



# City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center  
300 S. Church Street  
Jonesboro, AR 72401

## Meeting Minutes Public Services Council Committee

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Tuesday, August 30, 2022

5:30 PM

Municipal Center, 300 S. Church

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### SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

#### 1. Call To Order

#### 2. Roll Call by City Clerk April Leggett

**Present** 4 - Joe Hafner; Chris Gibson; Ann Williams and Brian Emison

#### 3. New Business

#### RESOLUTIONS TO BE INTRODUCED

##### [RES-22:152](#)

RESOLUTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS ACCEPTING AN IN-KIND LAND DONATION OF 24 ACRES +/- OF LAND AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH B & G LAND COMPANY

**Sponsors:** Mayor's Office and Parks & Recreation

**Attachments:** [B & G Land Donation unofficial aerial outline highlighted](#)  
[Deed to City of Jonesboro](#)

*Mayor Harold Copenhaver said, thank you and I appreciate all those in attendance this evening. I just want to give a brief history and I think it needs to be said. First, I appreciate the work that has been done on this and everybody working together as a community. Since we took office about 20 months ago we've been weighing a very generous offer from the B & G Land Company and the Sloan family. It's a land donation that would honor a family matriarch. As often as the case, there are unintended circumstances that residents raise to me and my leadership team. I have been in discussions with both the Sloan's and those concerned about this property donation. Today, I want to present to this commission an offer for almost 24 acres with an estimated value of around \$400,000. It is entirely donated. As you can see the deed includes numerous restrictions to insure, not only the wishes of the Sloan family, but the concerns I heard from some of the general public that live in the vicinity. To the family this track of land has sentimental value and can offer a rich green space with both recreational and ecological benefits that simply cannot be recreated once lost. Our estimate for city cost is about \$8,500 a year for annual labor and up keep of the property, picking up trash and such to keep it in its current condition. Additionally, we would want to spend about \$6,500 for a camera to monitor the area. Likewise, we are doing that with our other parks as well. Using a land donation as a match, we would apply for a grant that provides the opportunity to build an entrance with a sign for the family. Any future advancements to the property would*

*be the result of planning with area residents and cannot be a large disruption of the natural landscape; one example might be a botanical garden. As Mayor, I am obliged to bring offers of this magnitude, which we don't see very often or haven't seen very often in the community of Jonesboro, for public consideration. I am proud of the work we've done to show the care and consideration for all parties. Tom Haynes is here on behalf of the B & G Land Company and I know he would like to make a statement on the family's behalf.*

*Tom Haynes on behalf of B & G Land Company approached the podium, thank you for taking this up tonight; this has been a long work in progress. To echo some of the Mayor's comments, on behalf of our clients B & G Land Company which consist of the Sloan family. Here tonight we have John Sloan, his wife Leann Sloan, and John's sister Kitty Sloan. Then their first cousins, the Chamber's family, is also involved in this donation. Although the Chamber's do not presently live here, they have their roots here and are connected here, and I would be remised not to mention them in being involved in this donation. As the Mayor said, this is a offer of 24 acres of land on Strawfloor Road, to be protected and preserved in its natural landscape by the city. Some of the prior proposals were larger than this. They had originally considered some proposals up to 66 33 acres would be donated to the city, but after some concerns were voiced, I think the Mayor, for the city and the Sloan's and everyone going back to the drawing board and discussing some possibilities to make this happen, so their grandmother Beatrice could be honored and recognized. Thank you again on behalf of B & G Land Company. I think this is a wonderful gift that our clients have chosen to make to the city that can be wonderful property for all of the city residents.*

