can say, yes you hit on the head and said it better than what I was actually going to say and a lot of points you brought up tonight is exactly what I was going to mention as well so I thank you for showing up tonight.

**DISCUSSION FROM PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**

**Debra Alexander:** Now that we have heard from the public we can now open up the discussion as a committee.

**Rene Keene:** did everybody see in our packet the actual proposed amendment just so you will know specifically what we are talking about? Where it defines cause…. The bold is what they proposed to add. **Rene Keene** read the proposed Text Amendment Ordinance Section One which stated residency, then Section Two which stated absentee to meetings, I’m sorry, this is the first time we are actually seeing this ordinance, please be patient with us while we read over this a moment, then Section Three which stated accepting payment with the exception of the administrator. **Debra Alexander and Rene Keene:** so that doesn’t say anything about being compensated, yes it did, so its stating that there will be a fee schedule maintained at City Hall.

**Nicky Gwinnett:** so everything that we charge for is kept maintained on a fee schedule, just like when we charge for a culvert or anything like that its spelled out on a fee schedule and the reason for it is you can change a fee schedule without going through the hoopla of changing an ordinance that’s the only reason you do it that way. **David Bircher:** I have a question you (Nicky Gwinnett) can probably answer. Is this just like reimbursement of let’s say we go to training in Atlanta and your going to pay the hotel cost because we are going to spend the night as travel expenses but its not paying us as far as us showing up here, am I understanding that right? **Nicky Gwinnett:** that’s part of it. The other part is getting paid for showing up and our thought was to take the application fee and divide it amongst the ones that’s here and the reason we thought that was a good idea is because we never could keep anyone coming to these meetings regular and hopefully ya’ll will be the regular crowd but the thing that worries me about not doing something like this is you know in the future trying to get somebody else to do this. **Ginny Macaluso:** I just have a question, I think I feel the same way you both expressed, I think you did too that, I personally don’t want nor expect any compensation, so if we left this in, this language in and we all said as this committee, we don’t want compensation but leave it in for future commission members… **Nicky Gwinnett:** Maybe we ought to get the attorney to change it to say something like that. That you can either accept or decline and elective. **Bobbie Howard:** can I say, when you do that you are obligated and you’re paying reimbursement maybe in what I’m hearing, you are not reimbursing you are actually paying for people to show up which still takes you out of a voluntary position and you are working for the city then. The city is obligated to pay you a decent wage with benefits if you are going to be paid, period. **David Bircher:** Is there a way of adding into the fact that this would be just a reimbursement basically, we judged on the council if we submitted a reimbursement, we vote on it and they accept or deny it? **Nicky Gwinnett:** room and travel is covered for everybody. **Nathan Nall:** that’s already in there. **Nicky Gwinnett:** I mean everybody that has anything to do with the city that requires training gets reimbursed for their cost of the class, travel time and a meal per diem. That’s true for the Police Department, that’s true for council, that’s true for Planning and Zoning. **Bobbie Howard:** In actuality, this is written to pay you guys, that’s the way I’m hearing it. **Nicky Gwinnett:** well that was the thought but also to clean up some of the other stuff that was vague. **Bobbie Howard:** and even though you don’t want to be paid your putting an obligation on future committees and who knows what the future brings, we may not have 2300 people you know, you don’t know what the future is going to be about and paying people. **Nicky Gwinnett:** I get it, I get it, like I said, its something we thought might make it a little more interesting to people and maybe be able to buy a new pair of shoes at the end of the year. **Bobbie Howard:** Nicky, I feel like when you look for volunteers, you’ve got to look for the right person to do the job. **Nicky Gwinnett:** oh, I know. **David Bircher:** I would agree with that. It’s a volunteer type of job, I agree with the reimbursements for the class time and stay since most of the classes are hotel stays and all that, it shouldn’t be a burden on that end of it, but as far as coming here then you should be volunteer. **Nicky Gwinnett:** what the committee probably should do or however you wanna do it, make back a recommendation to council to accept whatever parts ya’ll like, and not what you don’t like. **Ginny Macaluso:** and that’s ok to do? Debra Alexander: that’s like what we talked about before as a committee, it’s a three part amendment. **Nathan Nall:** so if we want to kind of loop this discussion back around, I would say I think everyone is generally in the same opinion, and I think that it is not the best idea to even leave the opportunity open for future panels to elect weather or not they want to be paid or not. My feeling on all of this is that Section one is fine, Section two is fine and Section three changes should be removed and I think that is how we should phrase our motion to do it in that way. I think that is the most reasonable path forward so that the other changes for Section one and two can be cleaned up and Section three removed entirely and that be our recommendation, if you all agree? **Debra Alexander:** I think that is what we all agreed on before. **Nicky Gwinnette:** You probably really don’t wanna take out the reimbursement for training and travel. **Nathan Nall:** No, the point would be to keep that in the original section where its at and strike off the Section three with payment, and what’s already there would remain rather than being changed and I think that covers all the reimbursements. To me it’s the most responsible recommendation moving forward and the city council can make their decision on how they want to proceed forward but they will have our recommendation as those people would get paid or not paid moving forward. I feel like if you leave it open to an option or election to be paid or not, even if you choose not to be paid, it takes away the nature of being a volunteer panel. **David Bircher:** I have talked to others that also feel that when you volunteer, it feels like you are free to make your own choices and opinions but then you get paid it feels like you are obligated to lean towards anyway the city may want to lean even if we disagree with it or not actually being an independent. **Nicky Gwinnett:** If I can just say one more thing… the reason we went down that road in the first place is after the training classes we always asked everybody that went to training classes, do ya’ll get paid or not and 90% of them said yes, their planning and zoning committees get paid and that’s why we thought maybe that’s what we needed to be doing too, I’m good either way. **Nathan Nall:** I can vaguely remember something being mentioned at the training class but it really never struck me that this is what should or should not be done until I had a time to think about it. **The Committee as a whole:** We appreciate the effort and thought and appreciate the opportunity and gesture of it as a committee. **Nicky Gwinnett:** I think the council will be fine with all that, its not like we were gonna try to force it by any means. You know we had a hard time even in the past to have enough people here to have a quorum so you know…**David Bircher:** for the record, I want to thank the mayor for showing up tonight. **Nicky Gwinnett:** Well, since I’m in a position of no vote I feel like I can come to these, when I was in a position of vote I would not come to these because I did not want someone to think I was giving a biased opinion or trying to sway things. Sometimes it makes a difference if you know the intent of why.

• PLANNING AND ZONING RECOMMENDATION AND MOTION FOR REQUEST OF TA2024-019

**Consideration of a motion to approve Text Amendment TA2024-019 with conditions:**

Section One changes

Section Two changes

Section Three changes are Removed and left as is currently

**Motion to Approve with conditions:**

**MOTION:** Nathan Nall

**SECOND:** Rene Keene

**AYES:** Debra Alexander, Ginny Macaluso, David Bircher

**NAYES:** None

**Motion carried 5-0**

6. **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**MOTION:** Nathan Nall

**SECOND:** David Bircher

**AYES:** Debra Alexander, Ginny Macaluso, Rene Keene

**NAYES:** None

**Motion carried 5-0**