

The City Council in and for the citizens of the City of Lake City, Florida, met for a Special Called Session, on August 10, 2020 beginning at 6:00 P.M., via Communications Media Technology.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION – Mayor Stephen M. Witt

1. ROLL CALL

Mayor/Council Member	Stephen M. Witt
Vice Mayor/Council Member	Melinda Moses
City Council	Chris Greene
	Jake Hill, Jr.
	Eugene Jefferson
City Attorney	Frederick Koberlein, Jr.
City Manager	Joseph Helfenberger
Sergeant-at-Arms	Chief Argatha Gilmore
City Clerk	Audrey Sikes

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Moses made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Jefferson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed.

Ms. Moses	Aye
Mr. Jefferson	Aye
Mr. Hill	Aye
Mr. Greene	Aye
Mayor Witt	Aye

Mr. Helfenberger provided the following updates: He reported there are hurdles to be addressed prior to moving forward with any action regarding the monument.

- Olustee Park ownership. The City is currently conducting research on ownership. He reported it may be less costly if we ask Columbia County to issue a quitclaim deed to convey any interests the county may have in the land to the City of Lake City. If the council is interested in going this direction please let him know and he will make a formal request.
- Monument ownership. He is waiting on legal results to determine the ownership.
- Federal benchmark. This is in the concrete apron around the base of the monument. He reported this is the only marker in the downtown area. There are several options available: re-establish the marker, reset the benchmark or not to reset or re-establish at all.

Mr. Helfenberger stated he received an average cost estimate of \$145,956 from Chris Lydick to move the monument from its current location to either Oak Lawn Cemetery or to the Olustee Battlefield. He reported there is no room in either of the city owned cemeteries for the monument. Mr. Helfenberger stated there are two other pieces of land owned by the City across from Oak Lawn Cemetery in which the monument could be relocated to, however, transferring the monument from one parcel of city

property to another parcel of city property would not be a permanent solution. He reported the local confederate museum does not have adequate space to house the monument. The Olustee battlefield includes three acres of state-owned land with the remainder being federally owned. Mr. Helfenberger reported it may be easier to relocate the monument onto state owned property. He has reached out to the Olustee manager and he is awaiting to receive the states process. Mr. Helfenberger reported the city received, today, a petition with over 662 signatures to keep the Olustee Memorial where it is. He stated if the City opts to keep the monument where it is, an option to consider is the building of a new monument to honor the Union soldiers that died in the Battle of Olustee. A cost estimate was received from Chris Lydick to erect a new monument at a cost of approximately \$121,259. He stated unless general funds are used, funds would have to be raised to either relocate the Olustee memorial or to create a new memorial honoring the rest of the soldiers that died in the Battle of Olustee. Mr. Helfenberger reminded members of the city ordinance that protects public monuments. He stated the City may consider rescinding or amending this ordinance if the monument is determined to be owned by the city as this would be a necessary action to move the monument. Mr. Helfenberger stated he is seeking direction from the City Council to continue with the investigation of the park ownership.

Mr. Hill stated the City is not solving the problem with moving the monument from one city property to another city property. He would like to see the monument moved to the Olustee Battlefield.

Mr. Jefferson stated the City needs to establish the ownership of the memorial and feels a viable solution would be to place it on the state-owned property at the Olustee Battlefield.

Ms. Moses supports leaving the monument in the park and erecting a statue that honors and respects everyone on the Union side.

Mr. Koberlein reported the park ownership is still being researched. He stated the monument ownership is expressed in the laws of Florida in 1927 when the monument was donated to the citizens of Columbia County, who agreed to care for it. Mr. Koberlein stated there is conflicting information when the City of Lake City assumed care and preservation of the monument. He stated the City of Lake City could disclaim preservation of the monument and provide it back to the state of Florida but there would need to be some dialogue with the county, as the county represents the citizens of Columbia County to a degree. Mr. Koberlein stated the members should have received a memorandum dated July 15, 2020 in response to Mr. Greene's questions surrounding ordinance 2016-2081. He stated this ordinance is not a legal concern at this point and reminded if the park and monument ownership were resolved tomorrow, there is still the hurdle of the federal benchmark. He reported it is a violation of federal law to alter a benchmark.

Dr. Chris Essing – Professor of History, gave a presentation titled Olustee Park/Memorial Historic Analysis.

3. PERSONS WISHING TO ADDRESS COUNCIL

- A. Kyle Green – Lake City, spoke in favor of keeping the monument in the park.
- B. Cedric Cray – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- C. Unknown caller (288-9203) – spoke in favor of a neutral stance (fair and inclusive).
- D. Lucy Smith – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- E. Pastor Anthony Newton – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- F. Sylvester Warren – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- G. Roberta Strong – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- H. Glenel Bowden – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.

- I. David Eversole – Ft. White, spoke in favor of keeping the monument in the park.
- J. Nathan Gambles – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- K. Vanessa George – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- L. Christopher Turner – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- M. Clyde Douglass III – spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- N. Mary Barlow – Lake City, spoke in favor of keeping the monument in the park.
- O. Dr. Chris Essing – Lake City, apologized for taking so much time with the presentation and stated he tried to present both sides as equally as he could. He stated he would have happily, welcomed an African American historian to present the other side.
- P. Sylvester Warren – Lake City, 2nd time speaking, stated he was told by Mr. Helfenberger there would be a black Historian from the HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities).
- Q. Janette Jolley – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- R. Pastor Melvin Goggins – Lake City, spoke in favor of moving the monument.
- S. Cedric Cray – Lake City, 2nd time speaking, spoke in favor of moving monument
- T. Pat Car – Lake City, spoke in favor of keeping the monument in the park.

Mr. Greene stated he read every comment on the 600-page petition and has talked to residents in the community. He expressed tonight's meeting is not about the past but about the future and felt the best course of action is for the council to protect and preserve the monument. Mr. Greene discussed a three-step plan for preserving and protecting the monument and memorialized with the following motions:

Mr. Greene made a motion to authorize the city manager to work with local private organizations on possible relocation and transfer of care for the Olustee Battle monument and report back to the council at the next council meeting as to the interest of local organizations taking over this responsibility. Ms. Moses seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed.

Mr. Greene	Aye
Ms. Moses	Aye
Mr. Jefferson	Aye
Mr. Hill	Aye
Mayor Witt	Aye

Mr. Greene made a motion to authorize the city manager to research state requirement to return the monument should no local organizations be willing to take on this responsibility for care and maintenance of the monument. Ms. Moses seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed.

Mr. Greene	Aye
Ms. Moses	Aye
Mr. Jefferson	Aye
Mr. Hill	Aye
Mayor Witt	Aye

Mr. Greene made a motion directing the city attorney and city manager to prepare an ordinance repealing ordinance No. 2016-2081 and to have it on the agenda for the next city council meeting. Ms. Moses seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed.

Mr. Greene	Aye
Ms. Moses	Aye
Mr. Jefferson	Aye
Mr. Hill	Aye
Mayor Witt	Aye

4. ADJOURNMENT

All matters having been handled, the meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m. on a motion made and duly seconded.

Audrey Sikes, MMC City Clerk