

CITY OF LAGRANGE, GEORGIA
REGULAR MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

March 9, 2021

Present: Mayor Jim Thornton; Council Members LeGree McCamey, Mark Mitchell, Tom Gore, Nathan Gaskin, Jim Arrington and Willie Edmondson

Also Present: City Manager Meg Kelsey; City Clerk Sue Olson; Assistant City Manager Bill Bulloch; City Attorney Jeff Todd; Communications Manager Katie Van Schoor; Strategic Planning Manager Mark Kostial; Police Chief Lou Dekmar

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Thornton, the invocation was given by Council Member Willie Edmondson, and Scout Troop 31 led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

On a motion by Mr. Edmondson seconded by Mr. Gaskin, Council unanimously approved the minutes of the regular Council meeting held on February 23, 2021.

A public hearing was held to receive comments on a request to rezone 508 Greenville Street from C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) to C-3 (General Commercial). No comments were received and Council heard the first reading of the following ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY; TO AMEND THE ZONING MAP AND ORDINANCES OF THE CITY SO AS TO RECLASSIFY THE USE ZONE OF REAL ESTATE LOCATED AT 508 GREENVILLE STREET AND OWNED BY NEW VENTURES, INC.; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO FIX AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

A public hearing was held to receive comments on a request to rezone 507 Jenkins Street from R-2 (Residential) to O-I-R (Office/Institutional/Residential). No comments were received and Council heard the first reading of the following ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY; TO AMEND THE ZONING MAP AND ORDINANCES OF THE CITY SO AS TO RECLASSIFY THE USE ZONE OF REAL ESTATE LOCATED AT 507 JENKINS STREET AND OWNED BY ANGAMPALLY REJEEV; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO FIX AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Michael Strickland, Troup County EMA Director, came before the Council to introduce himself. Mr. Strickland started his new position in January 2021, and wants to meet and interact with the Council and the community so that in a time of need, we are all prepared.

Chief Dekmar introduced Chris Ridgeway, a former LaGrange Police Department Intern, to the Council. Mr. Ridgeway worked as an intern and a Cadet for seven years. He will graduate from college this year and will then go to law school. Mr. Ridgeway wanted to let the Council know what a great influence these programs with the police department had on him.

Tabitha Coverson, Executive Director of Communities in Schools, updated the Council on the progress from this past year. Ms. Coverson thanked the Council for their continued support. The Council praised Ms. Coverson's work in the community and thanked her for the update.

Mr. Kostial presented information to the Council regarding a Board of Planning and Zoning Appeals recommendation on a request to annex/zone property located at 143 Busch Drive. On a motion by Mr. Gaskin seconded by Mr. Arrington, Council voted unanimously to call for a public hearing to be held on April 13, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

Ms. Kelsey reminded the Council that they had discussed in their work session on February 23, 2021 the Sewer Extension Policy. At that time, no action was taken. On a motion by Mr. Gore seconded by Mr. Edmondson, Council voted unanimously to approve the Sewer Extension Policy. A copy of the document is on file in the Director of Utilities' Office.

On a motion by Mr. Gore seconded by Mr. Mitchell, Council voted unanimously to adopt the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, until the last several years, the City of LaGrange, like many local governments of the State of Georgia, has experienced a steady but significant decrease in violent crime;

WHEREAS, while the fluctuation of violent crime rates is driven by numerous, multi-faceted elements, the recent experience in LaGrange strongly indicates that a disturbing number of crimes are being committed by individuals who are on parole or felony probation, despite having been involved in an extremely high number of violent offenses;

WHEREAS, the express purpose of parole and probation is to provide opportunities for convicted offenders to conform to the laws of the State of Georgia, and become contributing members of society;

WHEREAS, for the parole and probation systems to work effectively, decisions regarding release or revocation must be founded on a merit-based matrix which reasonably predicts successful completion of parole or probation at minimum risk to the safety of our citizens;

WHEREAS, the recent experience of LaGrange calls into question whether appropriate safeguards are in place to prevent offenders with unacceptable criminal histories from being given the opportunities of parole, probation or release on bond;