*Chris Moore, 1237 S. Madison, approached the podium, first I would like to thank Mr. Sloan and his family. It's a lovely piece of property. I went out there last week and looked it over. Mr. Sloan and his family have lived here all their lives just like I have. I have been friends with the family, didn't know Beatrice but I did know Betty. My opposition to this has nothing to do with the Sloan family, my opposition is more technical. I'm going to cover a couple of points and maybe we can come to a suggestion that might be a good idea. When I evaluate something on the Council I normally look at three major criteria, is the proposal legal, is it fair and is it fiscally responsible. I have no doubt and I'm sure Carol would attest that accepting property from the Sloan's is legal and there's no reservation about that. Fairness on the other hand, since I've been on the Council 25 years, I don't think I've ever heard anyone in Sloan Lakes, Ridgepoint or anywhere in that area, ask for more green space, park or anything that even relates to that. On the other hand, Dr. Coleman and I represent Ward 2 in the northern part of the city, we've had numerous request at the Council for pocket parks, improvements for Herman Lewellen, African Museum, a variety of needs. So on one hand we've had no request for services and the farthest southwest part of the city but we have in the north, the northwest and even the northeast parts of the city for small parks. I think those are the trend that are coming, Danny seems to think they're a trend that's coming and I like that idea. As far as fiscally responsible, the Mayor is right, I take him at his word, it will cost \$8,500 a year to mow the grass and pick up trash if we want to leave it exactly like it is. When I was out there two weeks ago walking around, I would highly doubt that it would be of its best intended use in its current form. I would think we would want to develop it either more formal trails, maybe a parking area where you can park cars, some type of restroom facilities, maybe lighting, and a variety of other accommodations that are going to be quite expensive. While grants will pay for a large share of that it will not pay for all of that. The other issue I have, maybe Carol can straighten it out. I don't know that the city has received a donation of land that the person asked for any more than just naming rights. I'm concerned that, I read the deed restrictions and they are quite extensive,*

and that's actually my concern. I sit here on the Council today, some of the younger members like Brian, would be here in 20 years and I won't be and times changes and needs change. If you have deed restrictions that basically handicap us on a large number of issues, I think we're setting ourselves up to have a park that's kind of a one-trick pony. I don't like that, where maybe in 20 years from now we decide we don't need it and we're going to dispose of it but we're not able to, maybe we want to use it for a different purpose and we're not able to. While I do agree it would be a great site, one of the things that stuck out to me in the deed restrictions, was that the if the city fails to fulfill their obligations or abide to the deed restrictions the property may revert back to the Sloan's to be donated to some other non-profit. My question is today, why would the city not just pass on that and encourage the Sloan's to donate it to someone like the U of A which operates the county extension service which oversees the master gardners, instead of coming through the city and possibly having a conflict in the future. The final issue is, on the north side and the east side, we have a fairly developed transportation network. There is no public transportation to the area and although we could create a bus route the fiscal responsibility part of it falls to are we really going to create a bus route that would go out to that spot. I have some very serious concerns about all of that. My wish would be that, they donate to a non-profit organizations and fulfill their wishes as they have outlined in the deed restrictions. Thank you Mayor. City Attorney Carol Duncan asked if Chris would like for her to speak on the couple of questions that he had. Chris said you can. I wasn't questioning city employees. City Attorney Carol Duncan said, on the one about the parks, I do think we have several parks in town that were deeded with the understanding that if they were no longer used as a park they would revert back to the owners. I feel like Stallings Park over by Discovery Island, where the kids practice soccer, the Stallings' family donated that spot for a park and it had to be used for that and if no longer used as a park it would go back to the Stallings' family. Chris said he was familiar with that park and they did ask for two things, one that it be named Stallings Park after their family and two that it be used public use for the city. They put no other restrictions. It didn't say it had to be a particular type of park or we couldn't regrade it. Carol said, I agree but there are several around town that have a reversion on them that they will revert back to the family if it is no longer used for public use. Chris said, the public use part doesn't bother me because if the city owns it the area would be public use and if it fails to be that then it should revert back. The stipulations over what we might or might not build there, how we might grade it or what type of facilities are on it would be where I think it crosses the line. I think about the property we acquired from the Lacy's, we made some contingencies there but they were all on the front end. They made a stipulation for them to make a donation of that property we would have to make access to another piece of their property and some of those type of things. They weren't binding on the actual property that we received. Thank you.

