

A special meeting of the Conyers, Georgia, City Council was held on January 14, 2010, in the Carriage Room at the Georgia International Horse Park for the purpose of the Mayor's State of the City Address.

Roll Call – Present: Mayor Randy Mills; Council Members Chris Bowen, Vince Evans, Gerald Hinesley, Marty Jones and Cleveland Stroud.

Welcome – City Manager Tony Lucas welcomed everyone to the celebration.

At 7:10 p.m. Mayor Mills called the Special Meeting of the Conyers, Georgia, City Council to order.

Invocation – Mayor Randal S. Mills introduced the Reverend Dr. John Beyers, Senior Minister of Conyers First United Methodist Church, and asked him to give the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance – City Manager Tony Lucas introduced Conyers Police Explorer Kashawn Lenhard who led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Oaths of Office – City Manager Tony Lucas asked The Honorable Chief Superior Court Judge of Rockdale County, Sidney Nation, to administer the Oath of Office to Mayor Randal S. Mills, who was re-elected in the November 3, 2009, General Municipal Election. Mayor Mills then administered the Oath of Office to Council Members Chris Bowen and Cleveland Stroud, respectively, who were re-elected in the November 3, 2009, General Municipal Election.

Mayor Mills recognized past and present elected officials, other government officials, and various board members who were present.

New Business:

1. The State of the City Address – “Renewing a Promise to Serve” – Mayor Randal S. Mills addressed the audience and stated that this was his 13<sup>th</sup> State of the City Address. He also stated that the state of the City of Conyers is in great shape. Mayor Mills thanked and commended the Council Members, Department Directors, and City staff for all they have done in moving our community forward. Mayor Mills stated that he had asked the City Council Members to speak to the audience tonight about their respective projects and accomplishments from this past year and on things to come in 2010.

***Council Member Gerald Hinesley***, Co-Chairman of the Finance Oversight Committee, Chairman of the Community Development Committee and Co-Chairman of the Arts Committee, reported on the financial side that the City of Conyers' financial standing is more than sound. Also that the City's annual budget has received the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) award for Distinguished Budget Presentation for the last 19 consecutive years; and the recipient of the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Finance Reporting for the last 16 consecutive years. Council Member Hinesley stated that the City will continue to provide superior services to its customers, and that revenue and expenses will be carefully monitored in order to continue to be good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars.

Regarding Community Development, Council Member Hinesley reported that in 2009 Conyers was one of five Georgia communities that participated in several studies which resulted in recommendations for the exciting potential for the Central Conyers Activity Center, an area of 410 acres with boundaries of West Avenue, Dogwood Drive, Green Street and Old Covington Highway, as well as the Livable Centers Initiative which is a long-term plan for pedestrian and bicycle improvements, traffic flow, and housing alternatives and services

***Council Member Vince Evans***, Chairman of the Transportation Committee and Co-Chairman of the Arts Committee, reported on the completion of the intersection improvement at Eastview Parkway and Highway 138. He also reported that the West Avenue project was completed in late summer and was paid for with SPLOST funding of approximately \$948,000; and that this project was complimented with a mural on the side of Jim Andersen's building at the corner of West Avenue and Dogwood Drive by artist, Jack Whitaker. Approximately 125 people participated in the public painting.

Council Member Evans reported that the Milstead Avenue/Northside Drive project which consisted of new sidewalks, milling and repaving of Milstead Avenue, Northside Drive and Shipp Circle, realignment of the intersection at Milstead Avenue and Northside Drive, as well as a fountain and welcome sign.

Council Member Evans reported that work has continued with the PATH Foundation and that the surveying and engineering for Phase I of the project which will run from the Depot through the library property, Oakland Avenue to Parker Road, behind the county's annex, behind Rockdale Career Academy and ending at Flat Shoals Road is complete. He stated that Four A International will be funding most of Phase II which will run from Flat Shoals Road to Johnson Park; and that master planning is underway for the Conyers/Rockdale to Covington/Newton trail which will begin in Olde

Town and to the GIHP before heading east to Newton County, through Oxford and Covington and ending in Porterdale. He also stated that approximately 22 miles is being proposed including a waterway trail on the Yellow River that goes from the GIHP to Porterdale. Council Member Evans stated that the Olde Town Trail Committee organized a bicycle friendly community workshop and examined ways to make the community more receptive and open to alternative modes of transportation.

Council Member Evans also reported on the opening of the Olde Town Gallery and Studio in the spring of 2009. He stated that the gallery has hosted several art exhibitions, holds art classes, and has a collection of art by local and regional artists.

