

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Conyers, Georgia, City Council was held at 7:10 p.m. on January 19, 2011, 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 – Mayor Randy Mills welcomed everyone, and recognized past and present elected officials, other government officials, and various chairmen/board members who were present.

Invocation – The invocation was given by Council Member Gerald Hinesley.

Pledge of Allegiance – Mayor Mills led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

New Business:

1. The State of the City Address – “Taking Care of Business” – Mayor Randal S. Mills addressed the audience and stated that this was his 14<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 2011.

**Council Member Cleveland Stroud**, Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, addressed everyone and stated that the top concern of the Conyers Police Department is the safety and welfare of the City of Conyers' citizens. He also stated that the business community and neighborhood associations are encouraged to become more involved in the City's efforts to fight, prevent and solve crime in our community.

Council Member Stroud also reported that the Conyers Police Department is pursuing reaccreditation through the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police State of Georgia Law Enforcement Certification process; as well as applying for national accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. It is expected that certification on a state and national level will be awarded in 2012.

Council Member Stroud stated that the Conyers Explorers Post 222 had attended several competitions in Georgia and Michigan and winning awards in a number of categories. He also stated that the Conyers Citizens Police Academy had 19 class members this past fall, and will return this spring due to popular demand.

Council Member Stroud reported that the Conyers Police Department has partnered with the City's GIS Department, Larimore Associates, and the Omega Group in becoming part of crimemapping.com.

He also reported that a revised no loitering or prowling ordinance, along with an ordinance prohibiting prowling and loitering around parked vehicles was passed by the City Council in July.

**Council Member Vince Evans**, Chairman of the Transportation Committee and Co-Chairman of the Arts Committee, reported on the paving of the Olde Town parking lot behind the Whistle Post Tavern and that landscaping will begin when the weather improves.

Council Member Evans also reported that the “water feature” on Northside Drive as constructed as a gift of \$50,000 from the Vaughn-Jordan Foundation.

He stated that the Sigman/Eastview Road intersection improvement and traffic light was completed last fall, as well as the resurfacing of Pine Log Road and Rowland Road. He also stated that a \$249,000 grant from DOT was awarded for road safety improvements – i.e., restriping center lines, pavement markings and turn arrows on roads along with new reflective pavement marker in roadway medians and new facing on road signs and posts.

Council Member Evans stated that 2011 projects include the repaving of Sigman Road from Gees Mill Road to Highway 138, Eastview Road from Milstead Avenue to Sigman which includes resurfacing, addition of sidewalks and minimal drainage work; as well as additional turn names and a traffic signal at Sigman/East Park Drive.

Council Member Evans also stated that the groundbreaking for Phase I of the Olde Town Trail took place in November; and that the City is working with PATH and 4A for Phase II.

Council Member Evans stated that since SPLOST was passed again by the voters \$9-\$10 million for city projects could be expected.

Council Member Evans stated that the Olde Town Gallery and Studio is operating independently of the Conyers-Rockdale Council for the Arts, and that Jackie Sprague has been hired as the full-time executive director of the CRCA.

**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 that the City of Conyers remains financially sound. He stated that our budget has received the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada award for Distinguished Budget Presentation annually for the last 20 consecutive years; as well as having received the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Finance Reporting for the last 17 consecutive years.

Council Member Hinesley stated that the City, with over 180 quality employees, continues to provide superior services to its customers.

Regarding Community Development, Council Member Hinesley stated that the Livable Centers Initiative Overlay District has been revised for clarity and readability and understanding of the major tenets (encourage a complementary mixture of residential, employment, retail, civic, institutional & recreational uses within walking distance; ensure compatibility of proposed land uses; establish expectations for appearance & quality of building; and encourage the design of streets to accommodate multiple users).

Council Member Hinesley reported that the City is using an Urban Redevelopment Plan for redeveloping areas with blighted conditions. He also stated that the City's Central Conyers Activity Centered (at I-20, West Avenue, Oakland Avenue & Olde Town) is an example of an area that would be improved.

Council Member Hinesley stated that the City amended the zoning ordinance in 2010 which creates a special use permit for properties related to nightclubs, teen clubs, and similar establishments. He also stated that in another zoning amendment, the design requirements for buildings had been strengthened. He stated that the code enforcement software helps the City's inspectors, along with the help of the Conyers Police Department, track and measure their code enforcement efforts. Council Member Hinesley reported that the City's GIS Department has mapped all street signs and red lights in the city limits to updating the 9-1-1 software with GIS data.

**Council Member Chris Bowen**, Chairman of the Stormwater Committee and Big Haynes Creek Nature Center, reported that in 2010 the City's Stormwater Services Division completed six major in-house projects, which includes replacing pipe and curbing at Park Circle, adding a catch basin and curb on Springwood Drive, replacing pipe on Springwood Circle, cleaning out and reestablishing a ditch line with the replacement of pipe along Oakland Avenue, and cleaning out the catch basin and laying new pipe on Almand Creek Drive. He also stated that excessive vegetation on Needmore Street was cut back to ease water flow and pipe was replaced and the ditch line was reshaped and realigned.

