

**MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION WORK SESSION
FEBRUARY 1, 2022**

The Cordele City Commission held a Work Session on February 1st, 4:30 p.m., Cordele City Hall Courtroom, 501 North 7th Street, Cordele, Georgia with the following present:

Joshua Deriso, Commission Chair	Wesley Rainey, Commissioner
Vesta Beal-Shephard, Commissioner	Isaac Owens, Commissioner
Angela Redding, City Manager	Tommy Coleman, Attorney
Janice Mumphery, Recording Secretary	

Staff present: Police Chief Mike Hathaway, Capt. Jalon Heard, Irene Cantrell, Fire Chief Augusta Telfair, Debra Perry, Jack Wood, Sr., David Wade, Steve Fulford, Cathy Mygrant, Debbie Wright.

Others Present: See Sign in Sheet.

Media present: Joshua Roden – South GA TV; Cordele Dispatch – Neil McGaHee.

Call to Order: Commission Chair Joshua Deriso called the Work Session to order at 4:30 p.m.

Invocation: Prayer was rendered by Rev. Ricky Smarr.

Pledge Allegiance to the United States Flag: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call: A quorum was established.

Attendee's Name	Title	Absent	Present
Joshua Deriso	Commission Chairman		✓
Vesta Beal-Shephard	Commissioner Ward One		✓
Isaac Owens	Commissioner Ward Two		✓
Wesley Rainey	Commissioner Ward Four		✓

WORK SESSION AGENDA:

1. Usage of the Old Boys and Girls Club:

Commission Chair Joshua Deriso gave the reason for this discussion for the Commission to find out which direction to go.

On January 18, 2022 at the Regular Meeting of the City of Cordele Commission, Mr. Michael Waters appeared before the Commission, in reference to, the usage of the Old Boys and Girls Club. Mr. Waters requested that the Commission go in a new direction with the building. Commission Chair Deriso stated currently, the actual gymnasium is not being used; but what is actually in questioned is the occupancy of the Youth Build Building. There is a Community Block Grant, which stipulates that 70% of the people using the building should be LMI (Low to Moderate Income), another stipulation is, if we change the direction, we would have to have a Public Hearing or Meeting, the other stipulation is in question, was it used for 70% LMI.

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Commissioner Shepherd: When we released the building to the Empowerment Zone, it was vacant, and in order to keep the City from renegeing on the City's part, the City allowed Youth Build to use the building; comparable to an in-kind service. But now the City wants to go another route, is there anyway everyone can use the building?

Commission Chair: The floor is opened for discussion on this matter.

Commissioner Owens: What is the usage of the building at present?

Robert Cooke, Executive Director of the Southwest GA United:

Southwest GA United operates the Youth Build Program in the Old Boys and Girls Club Building. Mr. Cooke stated he has documents on how Southwest GA started using the building, a report on Southwest GA United Youth Build Program, and the percentage that is currently being served, which include the demographics information on male and female usage, along with other general information. Mr. Cooke stated there was not a lease found, but a Letter of Commitment for the 2014 Grant Application was found. Mr. Cooke said he can answer any questions, along with, Youth Build Director and Program Participants. Southwest GA United has been using the building since 2014, the first letter was received for the in-kind services was in 2014.

Youth Build Staff, Youth Build Participants and the Public Response:

Doris Farrow – Participant: Youth Build take in students and participants that want to accomplish their dreams and their goals to graduate. It is more than a building, it is like a home where we are comfortable in, in our own spaces. A lot takes place in the building, such as, activities, school work, etc.

Traci Curney, Youth Development Specialist, over 20 yrs. Experience globally: This situation presents a solution and a way the City and the Commission to look at Youth Development moving forward. It is a great opportunity for us to work together; at Youth Build, we have Case Managers, we have young people, we have job developers. This is an opportunity for the Commission to facilitate a Youth Development Response for Cordele, especially for older school youth who are coming in contact and conflict with the law. All of us as are stake holders and we should come together under one umbrella with a Coordinator to oversee, and then we can structure a response to the City and the Community.

Commissioner Owens: When we talk about activities, we are talking about the completion of schoolwork that helps the participants to get their GED?