WHEREAS, more specifically, of individuals arrested for violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault) in LaGrange in 2020, 57% were on parole, probation, or out on bond, often released despite being on parole or probation;

WHEREAS, similarly, for property crimes in LaGrange during calendar year 2020 (burglary, entering auto, larceny and auto theft) 59% of all identified and arrested subjects were out on parole, probation, or out on bond, often released despite being on parole or probation;

WHEREAS, in 2020, LaGrange experienced ten (10) homicides, including seven (7) murders, numbers not reached since 1997;

WHEREAS, six (6) of the seven (7) suspects identified in murders in LaGrange which occurred in calendar year 2020 have been arrested an average of nineteen (19) times each, and combined were convicted of twenty-five (25) felonies; importantly five (5) of the seven (7) suspects were on parole, felony probation, or out on bond pending felony charges when the homicides occurred (in some cases, bond was granted despite the suspect being on parole or felony probation);

WHEREAS, eight (8) out of (10) of the victims in the homicides occurring in LaGrange in calendar year 2020 were either on parole, felony probation, or out on bond pending felony charges at the time of the incident in which they were involved (and, again, in some cases bond was granted despite the victim being on parole or felony probation);

WHEREAS, based on the local experiences in LaGrange, it is apparent that the current procedures and resultant decisions regarding release on parole, probation and bond desire careful review to determine if practices and methods should be modified to ensure that release decisions are made with a reasonable degree of certainty that such will not compromise public safety;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the City of LaGrange, Georgia, and it is so ordained by the authority thereof, that the leaders of the criminal justice system, including courts, law enforcement, felony parole and probation, should review recent methods and trends in early release of offenders to determine if changes are necessary to ensure that determinations are made in a manner which better serves citizens of our state; in so doing, recognizing fully the importance of second chances, but asserting that the recent experiences in LaGrange are not the result of second, or even third chances, but instead are the result of releases occurring after an unacceptable number of chances were previously granted. In calling for serious study of the existing considerations and systems which govern release decisions, the Mayor and Council are not calling for reactionary incarceration, but instead encourage thoughtful, targeted and merit-based solutions which will more accurately predict those persons who are the most acceptable candidates for release.

Let a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to Governor Brian Kemp, Lt. Governor Geoff Duncan, Speaker of the House David Ralston, the Council of Superior Court Judges and the State Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Council heard the first reading of the following ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY; TO AMEND THE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ORDINANCE RELATING TO BROWN BAGGING; TO PROVIDE FOR THE CHARGE OF VIOLATING THE BROWN BAGGING ORDINANCE AGAINST AN OWNER; TO REQUIRE NOTICE PRIOR TO CHARGE; TO PROVIDE FOR PENALTIES; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO FIX AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

On a motion by Mr. Gaskin seconded by Mr. Mitchell, Council voted unanimously to approve the following ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY; TO AMEND THE CODE SO AS TO MODIFY COMPENSATION FOR THE OFFICE OF MAYOR; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO FIX AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE, GEORGIA, HEREBY
ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1:

That Section 5-5-10 of the Code of the City of LaGrange be amended by deleting said section, in its entirety, inserting in lieu thereof a new Section 5-5-10 to read as follows:

“Sec. 5-5-10.-Compensation.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 2.13 of the Charter of the City, the monthly compensation of the Mayor and each member of the Council of the City of LaGrange shall be as follows:

Mayor\$1,666.67
Council Member \$ 800.00.”

SECTION 2:

All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed.

SECTION 3:

This Ordinance after adoption by the Council and upon approval by the Mayor shall become effective upon the taking of office of those council members elected at the next regular municipal election pursuant to O.C.G.A. 36-35-4.

INTRODUCED AND FIRST READING _____ February 23, 2021

SUBMITTED TO MAYOR AND ADOPTED _____ March 9, 2021

SUBMITTED TO MAYOR AND APPROVED _____ March 9, 2021

BY: /s/ James C. Thornton, Mayor _____

ATTEST: /s/ Sue Olson, City Clerk _____

On a motion by Mr. Gaskin seconded by Mr. McCamey, Council voted unanimously to authorize the introduction of a substitute ordinance.

