

Work Session
City Hall
Fayette, Alabama
January 21, 2021

The City Council of the City of Fayette held a work session at 5:00 o'clock, p.m. on January 21, 2021, in the Council Chambers of the City Hall.

Upon roll call the following were found to be present: Mayor Rod Northam, Councilmembers Virettia L. Whiteside, Eddy Campbell, Tommy Williams, Aliska Hughes-Monroe and Jerry Nichols. Also present were City Clerk Dawn Clapp, City Attorney Dale Lawrence, Police Chief Danny Jenkins, and Fire Chief Shannon Taylor.

The opening prayer was given by former Mayor Ray Nelson.

Mayor Rod Northam announced a quorum was present and the meeting was open for the transaction of business.

RAILS TO TRAILS PROJECT

Mr. Terry Acuff of Community Consultants reported to the Council on the "Rails to Trails" Project. Mr. Acuff reviewed with the Council the timeline of the City purchasing the rail corridor from Norfolk Southern.

Mr. Terry Acuff stated the City was now in a position to apply for grants for the construction of the trail. He said the maximum grant the City could apply for is \$400,000.00 with the City providing matching funds of \$100,000.00. He said the initial estimate is based on a ten foot wide trail for diverse use. Mr. Acuff stated if the City applies for the grant, it would probably be August of 2021 before the City is notified whether it will receive the grant. He said the City could do in-kind work as part of its match.

Mayor Rod Northam asked what the consequences of not proceeding were. Mr. Acuff stated the corridor could sit there for a little while but ADECA expects for the trail to be built. He said based on the initial estimates, the \$500,000.00 grant would probably be able to construct a trail from the Depot to State Highway 96. The \$500,000.00 estimate prepared by Mr. Luke Porter did not include lighting.

Councilmember Tommy Williams asked about why the proposed trail was 10 feet in width and not 12 feet. Mr. Luke Porter explained the original rail bed was 12 feet and keeping the trail to 10 feet would limit costs because the City would not have to build up a shoulder.

Mrs. Toni Robertson said there were plans to move the Farmers Market to an area close to the rail corridor.

Councilmember Hughes-Monroe expressed concern about lighting for the trail. Councilmembers Williams, Whiteside and Nichols also expressed concern about the need for lighting. Councilmember Nichols also expressed concern about the potential need for fences.

Councilmember Nichols stated he thought the most expensive part of the trail would be in the downtown area from the Depot to Martin Luther King Drive.

Mr. Acuff said if the City receives the grant, then probably construction would not start until spring of 2022. It was the consensus of the Council for the initial phase to extend from Martin Luther King drive to the Depot or, if possible, 2nd Avenue (Hwy171).

Mayor Northam stated \$100,000.00 had been placed in the City budget for this grant.

Mr. Terry Acuff stated the City would need to obtain 12 to 15 letters of support from local citizens or merchants.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Mr. Terry Acuff reviewed with the Council other grant opportunities. He said the City was eligible to apply for a CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) grant for sewer line rehabilitation and/or drainage issues. The CDBG grant requires a 10% to 20% match.

Mr. Acuff stated the other grant opportunities were as follows:

- Economic Development grants are available.

- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants are not available because the City is doing the Recreational Trail Project
- TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) grants are available for sidewalk rehabilitation and downtown streetscape. The TAP Grant can be for up to \$650,000.00 with a 20% match.
- EDA (Economic Development Administration) grants are available.
- ARC (Appalachian Regional Commission) grants can be used for sewer line extension and rehabilitation. These grants can be up to \$200,000.00 with a 30% to 50% match.

Mr. Acuff said if the Council would provide him with its priorities, he would see if there are grant funds available.

COVID LEAVE POLICY DISCUSSION

Mayor Northam stated on December 31, 2020, the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act funds to pay salaries/wages of employees who were out due to COVID impacts ended. He said now when someone is out with COVID, the employee will be using accrued sick time or vacation time. He stated this is consistent with what the County is doing.

Mayor Northam said the CARES Act provided up to 80 hours of leave for City employees at 2/3rds of their regular pay. He said the City paid the employees 100% of their regular pay instead of the 2/3rds.

The Council discussed the implementation of a COVID Leave Policy for the City. After a general discussion, it was the consensus of the Council that the City implement a policy so that City employees would receive up to 80 hours of pay at 100% of their regular rate if they test positive. Also, it was the consensus of the Council that an employee would not come back to work unless they tested negative. The Council asked the Mayor to draw up and present the COVID Leave Policy to the Council at its next meeting for approval.

Mayor Northam stated the Council could revisit the policy in a few months. He stated the 80 hours of leave for employees would start from January 1, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, upon the motion to adjourn being made by Councilmember Nichols and seconded by Councilmember Whiteside, it was unanimously approved.

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk