

# WALNUT GROVE CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

THURSDAY AUGUST 24, 2017

7:00 P.M.

Present:

Mayor Lamar Lee

Carol Witcher

Kevin Shultz

Wayne Dimsdale

Kathy Dimsdale

Joe Reitman, City Attorney

Katherine A. Glass, City Clerk

## I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Joe Reitman, City Attorney

## II. INVOCATION

Invocation given by Joe Reitman

## III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance

## IV. AGENDA APPROVAL

Wayne Dimsdale made a motion to approve the agenda, Seconded by Kevin Shultz, opportunity for discussion, motion passed, unanimous.

## V. PUBLIC HEARING

### Joe Reitman opened up the Public Hearing

#### A. PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX IMPLEMENTATION

Joe Reitman showed his power point to support the property tax. Copies of the power point were available to the public. Council Member Carol Witcher spoke in favor of the property tax. Wayne Dimsdale commented he had been on City Council for 20 years. Things change, we take advice from others who don't do what they say they will, people invest in this City but the big problem right now there is a lot of property just like mine and people have their properties priced way up. I'd love to see everyone get what they want for their properties. Now real estate agents tell us our properties are worth about half of what it used to be. Carol Witcher told about the building and dream of Disney World in FL. The area was thousands and thousands of acres of Cypress Swamps. No one thought about a "mouse" coming and making something happen. This area has now turned into billions of dollars worth of property. It took a "mouse" to make a dream come true. We are in this together. We can honor our forefathers and mothers by saying we are in this with you and we are going to find that mouse and turn this place into something everybody is going to want. I was reading my Bible today and this verse

fell out. "God is in Control". So for me, "I'm looking for a rat." Greg Williams asked how far are we from having the Sewer Plant running. Joe Reitman told him the EPD final approval is eminent. Mayor Lee – we are waiting on them to send us the permit. Joe Reitman asked if we want to activate the plant at a cost of \$171,000 per year just to serve the new fire station I guess it will get done late this fall, it depends upon need and demand. You obviously don't want to leave a man bringing a multimillion dollar business hanging in the wind. What is your timetable sir? Roger Singleton – We should break ground in the next 60 days. Joe Reitman – completion date? Roger Singleton – That would probably be about 9 months. Joe Reitman – then your sewer needs? Is septic going to get it for a time or would you need to be on the sewer? Roger Singleton – well you wouldn't want the double expense. Joe Reitman – so we pretty much need to have it on line nine months from now. That coincides with when the fire station will be completed. Roger Singleton – After the sewer plant starts is when you will begin to gather customers serving this street and then another street. But then again all the entities you are wishing would come this way, the grocery stores etc. they won't come here and do all the preparation to acquire land if it is not up and running. They won't play games with their acquisition. Mayor Lee – We have to run the plant now and run the spray fields. It can run now. Greg Williams– it is good to hear that it is already running. Cynthia Head – the line that is being run to the new fire department, is the county paying for the line to be run or is the City paying for it? Mayor Lee – The County is paying for it. Cynthia Head - That is what I thought. Whoever is hooking up to the line would pay to have it run to their property. Joe Reitman – There is a property owner that the line runs across was going to pre-pay for taps in the equivalent to \$250,000 and then the County was going to pay the other \$250,000. Which in theory, before you think it through, sounds really good. But then you think about does it makes sense from a business/ planning perspective to pre sale almost 1/3 of our plant capacity to get to one property owner just to get a \$250,000 contribution. Then we started talking to other city managers and they all said you don't want to pre sale your capacity because then you have handcuffed yourself to one property owner. It looked good on the surface initially. We have explained that to the County that we can't be selling our capacity in that fashion. The County is going to have to pay for the line themselves if that is what they want to do because right now we want to gravity flow. The easiest way to do that is down the creek but the problem with that is it is not close to Hwy 81 so it would be a long distance for someone to tap on to it. Mayor Lee – I had a meeting with the County today, I haven't had a chance to talk to you, the man who owns that property up there wants to put a day care, a grocery store and a retail space and a 50 plus community. He wants to start right away. Joe Reitman - I think he needs to kick in a percentage, \$200,000 or whatever and let the County pay for half and him pay for half and not this pre-selling capacity because he will be the beneficiary anyway. Those are discussions that need to be completed I guess. Mayor Lee – That was the meeting we had today. Unknown person – Are we gaining any revenue from the County by letting the Walton County Sheriff's Office have a precinct in the Old City Hall? Are they going to stay in that building? Mayor Lee – Walton County Sheriff's Office Precinct will stay in that building. The Fire Department will move to the new location. I understand that maybe the GA State Patrol wants to put something where the fire station is. I can't say anymore than that. Unknown person – But there is potential for more income for the City of Walnut Grove? City Clerk- we are not charging them rent. Unknown person – Oh we are not. Joe Reitman – When we drew up the contract in 2012 that was one of the

inducements for us to have more of a law enforcement presence in town. City Clerk – they pay their expenses. They pay their electric, water and gas bills. They keep their grass cut. Kevin Shultz spoke in favor and explained the benefits of having a “police presence” here in Walnut Grove. Ms. Byrd - Is the City going to tax the trailers? Joe Reitman – We need to check with Walton County Tax Commissioners. The Public Hearing was closed.

**B. AMEND 2017 – 2018 BUDGET**

City Clerk – We voted in a previous council meeting that we would not renew our contract with Code Red so we would like to move that money to the line item Public Works – repair and maintenance. Then under professional services the money for engineering, we won’t need as much since the sewer plant is completed, so I would like to move \$6,700 and move it to the general fund to balance the budget. Under the custodial services I am reducing that by \$100.00. We are paying someone \$50.00 per week to clean the City Hall office. Under office supplies we have really tightened out belt this year. We reduced that by \$4,000. We would like to move out to the general fund. Miscellaneous expense, we cut out \$5,000 from there. That fund was where the money came from for the Christmas lights and the festival. Then the library fund, cut it back to \$45,000. These adjustments will allow us to have a balanced budget. Joe Reitman asked if anyone had any questions or comments. Hearing none the Public Hearing is closed. Are there any other comments from the Council or Mayor for Madam Clerk. There were none. Kevin Shultz made a motion we add to the Agenda “Action on Budget Amendment”, Wayne Dimsdale seconded the motion, opportunity for discussion, motion passed.

**C. ACTION TO ACCEPT**

Wayne Dimsdale made a motion to accept the amended budget, Kevin Shultz seconded the motion, opportunity for discussion, motion passed.

**VI. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

**Kathy Dimsdale** – none

**Wayne Dimsdale** – none


**Carol Witcher** – Upcoming Election and we need candidates and qualifying ends at 4:30 p.m. tomorrow.


**Kevin Shultz** – Thanks for coming out. This was a longer meeting than we usually have. I was expecting a lot more negative comments there were a lot more positive comments. It is a tough issue. I love this town and I have lived here for twenty years now. I want to see it grow. I just got my tax bill the other day and it has almost doubled since I first moved into my house. Things change and we need to be in a position to offer more. I don’t want to see us have to turn this city back over to the County. There would be no pride in having an unincorporated City. We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

Kevin Shultz made a motion to adjourn, Wayne Dimsdale seconded the motion, opportunity for discussion, motion passed, unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Approved by the Mayor and Council this 12 day of October, 2017

  
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Mayor Lamar Lee

  
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Katherine A. Glass, City Clerk