



CITY OF STONECREST, GEORGIA

Honorable Mayor Jason Lary, Sr.

Council Member Jimmy Clanton, Jr. – District 1

Council Member Rob Turner- District 2

Council Member Jazzmin Cobble – District 3

Council Member George Turner- District 4

Tammy Grimes – District 5

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

July 6, 2020

11:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting Available to the Public via YouTube Live and in person

I. CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Jason Lary

II. ROLL CALL: All members present.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

a. Property Tax Increase

Motion 1- was made by Mayor Jason Lary to open the Public Hearing and was seconded by Council Member George Turner.

Motion passed unanimously.

Deputy City Manager Plez Joyner read aloud the state requirements pertaining to the Property Tax Increase.

Below are comments submitted via email. City Clerk Megan Reid read them aloud.

- *Hello, My name is Aikeem Cooper, and I am a resident of 3068 Bonnes Drive, Stonecrest, GA 30038. I am writing you this e-mail to oppose any tax increase which would NOT transfer over the homestead exemption and other exemptions from Dekalb County. Thank You, Aikeem Cooper, Esq*
- *Councilwoman Grimes, Council & Mayor, I am submitting this letter as my public comment regarding my opposition to creating a Public Works department at this time. I also am concerned that the current management of the city does not warrant enough expertise to move forward in that direction. I do want to encourage you, your fellow council members & mayor to start the search for an experienced city manager with a minimum of 5-10 years of experience in running/managing a city similar in size. Too many costly taxpayer dollars are*

*being wasted due to the many mistakes that have, and are continuing to be made, and it needs to stop. You all have a fiduciary responsibility to the citizens and taxpayers of Stonecrest to allow this to continue with no accountability. I do not want to be told that the city is solvent and in good condition. I would like to see the **true** numbers for myself, so that I can be made comfortable in knowing that the city has a balanced budget. I have made requests via the Open Records Act, and still to no avail. Please bear in mind that we are not just community folk, rather, we are savvy, educated and experienced enough to make that determination on our own.*

Lastly, I want to make note of the fact that the advertising of the hearings concerning the tax increase was done with the AJC in a timely manner, however, when I checked on the city's website the hearing was just posted on late Thursday evening prior to a holiday weekend. I am not sure why they were not posted at the same time, and do not want my suspicions to guide me otherwise. I simply asked that we the citizens, stakeholders and taxpayers be given the very best in making sure that we have and represent that of a model city, because currently we do not.

Regards,

Cheryl Moore-Mathis, Chaparral Woods Subdivisions resident, Klondike Area Civic Association President, (KACA) A founding member of Citizens for Accountable Government in Stonecrest, (CAGStonecrest)

Cc: Councilman/Mayor Pro-Tem George Turner Councilman Robert

- *NO
Shawn Dunham
Campus Recycling Foreman
Office of Solid Waste Management & Recycling
Georgia Institute of Technology
151 Sixth St. N.W.
Atlanta, Ga. 30332-0350
www.recycle.gatech.edu*
- *Good afternoon my name is Tenika Kemp and I live in District 5. I am OPPOSED of the city to take on public works at this time. Based on city council meetings the city does not have Actual cost of the services. Until WE get actual numbers for these cost We are not ready. Please vote NO for this at this time.*
- *Hello, I would like to voice my vote as no for millage tax increase!! I don't think this was a good time for a meeting on this issue during the pandemic! People have lost jobs and we're still in Phase 1 and more jobs may be lost! So again I stress no!!! Thank you. Sherie Randolph-Dunham 6038 Idlewood Trace*
- *I am vehemently opposed to the mileage rate increase and Stonecrest's proposal to take over public works from DeKalb County. With all due respect, Stonecrest is not ready to take on yet another responsibility from the county. This in no way is a reflection on the administration, but speaks to the inexperience, the number of open positions, and the number of other already existing issues that need your attention to deal with before you take on additional matters. Many of us are paying attention, and many of us aren't. IMO, "selling" this tax increase as not really a tax increase because you are taking over public works and the money we are*

paying to the county will now come to Stonecrest for a zero change to the citizens' tax liability, FAILS to mention the unknown liabilities associated with the new responsibility of Public Works and Stonecrest's inexperience and the various vacancies that exist. As someone already said, taking over Public Works from the County does NOT have to happen right now, especially in such a time of uncertainty that we are experiencing now. I fear that Stoncrest is setting itself up to collapse under its own weight. I am opposed to the tax increase at this time because I oppose taking over Public Works at this time. I think that Public Works, and the taxes that fund it, is NOT a prudent move at this time of great uncertainty. Thank you for your time. -Clara DeLay