Patti Lack, 4108 Forrest Hill Road, approached the podium, first, I'm not understanding why we needed a special meeting and why is this being rushed through. Let me just say, I like parks, I love parks and I'm all for parks here. I really liked and admired Betty Sloan, I knew her from a business that we had. The question that we have to ask and answer today is that, is the correct decision to accept this land donation for all of Jonesboro. Our parks need to be useful to all of the community. Some of the questions I was thinking of today, you don't have to answer today, but I would like for you to think on them before going to the Council meeting next week. Reading the deed, is this going to be more of a memorial park or a recreational park? If it is going to be a recreational park, are we going to have swings, picnic tables and maybe fire pits? We don't really know what this park is eventually going to be. Are we going to have motorized vehicles on this park? That was brought up at one time. If we have

any type of building there, if we have a pavilion there, are we going to have a bathroom? If we are going to have a bathroom there, are we going to have to run sewer or are we going to have to have a septic tank there? I haven't seen this property but is there proper drainage on the property? Would we have to have a retention pond or is there a natural pond that's already there? Parking lot, if we want people to visit this park we are going to have to have some parking. Do we have lights there? If we have lights that means we will have to have City Water and Light run electricity to that property. The security cameras, you said some of the parks already have monitors, how much is that going to cost with the city? I know you mentioned the annual labor that was estimated which would be for the general pick up, the trash and the sanitation, but that would be a yearly cost to the city. This park is going to be in the farthest southwest corner of Jonesboro, like Chris mentioned, if we want all the people of Jonesboro to enjoy the beauty of that area, we would probably need to run a bus route out there, it seems only fair. The covenant, I just looked on Legistar at that, and seen all the different restrictions and conditions on this property that have to be met, and if they are not met does that mean the Sloan's can take the property back at any time? Let me restate what I just said. I'm not against parks, we need more parks in Jonesboro for all of our citizens to enjoy. I guess the long term is that we don't know what we're going to use this for and what the long term cost is going to be for this area. So with those questions I just asked, you can answer them and the public will be more aware. I think what we have to look at, is both parties benefiting from this equally. Are the pros and the cons weighing each other out? Is this the correct decision accepting this property from the Sloan's? Thank you.

Anna Williams, 604 Mardis Drive, approached the podium, I was researching some of the information the city has on parks today. Currently there are 25 parks in the city of Jonesboro, almost 900 acres. I think if we are going to consider anymore parks it should only be small neighborhood parks that most of the citizens would be able to get some use out of. I'm totally opposed to this proposal that has been brought before us. Not because of the family but because too many ramifications are undecided about it. I don't think it's a good idea.

Randy Woodruff, Ridgepoint POA (Property Owners Association), approached the podium, we've had a lot of meetings about this park. Many months ago we did have a POA meeting, we did our vote and opposition but it wasn't an opposition to the park itself but more of an opposition to a lack of plan. There is no concrete plan at all, where we can be told exactly what was going to happen. It has been in the paper many times that the Ridgepoint people hate parks but basically we want to know what is going out there. We are not in opposition to green space but like Chris said, we didn't mention that we needed a park out there. I can understand that it is a good donation of land and it's a pretty piece of property. Our job on the POA, myself, Don Harmon and Roger Hurt, is to maintain the safety and security of the people of Ridgepoint. In the original plans, we couldn't tell if it was going to be a small park or a big extravaganza. Ridgepoint is a golf course community, we have nine or ten golf cart crossings across the street. We have golf carts in the street, but a large extravaganza of a park would mean a lot of people would cut through Ridgepoint because for southwest part of Jonesboro that would be the quickest way to get to that park, so it would increase our traffic tremendously. Safety and security, I'm glad to hear about the cameras, if you're going to have a parking lot. One thing that we did talk about, we were assured that the park would be closed at night. A lot of mischief goes on at parks after dark, so being right next to Ridgepoint, we are concerned about that. If the park is closed at night, why do we need lights up there? Everything is about safety and security to us. Are we opposed to green space? No. If the city moves with this, all we want is for the city to always be in consultation with Ridgepoint to maintain our safety and security and not create dangerous situations for us. I just wanted to give a

