



**CITY OF RICHMOND HILL
TELECONFERENCE MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

**Tuesday, July 07, 2020
7:00 PM**

**Richmond Hill City Hall Council Chambers
40 Richard Davis Drive
Richmond Hill, Georgia
31324**

Present from City Council: Russ Carpenter, *Mayor*; *Councilmembers:* Kristi Cox, Mark Ott, Steve Scholar, and Robbie Ward

Staff Present: Chris Lovell, *City Manager*; Scott Allison, *Assistant City Manager*; Dawnne Greene, *City Clerk*; Robert Whitmarsh, *Finance Director*.

Mayor Carpenter called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Councilmember Cox gave the opening invocation. Councilmember Ott led the pledge of allegiance.

OPENING STATEMENT BY MAYOR CARPENTER

Good Evening,

Rising COVID-19 cases in our area necessitated that we hold this council meeting virtually through Zoom. The numbers are increasing -- we now regularly hear of friends who have tested positive for COVID. Coronavirus did not go away. However, the Georgia football season will go away if we cannot get the spread minimized again. Please wear a mask when in public settings and socially distance.

Over the past several weeks, the City of Richmond Hill has deepened its commitment to participating in difficult conversations. I want to take this moment to update you about our efforts towards creating a more inclusive and fair community. One conversation underway with city leaders and community leaders has been the Robert E. Lee statue at J.F. Gregory Park, which was gifted to the City of Richmond Hill twenty years ago.

At the end of June, we announced that we intend to place a contextual marker at the statue. The hope is this fact-based informational marker will be a starting point for people of all races to have a conversation about the Civil War and crucial lessons learned from that bleak

time in our nation's history. We have begun establishing the Historical Marker Committee comprised of area historians to achieve that goal in partnership with the NAACP.

Additionally, a future project has begun with the local VFW to erect a monument honoring Richmond Hill's fallen war heroes.

We received approval from the Boles family to proceed with our Phase I plans. We intend to have shovels in the ground by August to start this exciting project that honors a family that has been and continues to be integral to the fabric of Richmond Hill.

Earlier this month, we had the grand re-opening of the J.F. Gregory Park playground, which now offers more accessibility and two inclusive play structures. Special thanks to the Girl Scouts for proposing those changes to us.

We also launched a new feature to our website called Audio Eye to ensure that it is ADA compliant and accessible to all.

We are also proud to announce that we are creating a Cultural Diversity Committee that will be tasked to undertake projects that will ensure this community continues to respect and appreciate the diversity of all residents.

Richmond Hill has always been a tight-knit community, and our residents often demonstrate their dedication to the well-being of their neighbors. We continue to remain unified, and I am certain that we will get through 2020 stronger than ever if we work together and continue to have difficult conversations with respect and empathy. We recognize that this is only the beginning, but we are dedicated to focusing on these endeavors.

Approval of minutes of meeting June 2, 2020.

Councilmember Scholar made a motion to approve the June 2, 2020 minutes. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Cox. Motion carried in the affirmative by councilmembers Cox, Ott, Scholar, and Ward.

Approval of minutes of workshop June 16, 2020.

Councilmember Ward made a motion to approve the June 16, 2020 workshop. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Ott. Motion carried in the affirmative by councilmembers Cox, Ott, Scholar, and Ward.

STORMWATER PRESENTATION BY SCOTT ALLISON

Mr. Allison provided an update on the city's Stormwater Management Program (SWMP). He stated that the first version of the program began with the Stormwater Master Plan in 2009 and was revised in 2014 to create a more proactive approach to stormwater management. Since 2014, the staff has taken an inventory and condition assessment of the entire stormwater system, identified routine maintenance needs, created a maintenance plan, purchased equipment for capital maintenance projects, identified capital improvement needs, and created a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to manage long-term projects.

DEPARTMENTS

Administration: Dawnne Greene

1. Approval/Disapproval of a request by Bin Li for an alcohol license to sell beer, wine and liquor on premises consumption only at Three Brothers Chen, LLC dba Asia Asian Cuisine located at 13250 GA 144.