- *I am a homeowner and resident of Stonecrest. I am not in favor of the proposed millage rate increase nor the move to add Public Works to the City's responsibilities at this time. I believe that the council and mayor should focus on hiring a City Manager and Finance Director and circle back to review millage rate and adding Public Works in 12-18 months. Thank you, Malaika Wells*
- *Dave Marcus-*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tonight you will vote on setting a millage rate for Stonecrest's first property taxes. You are being asked to set a rate that will pay for Parks and Recreation operations during 2020, and will also pay for the creation of a Public Works Department and its operations in 2021.

I urge you to vote for enough of a millage rate to cover Parks and Recreation operations. I think that simply makes sense since they are being paid for already out of the city's operating budget, and this budget will be strained by any revenue shortfalls that occur because of the economy's slow-down.

I also urge you to stop there and to not vote for a millage rate increase that will force the city to take over Public Works six months from now. Keep in mind that while state law requires the city to take over Public Works, the law does not specify when that needs to happen.

Why not take over Public Works right now? Here are five reasons:

ONE. At the previous hearing on this, the city administration showed you a cost estimate for creating and operating Public Works. One figure was shown, with no breakdown or backup. The figure, if I recall correctly, was \$3.7 million.

That amount is over twice as much, if I remember the figures correctly, as DeKalb spends on Public Works in Stonecrest. The amount is nearly as much as the total that Stonecrest would get for Parks and for Public Works combined.

If that figure is correct, then DeKalb County today delivers Public Works for nearly half the cost that the city proposes, yet that figure was shown as a justification for us taking it over at the last hearing.

TWO. If that figure is incorrect, then administration has asked you to take this large step without having done due diligence. It appears that, at least as of two weeks ago, the city administration had not done a detailed study to quantify the costs.

You could be buying a pig in a poke tonight if you go ahead. And the current financial climate is risky in and of itself. It is important to be careful and perhaps cautious.

And if the figure has miraculously comes down from \$3.7 million to, say, roughly the \$1.8 million that the county spends, you need to look carefully at the financial model. I myself don't trust any model that has so much error that it can get corrected with such a large swing and end up with the right number.

THREE. There is no professional Finance Director in the city government to conduct a financial analysis. And, if you go ahead, there is no experienced City Manager to oversee building the department. And there is no experienced Procurement Manager to ensure that we are buying and contracting as efficiently as possible. These are all positions that there has been much discussion of in council meetings, but there has been no forward motion on them (although we apparently do have a finance manager starting in July).

FOUR. The city administration staffing is lean, with several senior-sounding positions empty and Jacobs filling in. Building a Public Works department will take energy and talent that could be going towards increased economic development activities and job creation activities.

While there are certainly more jobs and more development in the city's future, we need to maximize them — to get the most quality development and the most good jobs in the shortest amount of time. Isn't that Stonecrest's number 1 need?

FIVE. Taking over Public Works is not critical. It will not increase our quality of life to any real degree. And if it takes our focus off the basics, the citizens lose. And if the costs are not right, either Public Works service will be lower or taxes will be higher. Thank you.

- Stonecrest officials must be fiscally responsible as well as good stewards to avoid property tax increases. The tax transfer from DeKalb County will address this year. What actions need to be taken, or conversely, not taken to help ensure zero to minimum increases to property taxes in the future? What steps need to be taken to continue to operate in the black? Thank you for your public service. Sincerely, Mack and Karen Calhoun mackwcalhoun@gmail.com

Motion 2- was made by Mayor Jason Lary to close the public hearing and was seconded by Council Member Jimmy Clanton.

Motion passed unanimously.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Jason Lary adjourned the meeting at 11:55a.m.

Read and adopted in the regular meeting of the City Council held on this _____ day of _____, 2020.

Mayor Jason Lary

ATTEST:

Megan P. Reid, City Clerk