*brief comment of where Ridgepoint stands. Thank you.*

*Kitty Sloan of Paragould, granddaughter of Beatrice Sloan, approached the podium, because the acoustics are so terrible in here I have no idea of what the Mayor or anyone else has said. I just want to remind the committee, just in case no one knows, the vision for this donation from the beginning was because of the family connection to this land by Beatrice Lynch Sloan. Her family moved to Jonesboro in the 1890's and the idea for naming it Beatrice Park developed because you can imagine a park named Lynch Park would not be appropriate and we didn't really want to name it Sloan Park because it was park of her family. I think the connection of why this property has been lost in all the discussion of why a park at that specific location.*

*Beverly Parker, 3803 Sawgrass, approached the podium, I have spoken in favor of this green space. I'm not going to call it a park, and I feel someone here tonight does need to explain what is going to be there. The way I understand it, it is going to be preserved as green space, perhaps some trails but really for the enjoyment of nature. I can see bird watching and other activities happening in this space. I feel that it is important that our city take this very generous offer of this green space. I think it's a marvelous gift and can serve our city in years to come. I am a resident of Ridgepoint so Mr. Moore, I'm requesting some green space on behalf of myself and others that live at Ridgepoint. There are others that have spoken to me favorably about this. If we don't take this, I believe it would be a mistake for the city. I think it is an asset, it could be as a buffer between our community at Ridgepoint, Sloan Lake and other developments that are soon coming, so some of the concerns that have been aired are moot points, because there is going to be traffic due to the other homes going to be built out in that direction. We are barking up the wrong tree on that as far as I'm concerned. I think the idea of green space is marvelous and I think we should accept this and I think it will be a huge mistake not to. I encourage you all to vote positive and likewise as City Councilmen do the same. Thank you.*

*Nick Guinn, 3215 Strawfloor, approached the podium, I appreciate all the comments here, some stuff I didn't know and some stuff I did. On that map, my concern is that my property directly abuts this 24 acres. I don't remember the exact acreage that was under previous consideration, but my property does abuts the north northeast corner of that. My concern is like Mr. Woodruff, would be the safety of my property and my family. Green space and trails wouldn't have a whole lot of traffic and I hope this does go through it would absolutely stay like that. The concern is the absolute safety of my family and if there is no type of fencing or lighting, I don't know if we would even like lighting back there. We bought this property wanting it to be secluded, wooded and separated from the public in general and now I'm being told there will be public right in my backyard basically. The deed restrictions that I just saw, it says it will be mostly maintain as green space. A concern is that on the previous thoughts on the property was a pavilion, parking, playground and all that, which would affect us. A restroom which would be erected if that other stuff were to go through. If there's going to be a green space would there be public transportation, like Mr. Moore mentioned, coming to the site, which would essentially stop right in front of my driveway. Those are some big concerns of mine and my relatives that just wants a home on wooded acreage, safe and secluded and this kind of takes that way from us. Green space is great and we love it but we would be concerned about public access to that right behind our property and any future developments.*

*Mayor Harold Copenhaver said we will get back with Councilman Moore, Mrs. Lack, Dr. Guinn and Randy on your questions. We want them answered thoroughly and want you to feel comfortable with that. I just want to say that this is the obligation of the Mayor*

to bring this forth to City Council. This is good discussion, we've had long discussions and we've gotten to a point here, safety is high priority to this administration, and we want that for all residents of our 82 square miles of the community. Mr. Moore did address north Jonesboro and obviously this is in our plan for parks in north and northeast Jonesboro. We've already got those in the works on how we can address funding opportunities there to make that work and other plans as well. Again, this was a donation specifically to the City of Jonesboro by the Sloan family. Brian is well versed and heard some things. If you would like to address some of the questions that were raised here and then we can get back to the rest of the issues after the meeting.