Councilmember Ott made a motion to approve the request by Bin Li for an alcohol license to sell beer, wine and liquor on premises consumption only at Three Brothers Chen, LLC dba Asia Asian Cuisine located at 13250 GA 144. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Ward. Motion carried in the affirmative by councilmembers Cox, Ott, Scholar, and Ward.

2. Approval/Disapproval of a request by Rina Patel for an alcohol license to sell beer and wine off premises consumption only at SAATAK Inc. dba AI Food Shop located at 8724 Ford Avenue.

Councilmember Scholar made a motion to approve the request by Rina Patel for an alcohol license to sell beer and wine off premises consumption only at SAATAK Inc. dba AI Food Shop located at 8724 Ford Avenue. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Ott. Motion carried in the affirmative by councilmembers Cox, Ott, Scholar, and Ward.

Finance: Robert Whitmarsh

1. Approval/Disapproval of May financials

Councilmember Scholar made a motion to approve the May financials. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Ward. Motion carried in the affirmative by councilmembers Cox, Ott, Scholar, and Ward.

2. Overview of annual millage process

Mr. Whitmarsh stated that the city will not be raising the millage rate. He then explained that the city is required, per the Department of Revenue, to hold three public hearings regarding the City's millage rate and disclose the dates to Bryan County News. The first public hearing will be held July 21, 2020 at 6:00 PM. The other hearings will be held on the dates of regular council meetings.

Planning and Zoning: Scott Allison

Board of Zoning Appeals Items

Public Hearing

1. A petition has been filed with the City of Richmond Hill by Seth Norwood requesting Individuals with disabilities who require certain accommodations in order to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting, or who have questions regarding the accessibility of the meeting or the facilities are required to contact the ADA Coordinator at (912) 756-2921 promptly to allow the City to make reasonable accommodations for

those persons. a variance to Article 6, Section 6.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance on side setback requirements. The property is Lot 10, Sterling Woods, 838 Sterling Woods Drive. The property is zoned R-1, Estate Residential District.

Variance

1. Approval/Disapproval of the petition filed with the City of Richmond Hill by Seth Norwood requesting a variance to Article 6, Section 6.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance on side setback requirements. The property is Lot 10, Sterling Woods, 838 Sterling Woods Drive. The property is zoned R-1, Estate Residential District.

Councilmember Cox made a motion to approve the petition filed with the City of Richmond Hill by Seth Norwood requesting a variance to Article 6, Section 6.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance on side setback requirements. The property is Lot 10, Sterling Woods, 838 Sterling Woods Drive. The property is zoned R-1, Estate Residential District. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Ward. Motion carried in the affirmative by councilmembers Cox, Ott, Scholar, and Ward.

CITY MANAGER TOPICS

1. Approval/Disapproval to purchase two 72" zero turn lawnmower from Bobcat of Brunswick for \$31,648.10 from SPLOST VII.

Councilmember Ott made a motion to approve the purchase two 72" zero turn lawnmower from Bobcat of Brunswick for \$31,648.10 from SPLOST VII. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Cox. Motion carried in the affirmative by councilmembers Cox, Ott, Scholar, and Ward.

2. Approval/Disapproval to purchase a rubber track excavator from Synergy Equipment for \$178,180.00 with five-year financing from Stormwater Fund.

Councilmember Scholar made a motion to approve the purchase a rubber track excavator from Synergy Equipment for \$178,180.00 with five-year financing from Stormwater Fund. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Cox. Motion carried in the affirmative by councilmembers Cox, Ott, Scholar, and Ward.

NEW BUSINESS

1. First reading to amend the Revenue Ordinance of 2020 to Assess and Levy Taxes, Service Charges, and Fees for the City of Richmond Hill, Georgia; for the purpose of raising revenue for the City of Richmond Hill; to repeal all ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict herewith; to establish an effective date; and for other purposes connected with revenue in said City.

COMMUNICATIONS

Please follow the City's Facebook page (@WeAreRichmondHill) and visit our website (www.RichmondHill-Ga.Gov) for important information about COVID-19 and how it affects you, your family and this community.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

1. Cynthia L. Hatala

Mrs. Hatala thanked the city for what has been done so far to correct the City's drainage issues and stated that she believes more needs to be done. She explained she had reached out to the community on Facebook, asking for residents with flooding issues to respond to her message. She then compiled the responses to pinpoint problematic neighborhoods, and sent her findings to the City. Mrs. Hatala expressed that she hopes the City Council will take her data into consideration when planning their response to the City's flood problems.

