

CITY OF PINE LAKE
ACTION AGENDA
February 23, 2021
7:00 PM
VIA ZOOM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mayor Melanie Hammet.

Present – Mayor Melanie Hammet, Mayor pro tem Jean Bordeaux and Council members Tracey Brantley, Brandy Hall, and Augusta Woods. Also present were Acting City Administrator Peggy Merriss, City Attorney Susan Moore and Chief of Police Sarai Y’Hudah-Green. Council member Brandy Beavers and Administrative Coordinator Missye Varner were not present.

Announcements/Communication

Mayor Hammet announced that there was a meeting to begin to plan the Community Conversations around race with hopes that they would be scheduled to begin in late March.

Adoption of Agenda

On a motion by Council member Hall, second by Mayor pro tem Bordeaux, and all present voting “aye,” the agenda was adopted as amended to add scheduling of a Town Hall as new business.

CONSENT AGENDA

Adoption of the City Council Meeting Minutes for February 9, 2021.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Bordeaux; second by Council member Hall, and all present voting “aye,” the minutes were adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

COVID-19 Pandemic Report – Mayor Hammet provided an update on current COVID pandemic information. She stated that there had been just over 500,00 deaths since the pandemic began. She noted that Georgia was ranked 47th in the United States for vaccine distribution efficacy and 6th in new cases. Mayor Hammet stated that monitoring will continue, and everyone needed to continue to wear masks in public and to maintain social distancing and practice other safe habits.

NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance 2021-01

Ordinance O-2021-01 encourages the issuance of citations instead of arrest for possession of less than one ounce of marijuana when it is the sole non-traffic offense.

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Bordeaux; second by Council member Woods, and all present voting “aye”, consideration of the ordinance and scheduling of the second reading for the Council Meeting on March 9, 2021 was adopted.

Amendment to Street Renaming Policy

Recommend approval amendments to the Street Naming Policy.

On a motion by Council member Woods, second by Council member Hall, and all present voting “aye”, the policy was amended as recommended.

Amendment #2 to Employment Agreement

Amendment #2 to the Employment Agreement extends the term of the agreement for professional services of Peggy Merriss as Acting City Administrator to December 31, 2021.

On a motion by Council member Hall, second by Council member Woods, and all present voting "aye", Amendment #2 was approved.

Town Hall Zoom Meeting

By consensus, it was agreed that a Town Hall would be scheduled for Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 7:00pm.

REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS

Public Comments

April Mackey, resident requested to open discussion about the playground and how to open it safely for children in the neighborhood. Ms. Mackey stated that Avondale Estates and the cities of Decatur and Tucker have currently opened their playgrounds.

Tyler Covington, resident, commented that he has two small children ages two and four and that they are very cautious regarding quarantining and fully understand the concerns regarding transmission of the Coronavirus. Mr. Covington said that all children have sacrificed their need for development during the pandemic. He commented that he hopes to find a way to open the playground safely for a more normal means for kids to interact with other kids by utilizing social and safe distancing. Mr. Covington recommended exploring opening the playground to see what happens.

Nevia Castro, resident, commented that she understands the plight of the kids but that she is concerned that people from all over will come to the playground and asked if they will socially distance. Ms. Castro stated that there will need to be rules in place and asked how they will be enforced. Ms. Castro recommended to be careful and not open too soon.

Susan Lightcap, resident, commented that it is heartbreaking that the children are suffering from isolation during the pandemic. She also stated that Pine Lakers practice quarantining and social distancing and urged the City to use caution and go slow in opening public spaces. Ms. Lightcap talked about playground equipment not being sanitized properly and said that she does not know if the City can safely open the playground. Ms. Lightcap concluded by saying that COVID-19 is not widespread within the city because the citizens are being sensible and suggested practicing true caution.

Andrea Richardson, resident, commented about how working women, especially Black and Latino mothers have been the most affected especially when it comes to childcare during the pandemic. She said that many have had to quit their jobs to care for their children and homeschool during the day due to school closings. Ms. Richardson said that she has the option of driving to local parks but that many parents do not have that option. Ms. Richardson talked about managing risk versus the benefits of playing outside and that she often meets with other kids within the community to enjoy the green spaces. Also, she asked Mayor and Council to reopen the playground because many neighbors do not have the option to go to other area playgrounds. Ms. Richardson said that grocery stores and restaurants are open spaces that society has decided are important and that the parents and children are being left behind.

Sierra Wallace, resident, commented that she agreed with the other comments to open the playground and said that this past year in the life of kids has been huge. She also stated that the children within the City have been congregating at the green spaces and are being cautious and that opening the playground is low risk with huge benefits. Ms. Wallace recommended to open the playground and if the crowd becomes too large to close it down and revisit the issue again.

Staff

There were no comments.

Mayor and City Council

Mayor Hammet commented that she appreciated residents attending the meeting and that this is how the City operates; by listening to the citizens. The Mayor said that staff will do additional research. She also said that volunteers and monitors would be needed to assist with playground activities if it were to open so that police officers would be called to monitor the play area. Mayor Hammet suggested to the residents who were present have further discussion about next steps that would be safe and consider creative possibilities.

Mayor Pro tem Bordeaux thanked all of the families represented and said that Council will do all that they can to come up with a solution and recommended having a sanitation plan for the playground. She also applauded the families for raising children during the pandemic.

Council Member Brantley commented that she feels the parents and children pain because playgrounds and parks were important to her and her three children while they were growing up and thanked all for sharing.

Council Member Hall thanked the concerned residents for sharing their perspectives and that she has a three-year-old that thinks that public works are slacking on their job because the playground is closed.

Mayor Hammet commented that a three-year-old sent her a video last May 2020 during the pandemic to re-open the playground. The Mayor thanked everyone for attending the meeting and stated that the city must keep the public safe.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mayor pro tem Bordeaux; second by Council member Brantley, and all present voting "aye," the meeting was adjourned.