Brian Richardson, Chief Administrative Officer, approached the podium, I will try and start at most recent and then going back. As far as the green space requirements that Dr. Guinn mentioned, one thing I would like to point out on the deed restrictions is there would be a 25 foot vegetative buffer that's made allowable for any adjoining property owners that are interested. I certainly want to highlight that there couldn't be any development within that 25 foot buffer, but also the fact that I'm happy to sit down with anybody on any specific questions that you have. Our goal is to protect and maintain this green space. Anything I can do to help, I will try to make myself available as possible and if you have any questions you can email me at [brichardson@jonesboro.org](mailto:brichardson@jonesboro.org). Somebody had asked earlier about motorized vehicles on the property, that's a pretty clear restriction. That is item P under the deed restrictions that no recreational motorized off-road vehicles shall be permitted on the property except electric assist bicycles and ADA compliant assist vehicles. If we are successful in receiving a grant and we do need to put parking lot lighting there, although the park will be closed at dark, or maybe you would want motion sensor lights so if something happens when the park is locked, that's a discussion we can have. The requirement of the grant, any and all utilities would have to be underground, so that would be one thing that you wouldn't have to worry about unsightly wires. I can go back and watch the transcript so we can make sure everything gets answered that was asked today. Chairman Chris Gibson said drainage was something that came up a couple of times. Brian said there is a soil conservation service pond that is directly to the west of that property line that was built for the purpose of water shed. Truthfully, in its natural state, it best suites itself for slowing down water runoff. That is one concern that we have, if this property is developed there is downhill consequences for that and someday at some point somebody is going to have to pay for those consequences, and whether that's a financial burden on the city at that point, I don't know but trees, grass and bushes do slow down water rather than pavement and sidewalks. I think that is something to definitely consider. When the Mayor mentions ecological value, outside the recreational bird watching, hiking type of enjoyment, there really is a type of benefit to preserving this type of landscape, especially in some areas where there is some runoff issues out there. I think someone asked if this was going to be a park to honor the family or if it was going to be a recreational park, I don't see any reason it can't be both. I think the point in honoring the family is certainly maintaining it the way it originally was where they grew up and have so many memories on. There is enjoyment for everyone, there are existing hiking trails that people can enjoy, there's some recreational disc baskets out there that I think people enjoy, there's bird watching, there's just general enjoyment of the outdoors, not to mention, there's a school just right down the road that I can only hope that some of those children get to enjoy it. The only way that we can really assure that's something that will exist two, fifteen or twenty years from now, is that it's under the cities control. We've been working with B & G Land Company and others in the area to make this as compatible as possible, and I hope we have been open and transparent in that process.