Traci Curney, Youth Development Specialist: When a participant comes into Youth Build, they have life skills training, they are seen as two persons; (1) a person, an individual from a family and a community, there are certain capacity building, such as, training, psychosocial support, support services that are given to them as that person,

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whether that be food stamps, housing, whatever service or partnership we have to streamline them into becoming attached to mainstream line activity, then we are developing their ability to be determined, to be a leader, to come to this meeting to see how a Commission runs on an issue that concerns them. (2) They are professionals – Youth Build has a Job Developer who is there, trying to get the participants to understand, they are not just a young person anymore, you are a professional now, a resume' is needed, an email is needed, voice mail is needed. Youth Build to some extent is a Coordinator, we are working with partner, we are doing referrals, we are also involving Chambers, job boards, Commissions and doing an advocacy role for unattached youth.

Commissioner Owens: What are the hours of operation? Morning until 4:30 p.m.

Commissioner Shephard: The 4-H Club of Cordele/Crisp County is also using the building. Commissioner Shephard stated that she received a complaint from the 4-H Director, informing her that they have been asked to vacate the building, she contacted the City Manager to take care of this issue.

Commission Chair Deriso: Here is the issue with that issue, Mr. Waters has a contract for the gymnasium, given by the prior City Manager to actually have the building. Mr. Waters actually have in his possession this evening, for the contract part of the gymnasium.

Quintavius Thomas – 17 years old – Participant: I was one of the youths that always got into trouble, always did something bad. I actually found a place I can call home, instead of getting into trouble, I can do something with my acting, instead of going out in the streets, staying in streets all night, making my mom worry, I actually do something that makes her happy and help in the community. I have been participating with Youth Build for a little bit over six months.

Commissioner Owens: What is the longevity of the participants program? It is a two-year program under the Grant. Each participant goes through the training in six months, but we too, can be flexible, because we are dealing with young people and they are at different stages of development, different points of transitioning, so we have to be flexible in doing things. After they leave the program, we still communicate with them up to six-months.

What is the value of the two-year Grant? The Grant depends on the overall running of the program, it is calculated by the number of participants, 84 participants is calculated about 1.1 million, all of the services are including in this amount.

Carla McKenzie: I like being in Youth Build, there is nothing but love, everybody gets along, we are like sisters and brothers. We can get our Construction License; we paint houses and we get a stipend for that. Hopefully, I will have my GED before May.

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Marleka McCloud: I am 19 years old. Youth Build is a positive space, you do not have to worry about people judging you and being criticized, discrimination. Youth Build not only helps us, but it helps us help the Community. We restore old houses from the floor up.

Lisa Dixon: Employed with Southwest GA United for twenty-three years. The youth are a joy to work with. I wouldn't want to work with anyone else. Youth Build is a place to help the young person to strive in life.

Michael Waters: Do you all offer programs for Early Childhood up to early teenage years. The last past ten years I have accumulated a lot of youth in that age range and I cannot bring them all to my house. I do not mind working together, but what do you all offer for under 16 years of age?

Traci Curney: We do not offer programs for 16 years of age and under. I was looking to see if there was an Early Childhood Center that Youth Build can partner with. Early Childhood is something that is offered and is something we can facilitate with students learning and we can have a partnership with them. We understand the challenges and that is where the partnerships come in. We will have to have insurance when we start engaging in children at certain ages, there are certain polices, laws, insurance requirements that we will have to adhere to. I look for a solution.

How do you all recruit? Social media, signs.

Michael Waters: Southwest GA United are talking about funding, up until 2008 they received \$584,000,000 in funding that came in off of the Empowerment Zone. Empowerment Zone is a distressed community; which is poverty stricken, high unemployment, high crime rate, etc. This is the West side of town, our community. So, if all those funds came into the Community, we should not be having a discussion about these programs. You only reported that you received \$26,000,000. So, it is a lot of funding that is being mismanaged. These programs were supposed to have been in place, since the last past ten years. I asked for the building ten years ago, there were not programs in the building. I come around again ten years later, it is the same thing, no programs.