Council Member Bowen reported that in 2010 the GIHP staff worked with FEMA on restoring the GIHP's Glen special events field, horse trails and portions of the Nature Center that sustained damage and were washed out due to the 2009 massive flooding.

Council Member Bowen stated that Phase III of the Big Haynes Creek Nature Center began in 2010 and will be completed in a few months. Phase III includes a new boardwalk, canoe dock, and viewfinder, addition of four tent pads, grills, fire pits and a council ring alongside Big Haynes Creek. He also stated that discovery stations depicting the nature center eco-system will be installed, as well as new audio interactive stations that will allow visitors to identify sounds throughout the wetlands.

**Council Member Marty Jones** is Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, Co-Chairman of the Finance Committee, and Chairman of the GIHP/Tourism Committee; reported that, according to figures from the Travel Industry of America, tourists spend an average of \$109 million a year in Conyers/Rockdale County with each household in Conyers/Rockdale County paying approximately \$232.00 less in state and local taxes.

Council Member Jones stated that in almost five years that the Conyers Main Street Program has been in existence the Program continues to hold popular events and assist businesses with financing options. He also stated that the St. Patrick's Day Parade, the Taste of Conyers, the Fall

Festival and Christmas events bring thousands to Olde Town. Council Member Jones stated the hopes are that investors will reevaluate Olde Town for their retail businesses and restaurants.

Council Member Jones reported that the Conyers Downtown Development was successful in selling the Langford-Elliott Hall to a local attorney; and that the DDA also worked with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and Georgia Cities Foundation to secure low interest loan financing for Olde Town's Thai Palace. He also reported that the DDA has recently signed a lease agreement allowing the Borage Grill on Commercial Street to expand into property owned by the Downtown Development Authority.

Council Member Jones reported on the substantial economic impact of horse shows. He also stated that the Mayor and Council approved the expansion of the Horse Park's RV lot, with the addition of 28 spaces as well as the possibility of an additional 42 temporary spaces, bringing the total number of spaces to 142 for those staying on-site for GIHP events.

Council Member Jones stated that Wi-Fi has been added to the GIHP and Olde Town Conyers, and wireless antennas have been placed throughout the Park and Olde Town Conyers. He also stated that this network also aids law enforcement while in their vehicles.

Council Member Jones reported that this year the City, the GIHP, and the Conyers Convention and Visitors Bureau have debuted new websites which feature payment options for city services, up-to-date event calendars, etc.

Council Member Jones gave an update on the North Georgia Live Steamers which continues to lay track for their miniature outdoor railroad club on Horse Park property with the hope of having the trains running and rides available to the public in late spring.

Council Member Jones reported that the Horse Park staff is continuing to work with the Conyers-Covington Cycling Club regarding attracting more mountain biking events on the Horse Park's Olympic mountain biking trails.

Council Member Jones stated that the Monastery of the Holy Spirit broke ground on their new 17,000 square foot, \$6.2 million Monastic Heritage Center last spring, with the hopes of accommodating more than 70,000 visitors annually. Council Member Jones also stated that the Conyers CVB enjoys its partnership with the Monastery.

Council Member Jones reported that Conyers has been the location of the film industry shooting several projects in our area which include a backdrop for a Turner and Chevrolet-sponsored webisode, The Vampire Diaries, and the "Teen Wolf". Warehouse space was also utilized for the shooting of the 2011 film, "Fast Five". Council Member Jones stated that the film industry brings people to our area that utilizes overnight accommodations, long-term housing, restaurants, retail, and more. He also stated that the City looks forward to continue partnering with the Conyers-Rockdale Economic Development Council.

Council Member Jones reported that after a two-year legal battle, the City now owns Cherokee Run. He stated that the conditions at Cherokee Run with the prior lease holder were deplorable, including the course, the unsanitary condition of the kitchen, and poor customer service. Council Member Jones also stated that all of the City departments have been an integral part in working to bring the course and grounds back up to the Arnold Palmer standard. Council Member Jones stated that the City is also renovating the clubhouse, clubhouse kitchen, bunkers and greens. Council Member Jones also stated that with the new general manager and golf pro, Tommy Moon, the goal is to make Cherokee Run profitable for the City and a significant economic development and recreational component not only to Conyers, but east metro Atlanta and our region.

Mayor Mills again thanked the Council, Department Directors, and all City employees for a great job. He also stated that public safety remains a top priority, as well as economic development and job creation.

In conclusion, Mayor Mills stated that we must all work together with our bordering communities and asked everyone to do four things: (1) pray for your community; (2) care for your community; (3) believe in your community; and (4) be active in your community.

Again, Mayor Mills thanked everyone for coming to hear the assessment of the state of the City of Conyers.

2. Spirit of Conyers Awards – Mayor Randy Mills addressed the audience and stated that the following individuals were selected for the Spirit of Conyers Awards, and that these individuals have provided valuable service to the City of Conyers:
- Benny Atkins
  - Mike Houchard
  - Charlotte Gellert
  - Fred Straub
  - Ed McBrayer (absent)
3. Employee of the Year  
City Manager Tony Lucas recognized Kelly Honea as the recipient of the 2010 Dee Buggay Award of Excellence.

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.



Randal S. Mills, Mayor

Attest:



Patricia I. Smith, City Clerk