

CITY OF STATHAM

MINUTES

Statham City Hall

327 Jefferson Street, Statham, GA 30666



PUBLIC HEARING – August 3, 2023

6:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Piper called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Mayor Piper and Councilmembers Krause, Patterson, Penn, Thrasher and Venable

Also Present: City Attorney Jody Campbell, City Clerk Ashya Fambrough, and Rachel Bemby (JAT Consulting).

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE- Mayor Piper led the pledge of Allegiance and thanked all the Veterans and their families for their service.

At 6:15 p.m., Councilmember Krause made a motion to enter into Public Hearing. Councilmember Venable seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

- 1. Tax Year 2023 Millage Rate:** The City of Statham has tentatively adopted a millage rate which will require an increase in property taxes for the 2023 tax year. The City of Statham anticipates the property tax levies will be set at 4.06 mills, an increase of 0.057 over the 2022 millage rate and an increase of 0.795 over the rollback rate. Without this tentative tax increase, the millage rate would be no more than 3.265 mills. The proposed tax increase for a home with a fair market value of \$225,000 is approximately \$5.13 and the approximate tax increase for a non-homestead property with a fair market value of \$300,000 is \$6.84.

Rachel Bemby reviewed the components that go into a tax bill based on a homeowner that reached out about the overall increase in his tax bill at the proposed millage rate. The assessed value of the property increased by \$65,000.00 and the millage rate increased by 0.057 mils. The property value is determined on the county level and would need to be appealed with the county tax assessor's office. 95% of the increase of the tax bill is due to increased property values. Also, she reviewed the CPI (cost of goods and services) versus the city's millage rate going back to 2018. The CPI has increased while the millage rate has decreased. This is not sustainable for the city as the city reserves will only cover 18 days of operation currently. If the millage rate is rolled back, there will have to be \$100,000.00 cut out of the budget that was approved in June. Councilmember Patterson noted that if the millage rate was rolled back yet the cost to run the city has increased, then we won't be able to afford to run the city. Rachel confirmed that that is correct and that services would have to be decreased. Councilmember Krause thanked Rachel for taking the time to explain and noted that it was the same when she served on the school board.

2. TSPLOST (Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax): To discuss a TSPLOST referendum.

Mayor Piper noted that is a sales tax not a property tax. Councilmember Venable provided a recap from previous hearings explaining the funds must be used for transportation purposes and that listing a specific road on the list will mean that the funds must go to that road and could lead to partial projects if enough funds don't come in, so the list needs to be broader. Councilmember Penn noted that it is estimated that the city will receive \$867, 000.00 per year for the next 5 years. Councilmember Patterson noted that Mayor Piper gave an estimate of Dooley Town Rd at \$400-500,000.00 and Atlanta Hwy at \$1.5 million. Councilmember Krause noted that this could be a game changer for the city and didn't pass when it was for the region. Everyone that comes into Barrow County will pay this and there are holes in the roads throughout the county. This is very important and a game changer for the city.

CITIZEN INPUT

- Kay Burnette serves as the vice president of the Oak Springs HOA and requested an update of a decision from the petition that was presented to Council at the last work session requesting the streets be serviced and that stop signs be put in. City Attorney Jody Campbell noted that he has met with Oak Springs residents and the HOA previously. There is no record of the streets being adopted by the city by deed / ordinance nor by the recording of a final plat and action such as maintenance or something similar to which would make the roads belong to the city per Georgia Law. It is truly regrettable that the developer did not do what they said they would do but the city cannot accept the roads. The portion of the final plat that would be signed upon acceptance of the roads was not signed. Kay Burnette noted that she does not agree, and that the HOA has sought the advice of legal counsel.
- Frank Burnette spoke concerning Oak Springs and noted that the developer failed to do as the city requested. Citizens are being hung out to dry and the roads in the subdivision are better than some throughout the city, yet they are being told they need to pay \$300,000.00 before the city will accept them. City Attorney Jody Campbell noted that is not an apples-to-apples comparison. Roads are required to be of a certain standard and the roads in the subdivision are not. If the roads are brought up to code, the city can accept them.
- Diane Scott spoke concerning creating a special tax district for the Oak Springs Subdivision. The HOA applied for one previously and was turned down. City Attorney Jody Campbell noted that per the code that does not apply to private roads which these are. Diane Scott noted that other municipalities have done this when roads were not built to code. Mayor Piper stated that he has been working with the HOA since he was elected. He has met with residents, the developer, and Georgia Power. There are septic issues in the subdivision where he resides and has had to pay to have water rerouted. Unfortunately, it all comes down to buyer beware. Also, there were only 2 houses left to build and the developer planned on leaving town after they were complete.
- Adrian Miller spoke concerning Oak Springs. The citizens have been honest and want to know what the city can do to help. It is becoming a safety issue because there are no streetlights nor street signs. There are issues with the homes as well. If they were inspected, then the inspector did not do a good job.

- Brian Craig also spoke concerning Oak Springs and the petition. What was done is wrong and the residents need solutions.
- Alan Seaward spoke concerning the millage rate. He feels what is in the paper is misleading because it doesn't address that property values increased. Beacon Park will have a 48% increase overall and other neighborhoods will have a 41% overall increase. Rachel Bemby reviewed her previous presentation with him. Councilmember Venable stated that he is imposing a tax on himself also. During the budget hearing the council reviewed the amount of the budget that would go towards road repair. The bulk of the increase is from the county and is going to fund the projects that need to be done throughout the city. It will go towards have 24 police coverage and K-9 Officer Nora. It allows city vehicles to be replaced, many of which were financed. Councilmember Patterson noted the importance of having the local police in consideration of the recent incident at Winder Barrow High School.

ADJOURN

At 7: 50 p.m., Mayor Piper asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Venable made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Krause seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.