2. David London

My name is David T. London. I am a 17-year resident of Richmond Hill. I am a member of the NAACP of Bryan County, but I do not speak for the NAACP. I am a member of The Falcon Group, but I do not speak for The Falcon Group. I am a supporter of 912 Black Lives Matter, but I do not speak for Black Lives Matter. I am a leader in a number of local and state organizations, but I do not speak for those groups tonight. I am a Husband, Father, Christian, Educator, West Point Graduate, Combat Veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, and Retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel. But tonight, I speak to you as a Black man, a Black husband, a Black father, and Black man in Richmond Hill.

On May 25th of this year, a Black man in Minneapolis, a Black man only 3 years younger than I am, was murdered when 3 police officers kneeled on his neck and body for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. In the 43 days since George Floyd was murdered, the citizens of our Nation and the residents of Richmond Hill have shined a light on policing and systemic racism in our society. I am grateful that all of you (mayor and city council) participated in the June 1st Richmond Hill Peaceful Protest organized by The Falcon Group to stand with the citizens of Minneapolis, stand against systemic racism, and declare that Black Lives Matter. I am also grateful that our community participated in person and on Facebook in the June 13th Black People Have Always Been Here historical presentation about Richmond Hill's rich African American history. Religious leaders, community leaders, elected officials, and city staff to include Mayor Carpenter and Police Chief Shores participated in online forums on racism that were broadcast through Facebook to our Richmond Hill community. Facebook has been ablaze with candid, sincere, sometimes raw, and sometimes confrontational discussions about what constitutes systemic racism, the many issues that surround it, and whether systemic racism exists at all. It has been a mind-blowing, fast paced, and unprecedented 43 days. And as a Black man in Richmond Hill that sees the systemic racism and its effects on Black people and our whole community, I pray that we actually do something at the end of this community-wide discussion.

To that end, I offer several initiatives that our city and our community can implement to send a message that systemic racism has no place in Richmond Hill anymore and that together, Black people and white people, indigenous folks and transplants, old people and young people, and people of every ethnicity, gender, and persuasion can and will work together to rid our community of systemic racism.

REQUESTED CONTENTS OF A CITY PROCLAMATION

A proclamation by the city: (Words have meaning, ladies and gentlemen. Words need to be said by this city to mark this point in history so that our children's children and their grandchildren know what Richmond Hill was about during this critical point in our nation's journey of democracy.)

1 - Opposition to the indifference and systemic racism that allowed 4 police officers to casually kill George Floyd by kneeling on his neck and body for 8 minutes and 46 seconds;

2 - Proclaim Richmond Hill's continued determination to recognize and mark the vital role indigenous Black people played in building Richmond Hill as enslaved people;

3 - Acknowledge that those indigenous families were never able to enjoy the monetary fruits of their labor once their enslavement ended in Georgia;

4 - Memorialize the racial history of Richmond Hill by placing comprehensive historic displays at the sites of the Kraft school for agricultural sciences and farming, the Carver school where local African Americans attended primary through secondary school grades once their enslavement ended in Georgia, and in other places as may be appropriate;

5 - Conduct a review of our arrest and sentencing data to identify racial disparities in those areas;

6 - Review and revise the policies of our police department to promote officer discretion and accountability, reduce use of force, and advance a community policing model;

7 - Task our City Manager with ensuring diverse and inclusive hiring for all departments and require implicit bias and race equity training for all staff; and

8 - Proclaim that the City will work collaboratively with residents, local businesses, and local organizations to dismantle systemic racism in Richmond Hill. Appoint a committee of volunteers to identify further steps the City can take to advance racial equality and reduce inequity in our city.

REQUESTED INITIATIVES #2 through #7

2- Continue the great work of Richmond Hill historical bodies in expanding the inclusiveness of Richmond Hill's diverse history.