Chris Moore approached the podium, is there anything on this property that exist that does not currently exist at Craighead Forrest? Expansive hiking trails, large green space, bicycle trails, is there anything on this property that we don't already have? I mean, we're not talking about a unicorn here. Brian approached the podium, sure, I think a diversity of those options and I've talked to Mr. Kapales about it, and there are some trees and ecological features out there that certainly don't exist at Craighead. Chris said would you provide a list of those to the Mayor at the next meeting if this moves forward, because I don't know what separates this current proposal from the park we already have. Brian said obviously this park is not Craighead. It's preserving some green space in an area that the only chance we have to get it in that area and we don't know what the future holds. If this property had been an additional 24 acres at Craighead we would certainly be accepting it, and I would challenge anybody that might have property that they want to donate elsewhere in the city that we'll certainly entertain that option anywhere. I would love to see some park ground come up even if it's trails and bike paths in north or northeast Jonesboro. I think we have to examine every offer as it comes about, and just because it may duplicate some recreational value that is somewhere else in a park. The fact is, Craighead gets crowded and it's a fifteen minute drive with no traffic from this park to Craighead. It's a pretty good distance between the two. So to answer your question, are biking, hiking, bird watching all available at Craighead, yes, but is there anything wrong with having multiply places throughout the city. Chris said I will just reiterate my two points and I won't say anything else because of the points I'll make at the Council meeting. One is of the deed restrictions and I will specifically tell you which ones those are. You have the grantor stipulating what types of materials can be on the outside of buildings, tells what it has to be and what color it has to be. It has to be wood, brick or stone, no mass grading of the property, plants have to be indigenous. Then I'm concerned about item E and only because this week I have noticed in some city in town the State Supreme Court ruled against the Governor in the State Plant Board because businesses were recommending to the Governor who could be on the State Plant Board and they decided that bypassed the legislative process to allow private businesses to set policy for state commissions. Item E clearly states that you are going to allow the people that surround this property to dictate to the city whether or not they want a 25 foot buffer and if we're to maintain it or not. I would ask that the City Attorney to consider that also. That is the gist of my complaints, the deed restrictions, but once again, I think the solution to this whole problem is if Mr. Sloan wants to donate it, let's donate it to a group that's in line with his thinking and take the city out of the equation here. If Beverly and Keep Beautiful Commission want to adopt it, if their non-profit, let's let one of them adopt it. Thank you. City Attorney Carol Duncan said I just want to clarify that those restrictions that you were listing, Mr. Moore, are actually restrictions that the city placed. Those were not requested by the Sloan family. The top section A-D were requested by the Sloan family, and the bottom section was added after discussions with surrounding property owners to try and make sure that everybody knew, so those were not requested by the Sloan family. Chris said, That point is moot, I don't care who requested them. The fact that they're on there and they would be a restriction placed on this property. I'm not arguing that who might have asked for them or who might have put them on there. The end result is what I'm asking.

Dr. Guinn asked is that on the covenant somewhere. Carol said it's online. Mayor Harold Copenhaver said on Legistar.

Brian approached the podium, I just wanted to add to what Carol said and I don't know if this address Councilman Moore's comment or not, but part of the reason why some of those restrictions are so is so that in twenty years from now some of us may not be

*here and have influence on what happens on that property, and we wanted to try and make sure that no matter who the caretaker of that property is at that point that the area residents would have insurance of what could be in that area even if it's out of our control. That resulted from conversations and trying to set the concerns at ease because deed restrictions do carry over but us just promising does not. I just want to clarify that, yes these are restrictive but I think restrictive is an important thing here due to the sensitivity of this property.*

*Beverly approached the podium, to Mr. Moore's point about Craighead and what's offered. Great cities have great public spaces. This would be another great public space. I don't get in my car and go to Craighead. I would prefer that there be something closer to my home. I also want to note that my former neighbor moved to Fayetteville and they pay \$50 per square foot more on the property that they acquired close to a green space and a trail. This is certainly an asset for this area. To Dr. Guinn's point about the common space, at some point there is going to be something there. I have said to other's that I believe that this is the best offer that we're going to get to protect the area, to be able to use it for the cities purposes and not a huge development. Again, I encourage you to vote in favor of this request. Thank you*

**A motion was made by Councilperson Joe Hafner, seconded by Councilperson Ann Williams, that this matter be Recommended to Council . The motion PASSED with the following vote.**

**Aye:** 3 - Joe Hafner;Ann Williams and Brian Emison

#### **4. Adjournment**

**A motion was made by Councilperson Brian Emison, seconded by Councilperson Joe Hafner, that this meeting be Adjourned . The motion PASSED with the following vote.**

**Aye:** 3 - Joe Hafner;Ann Williams and Brian Emison