**Council Member Chris Bowen**, Chairman of the Stormwater Committee and Big Haynes Creek Nature Center, reported that the City's Environmental Services division completed four major in-house projects totaling more than \$17,000, which included ditch restoration on Sara Court and Old Covington Highway and pipe replacement on VFW Drive and West Circle. He also reported that the City also worked with contractors on the completion of the West Avenue corridor improvement and transportation improvements on Milstead Avenue, Northside Drive and Shipp Circle which included milling and repaving streets, installation of sidewalks and curb and gutter work.

Council Member Bowen reported that Phase II of the Big Haynes Creek Nature Center was completed in 2009, which included an additional two miles of walking trails with four bridges; and that the City has signed a contract with Ecos Environmental Design for a master plan for construction of additional trails and amenities. He also reported that the attendance at the Big Haynes Creek Wildlife Festival has doubled between 2008-2009 and that the festival also includes the North Georgia Live Steamers and their scale steam engines and diesel locomotives.

**Council Member Cleveland Stroud**, Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, reported that in 2009 the City received grants for additional patrol officers, a wireless mesh network to aid communication efforts between our police officers and the 9-1-1 Center; and a new four-legged member of the Police Department named Flossie. He also reported that Flossie was purchased with drug forfeiture money.

Council Member Stroud also reported that Representative Hank Johnson was instrumental in securing a U. S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing (COPS) grant totaling more than \$409,000 for the Conyers Police Department. He stated that these funds pay 100% of approved salary and benefits for three entry-level officers for three years. Council Member Stroud stated that federal grant money received in 2008 was used to upgrade the City's 9-1-1 Center.

Council Member Stroud reported that the City's Court Services Department expanded their facility to approximately 3,000 square feet in 2009; and that the Department changed their hours from 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. to allow more customer hours.

**Council Member Marty Jones** is Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, Co-Chairman of the Finance Committee, and Chairman of the GIHP/Tourism Committee; and also serves on the Olde Town/Main Street/DDA Board. Council Member Jones reported that the Conyers Main Street Program continues to bring new businesses and new life to Olde Town. He also reported that the DDA and Main Street Board raised over \$20,000 in their sponsorship drive to promote and provide incentives for new businesses.

Council Member Jones also reported that geocaching, similar to a treasure hunt, has been placed in Conyers – two in Olde Town and three at the Horse Park. He stated that a GPS device is used in tracking down the caches.

Council Member Jones reported that in 2009 the Georgia International Horse Park reached its 15<sup>th</sup> year of operation. He stated that the City continues to work on improving horse, mountain bike, and pedestrian trails. He also stated that the Mayor and Council remain open to ways that the GIHP can continue to generate sales tax dollars that will be reinvested in Conyers.

Council Member Jones reported that the City continues to take an active role in Olde Town Revitalization. He stated that the City is participating in studies such as ARC's Livable Centers Initiative for an activity center to border Olde Town where citizens can live, shop, dine, be entertained and do business.

Council Member Jones reported that City is committed to clean up Olde Town and bordering areas in order to make sure developers interested in the area have contiguous parcels of land adjacent to Olde Town to work with for redevelopment; and to provide opportunity for developers to come in, work with our vision and plan for a variety of housing options, landscaping and beautification, new business ventures and a place where people want to be.

Mayor Mills again thanked the Council for a great job. He asked for continued prayers and guidance in moving the community forward, including our community development plan incorporating land-use planning in activity centers, north and south of I-20. He stated that results will continue to be evaluated and began as funding is available and with grant opportunities.

Mayor Mills also stated that public safety remains a top priority, and introduced Mr. Gene Wilson, the City's new Public Safety Director.

Mayor Mills stated that transportation issues are critical and that Conyers will work with the Atlanta Regional Commission and other entities in the further development of a regional transportation plan. He asked that everyone consider voting for approval of another SPLOST this year. He also stated that we must strive to energize our local economy by keeping taxes down and providing incentives.

In conclusion, Mayor Mills stated that we must all work together with our bordering communities since transportation issues cross jurisdictions and that crime does not always stay in one's locale; and he thanked everyone for coming to hear the assessment of the state of the City of Conyers.

2. Spirit of Conyers Awards – City Manager Tony Lucas addressed the audience and stated that the following individuals were selected by the Mayor for the Spirit of Conyers Awards, and that these individuals have provided valuable service to the City of Conyers by supporting its mission.
  - O. T. Adams
  - Jean Hambrick
  - David LaMalva
  - Cesare Matrundola
  - Larry Perry
  - Bill Spivey
  - Mike Sullivan
  - Zia Usmani
  
3. Employee of the Year  
 City Manager Tony Lucas recognized Charles Drake as the recipient of the 2009 Dee Buggay Award of Excellence.

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

---

Randal S. Mills, Mayor

Attest:

---

Patricia I. Smith, City Clerk