- Continue the work of last year's historical survey that established our historic preservation district so that it can mark even more buildings and sites representing Richmond Hill's rich African American history

- Establish closer relationships with key organizations working directly with trying to protect the African American history of this region. Continue to invite residents to be a part of this important work by joining our historical preservation bodies.

- I was moved to tears as I heard the stories of our community's history and heard that archeological evidence refuting our telling of the Ogeechee River's history was found and intentionally covered back up. For this reason, I had to come to the good people I've come to know as mayor and city council to share ideas that came to me and were shared with me by others in this community. I want to work with the City, historical bodies, and community at large to close the loop on that archeological evidence I just mentioned.

3- Move the Robert E Lee Statue out of JF Gregory Park

- The statue was removed from the Ford Plantation many years ago when the Ford Plantation sought more diverse homeowners and was concerned that the statue might offend potential buyers

- The statue does offend many homeowners and residents of Richmond Hill

- I applaud the efforts the city is already taking to address this issue along with so many others in the community.

4 - Ban public display of the Confederate Flag anywhere in the City

- Just this week, Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina defended NASCAR and Bubba Wallace, one of the sport's top Black stars, as they banned display of the Confederate flag at NASCAR events.
- In June of 2015, Governor Robert Bentley of Alabama ordered the removal of the Confederate flag from a memorial on the state capitol grounds.
- In June of 2015, Governor Nikki Haley called for and implemented the removal of the Confederate flag saying that while the flag was "an integral part of our past, it does not represent the future" of South Carolina. "We are not going to allow this symbol to divide us any longer"
- Endorsing her call to remove the flag were Kentucky Senator and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus, Senators Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott, former South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford, and governors and then presidential hopefuls Scott Walker and Rick Perry
- Among the legislators speaking in favor of removing the flag was State Senator Paul Thurmond, son of Senator Strom Thurmond, whose 1948 "Dixiecrat" segregationist presidential campaign helped politically re-popularize the flag.
- Following the Charleston shooting, the retailer Walmart announced that it would no longer sell items with the Confederate flag on them.
- Shortly afterward, Amazon.com, eBay, Etsy, Sears, Kmart, and Target announced that they would also be removing Confederate flag items from sale
- Google pulled Confederate flag merchandise from their shopping site.
- Smaller flag retailers are also ceasing to sell it.
- Valley Forge Flag, Annin Flagmakers, Eder Flag and the Dixie Flag Manufacturing Company, four of the largest U.S. flag manufacturers, also announced that they would cease selling Confederate flags.
- This year, the US Marine Corps, and the US Navy, banned public display of the Confederate flag

5 - Erect JF Gregory Park monuments to Ellen and William Kraft, London Harris, Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr, and other important figures in Richmond Hill's rich African American History

- Our community continues to showcase the history of authentic, indigenous African American descendants of slaves through works by our own:
 - Richmond Hill Historical Society and Museum
 - And the continuing historical presentation series by The Falcon Group called, Black People Have Always Been Here
 - These showcases demonstrate the importance of these figures and how it will be fitting to erect monuments in honor of their important contributions to the Richmond Hill we enjoy today

6 - Remove the word Plantation from the names of housing areas, streets, and businesses located in the city

- Throughout our community and the entire southeast region, the word plantation harkens back to the days of slavery. Some Black people find themselves unable to even look at apartments or houses that hold that word in the name of the community.
- Your support and action in removing the word from Richmond Hill names would be a powerful and appreciated statement recognizing the pain that still lingers from slavery

7 - Change the name of Timber Trail Road to Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Boulevard

- Since our city's first historic MLK parade in 2019, indigenous residents and transplants alike have expressed a desire to have a Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard in Richmond Hill and to have Timber Trail road renamed to be that boulevard.
- Historically, once a city holds its first MLK parade, it normally names a street in honor of this civil rights leader.
- This move would be a physical representation of support for the civil rights Dr. King fought and died for and its designation today would reemphasize that his work and the work of our great American democracy is not yet done.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:21 PM in a motion by Councilmember Scholar. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Cox. Motion carried in the affirmative by Councilmembers Cox, Ott, Scholar, and Ward.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawnne Greene
City Clerk