On a motion by Mr. Edmondson seconded by Mr. McCamey, Council voted unanimously to approve the following substitute ordinance:

A SUBSTITUTE ORDINANCE

A SUBSTITUTE ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE CITY; TO AMEND THE WATER AND WASTEWATER USER CHARGES IN CERTAIN SPECIAL DISTRICTS; TO MODIFY WASTEWATER CONNECTION CHARGES; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO FIX AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAGRANGE, GEORGIA, HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1:

That Section 20-15-10 of the code be amended by deleting therefrom subsection (b), inserting in lieu thereof a new section 20-15-10 (b) to read as follows:

“(b) Customers connected to the City of LaGrange wastewater system that discharge wastewater through a lift station placed into service on or after April 1, 2007 shall be assessed a Special District Water Rate equal to the

applicable standard water rate plus a fifty percent (50%) surcharge until the total surcharges, tap fees, capacity fees, and capital contributions collected from those customers equals the City's incurred cost for the lift station, force main, and gravity lines installed to serve such customers plus a three percent (3%) annual carrying charge."

SECTION 2:

That Section 20-15-11 of the code be amended by deleting therefrom subsection (d), inserting in lieu thereof a new section 20-15-11 (d) to read as follows:

"(d) Customers connected to the City of LaGrange wastewater system that discharge wastewater through a lift station placed into service on or after April 1, 2007 shall be assessed a Special District Sewer Rate equal to the applicable standard sewer rate plus a fifty percent (50%) surcharge until the total surcharges, tap fees, capacity fees, and capital contributions collected from those customers equals the City's incurred cost for the lift station, force main, and gravity lines installed to serve such customers plus a three percent (3%) annual carrying charge."

SECTION 3:

That subsection (2) of Section 20-15-4 of the code be amended by deleting said subsection, in its entirety, inserting in lieu thereof a new section 20-15-4 (2) to read as follows:

- "(2) Sewer tap charges:
- a. The capacity fee for new sewer service to a single family dwelling or commercial building served by a water meter of up to one inch (1") shall be \$3,000. The capacity fee for new or expanded sewer service to a building served by a water meter of one and a half inches (1-1/2") shall be \$6,000. The capacity fee for new or expanded sewer service to a building served by a water meter of two inches (2") shall be \$15,000. The capacity fee for new or expanded sewer service to a building served by a water meter of three inches (3") shall be \$30,000. The capacity fee for new or expanded sewer service to a building served by a water meter of four inches or larger (4") shall be \$50,000.
 - b. The tap fee for a sewer tap installed by the city shall be the cost of labor and materials as determined by the city.
 - c. For multi-family buildings including apartments, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities, the capacity fee shall be the 3/4" meter capacity fee multiplied by the number of individual living units multiplied by fifty percent (50%).
 - d. For redevelopment projects located on property that has received prior sewer service of equal or greater capacity, the capacity fee calculated above shall be multiplied by twenty-five (25) percent."

SECTION 4:

All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed.

SECTION 5:

This Ordinance after adoption by the Council and upon approval by the Mayor shall become effective immediately.

INTRODUCED AND FIRST READING _____ February 23, 2021

SUBMITTED TO MAYOR AND ADOPTED _____ March 9, 2021

SUBMITTED TO MAYOR AND APPROVED _____ March 9, 2021

BY: /s/ James C. Thornton, Mayor _____

ATTEST: /s/ Sue Olson, City Clerk _____

In good news, closing comments, Ms. Van Schoor reported that we are once again talking about our litter cleanup – we had a record breaking attendance in Calumet Neighborhood Park – nearly 120 collected an estimated 8,000 pounds of trash, making this our biggest cleanup to date. Thank you to our partners, Calumet Neighborhood Park Association, the Chamber’s Leadership Troup Class, Kiwanis Club of LaGrange, Ark Refuge, the LaGrange Fire Department and Police Department. She then showed the Council a fun video of a day in the life of a LaGrange litter cleanup.

There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m. by Mayor Thornton.

Mayor

City Clerk