

City of Blue Ridge

480 West First Street • Blue Ridge, Georgia • (706) 632-2091

City of Blue Ridge
Workshop Meeting Minutes
City Hall
480 West First Street
August 14, 2018 at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donna Whitener
Council Members Robbie Cornelius,
Nathan Fitts, Kenneth Gaddis,
Rhonda Haight and Harold Herndon
City Clerk Kelsey Ledford
City Attorney James Balli
Planning, Zoning and Project Manager
Jeff Stewart

1) Call Meeting to Order:

Council Member Rhonda Haight made a motion to call the meeting to order. The motion was seconded by Council Member Nathan Fitts. The Council voted 5-0. Motion carried.

2) Downtown Development Authority—Ann Arnold:

Ann Arnold introduced herself and informed the Mayor and Council of her credentials and experience with downtown development.

She informed the Council of her experience with a project involving parking solutions for downtown and explained how a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) could assist the City with such a project.

Ms. Arnold explained that a DDA could enter into agreements for a maximum of fifty (50) years. Council Member Nathan Fitts asked what type of agreements the DDA could execute that would be for that amount of time. She explained that a parking lease could be made up to a term of 50 years maximum or for as long as the property owner was willing to lease the property (whichever comes first).

Council Member Nathan Fitts asked for some clarity on the grant that Ms. Arnold had previously mentioned in regards to the parking solution she was involved in. He asked who applied for the grant, the DDA or City. She explained that it was the DDA and that the grant was specifically written to be used on a specific project.

Ms. Arnold gave some information in regards to a Business Improvement District (BID), which would allow the DDA to impose a tax just on the business district in order to collect funds for the DDA.

Council Member Rhonda Haight asked if Ms. Arnold could expound on the DDA board and the term of each member. Ms. Arnold explained that the board is made up of seven (7) members and that the initial board members would have staggered terms. She continued to explain that after the initial terms were up each term thereafter would be for four (4) years.

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Council Member Rhonda Haight asked if the DDA could be abolished at any point after its creation. Ms. Arnold replied that the DDA could not be abolished.

Mayor Donna Whitener asked about budgeting and who funds the DDA. Ms. Arnold replied that the City funded the DDA as it was a department of the City, but that there were different ways to fund the DDA. She also posed the question of why create a department that you do not plan on funding.

Council Member Nathan Fitts asked about any liabilities or negative aspects that the Council should be aware of. Ms. Arnold answered that funding was the biggest issue with most municipalities as well as the possibility of not being able to fill positions on the board or the possibility of the Council not picking the correct members for the board.

Council Member Rhonda Haight asked if the Council could serve on the board. Ms. Arnold replied that yes, but that the term is only for the extent of their elected term.

Ms. Arnold explained that the City could set policy in regards to what authority the DDA could have.

Council Member Rhonda Haight asked if the City of Blue Ridge was considered too small for a DDA. Ms. Arnold explained that any City can have a DDA that only focuses on downtown.

Council Member Nathan Fitts asked about a happy median of serving both downtown and residents. Ms. Arnold mentioned that if the City had a DDA it would serve downtown and that the Council would be able to focus more on the residents.

Council Member Rhonda Haight asked how to determine setting the district for the DDA. Ms. Arnold explained that typically the City's Central Business District (CBD) is designated as the DDA district as well since the CBD is the downtown.

Council Member Nathan Fitts asked if she had seen any loans default during her experience. Ms. Arnold answered that in her seventeen (17) years at Rome, while writing forty (40) loan applications that received nine (9) million dollars in funds; only one (1) loan defaulted. She explained that the bank that the loan was from went under during the 2008 recession and that it was not of any fault of the City or DDA. She continued to state that the City nor DDA have any type of liability in these types of loans. She explained a ratio of 50/40/10; which she went on to explain that fifty percent (50%) of the money comes from the bank, forty percent (40%) comes from the loan programs and ten percent (10%) is owner's equity. She explained that the bank takes the first position, second is the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and third is the Georgia Cities Foundation. She continued to state that the DDA is the applicant or conduit for the business/developer to obtain the loan program or be the sub recipient.

Christy Arp with the County Development Authority spoke about her experience with obtaining the loan programs.

Council Member Kenneth Gaddis asked about the possibility of lawsuits and the liability associated with having a DDA. Ms. Arnold asked if an attorney was present who could answer that question. City Attorney James Balli stated that anyone can sue anybody, however that does not mean that they will win the suit.

Council Member Rhonda Haight asked if it was the City's responsibility to hire a full time DDA Director and whether the Director was considered an employee of the City or the DDA. Ms.

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Arnold explained that it was up to the Council and how they structured establishing the DDA. She gave the Council a few options of how they could structure the position of the Director. Mayor Donna Whitener announced that Ms. Arnold had agreed to assist the City in establishing the DDA if the Council decided to move forward.

The Mayor, Council and Ms. Arnold then discussed the initial steps in establishing a DDA such as adopting a resolution to establish the DDA, designating a district and appointing members. The Director's salary range was discussed and Ms. Arnold stated that the salary would typically be set between \$40,000 and \$120,000, depending on what the Council decided.

The Council then accepted comments from the public. Among those who spoke were Brian Pritchard, Cesar Martinez, Frank Moore and Nichole Potzauf.

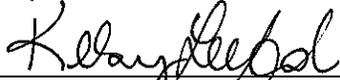
The Council was approaching the time for their regularly scheduled Council Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

3) Adjournment:

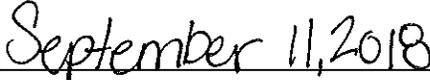
Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rhonda Haight. The Council voted 5-0. Meeting adjourned.



Mayor Donna Whitener



City Clerk Kelsey Ledford



Approved