Commission Chair Deriso: We have to clean somethings up in the City, how people come across things, partnerships that are made. I am a Social Work by education and profession. I got my start working with youth, I worked with the Federal Trio Program. I understand the Grants. I am concern that the program only serves ages 16 to 24. I am always concern about the 70% LMI (Low to Moderate Income), because that is a stipulation that must be met. I am not sure that we are meeting that qualification to continue. Where I am stuck at is the early initial component, the 70% LMI and the funding with Southwest GA United. The City has given a building, which I believe, the organization has the funds to actually pay something for the building. Now, this is me

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being Chairman; Mr. Waters organization is a partnership with thriving non-profits that want to increase and do better, we owe it to our citizens to help develop, which is the reason I say we need a Community Development Manager for now, given the funds that the City has, I mean one that will work in develop non-profits, not in a general, tradition sense of go out and develop the community all over, not an Economic Developer, but a Community Development Manager that will work with our non-profits. We have one organization that has the financial capability of being okay without the City giving them this building, but we have another group that do not have the financial capability yet and they are asking for the City's help to serve the kids. As the Program Director stated, I think we need to develop a Youth Development Strategic Team for the City, that would be good for us to bring it all together. But we have to start looking at organizations like Mr. Waters and develop them. Commission Chair Deriso asked the Commission to do not look at a solution, but look at both plans, currently look at what Youth Build has to offer and also at what Mr. Waters is asking.

Commissioner Owens: I think we have a solution on both parts that would work all the around for our community. But, as was stated by the Chairman, we cannot say, this is what it is going to be today and go on with it, we will have to go back and look at how both organizations can serve our community. Because the positive side is, we have people in this room who want to help our community.

Mrs. Rosie Watkins: I am looking out for everybody, not just a program, but a strategy on how to work together to be a good community, good society and all people working together. Mrs. Watkins stated the problem with building cannot be solved this evening.

Commissioner Reeves: Why is the building empty?

Michael Waters: For number one the Grant for \$500,000 was to construct two buildings, but there is only one building.

Commission Chair Deriso: A decision of the building should not be made this evening because if we do, I do not think we will be doing our due diligence as far as honoring our oaths of office without favor or fear. I am concern about the financial capacity of Southwest GA United with the building be used as an in-kind donation. There is a good amount that the City can use, if the building is leased out for a cost. Commission Chair Deriso stated that he thinks one of the solutions for everyone working together is to develop some kind of team or task force with Mrs. Watkins, Dr. Jackson, Mr. Waters and anyone else who is vested in the interest in the Community, should sit down and assist with developing that infrastructure as we speak, so we will have a comprehensive plan for our youth City wide. I think this is an immediate solution if we come to a solution this evening.

Robert Cooke: The documentation that was submitted to the Commission, does document low income served over the course of the Grants that were received from Dept.

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of Labor and we are 91.9% low income served. 91% of the youth that has been served by the Youth Build Program is low-income.

2. Discussion of the Demonstration and Parade Ordinance:

An Ordinance Repealing section 12.5 of the City Code of the City of Cordele; Adopting a New Section 12.5 Entitled Demonstrations and Parades; Repealing all Ordinances in Conflict Herewith; and for Other Purposes.

City Attorney Tommy Coleman stated this Ordinance is replacing the old Ordinance about Picketing. Mr. Coleman drafted a minor Ordinance about use, right-of-way, demonstration. A person will come to the City and get a permit, it will go to the City Manager, the City Manager will approve it or not, this has appeal to the Commission, more general nature. Mr. Coleman is recommending this Ordinance to replace the Picketing Ordinance. The Ordinance goes to the Police Department and then to the City Manager. It repeals section 12.5. The First Reading of this Ordinance. Mrs. Redding stated the Police Chief needs to sign off on the application first. This is on the Agenda for this evening for the First Reading.

ADJOURNMENT: Commission Chair Joshua Deriso adjourned the Work Session at 5:34 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Commissioner Shephard moved to approve Work Session and Regular Meetings for February 1, 2022; second by Commissioner Rainey; Minutes were approved unanimously by the Commission.