

LWV of East Alabama — Observer Corps Report

Agency: Auburn City Council Meeting

Date: January 22, 2019

Location: 141 North Ross Street, Auburn

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/CityofAuburnAL/videos/>

Staff present (Approx. Number): Five (5) or more

Number in Audience: 30 plus

FEATURE EVALUATED	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Did meeting start on time?	X		Adjourned circa 8:00 p.m. CST
Were all members present?	X		
Were members attentive?	X		
Did the members appear to have done their “homework”?	X		
Were members courteous to each other and the public?	X		
Was the agenda online at least 24 hrs. before?	X		
Did agenda items clearly describe what was to be discussed?	X		
Was there adequate opportunity for public input?	X		
Was there the appearance that some action items were discussed in closed rather than open session?		X	
Was background information available to public?	X		

Were any topics on the agenda of interest or relevant to any LWVEA members or its friends?

1. Ward meetings were announced. They are as follows:

Ward # 1: January 31st 5:30 p.m.	Boykin Community Center	Connie Fitch-Taylor
Ward # 2: January 29 th 5:30 p.m.	Harris Center	Kelly Griswold
Ward # 4: February 4 th 5:30 p.m.	Main Library	Brett Smith
Ward # 5: February 4 th 5:30 p.m.	Chamber of Commerce	Steve Dixon
Ward # 6: February 4 th 5:30 p.m.	Chamber of Commerce	Bob Parsons

2. **Opelika-Auburn News Reporter:** Timothy Noordermeer; (334.707.0955); tnoordermeer@oanow.com

3. **Roundabout:** Council endorsed ALDOT’s proposal to construct roundabout at intersection of North College Street and Farmville Roads, including City’s request to change speed from 55 to 45 m.p.h. ALDOT to fund the project.

4. **Diversity and Inclusion Task Force:** In formative stage. Contact Councilors Fitch-Taylor and Dixon if interested in serving.

5. **Gentrification:** During the Citizen’s Open Forum concern was expressed over the apparent gentrification of NW Auburn or segments thereof. Select Councilors commented that property owners have a right to sell their homes or business as they may determine to be in their best interest. *Caveat Emptor*. Others commented that an assumption often made is that seller has full knowledge of the terms conditions of the transaction, which may or may not always hold. Suggestions were made that the *Auburn Family* consists of people of all ages, education levels and incomes, and that to remain the *Loveliest Village on the Plains*, Auburn must have a social conscious that addresses the needs of all its people and as was intimated Auburn is only as good as it addresses the needs, hopes, and aspirations of those that have the least.

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5. **Short Term Rentals Task Force:** Task Force continues to meet; it has received considerable comments and is analyzing same. Task Force is considering expanding membership to broaden participation. Contact Councilors Smith and Parsons if interested in serving.

Mayor Anders commented that over the past several years there's been considerable discussion by and among the public and Councilors regarding short term rentals with no action taken. Upon being elected Mayor Anders elected to formalize the debate through the formation of the Task Force with the hope of building a community-wide consensus by formalizing polic(ies) associated therewith. There appears to be strong arguments (and feelings) on both sides of the subject, with a portion of the population feeling that the rentals should be allowed community wide; others argue for limiting them to designated areas or zoning districts. Enforceability of any policy seems, at best, challenging from both a location and taxing perspective.

6. **School Board Appointment:** Deadline for submitting application is February 4th at 5:00 p.m. CST. Interviews are scheduled to commence Tuesday, February 12th. If necessary, interviews will be extended to Wednesday, February 13th.
7. **General Observation of the Meeting:** It is worth noting that, in the opinion of this Observer, Council meetings are being conducted with an unprecedented air of transparency with Councilors freely expressing their thoughts and opinions. Also, videos of meetings are timely posted on the City's websites/Facebook page(s); e.g., Tuesday's meeting (January 22nd) was available Wednesday morning, January 23rd. Furthermore, of import is the fact that the public is given three (3) opportunities to speak: first, during *Citizens' Communication* (Item # 6 on the Agenda); secondly, during *Public Hearings*; and, thirdly, *Citizens Open Forum* (last item on the Agenda).

Auburn City Council Members

Mayor	Ron Anders, Jr.	334.703.9000	randers@auburnalabama.org
Ward 1	Connie Fitch-Taylor	334.704.3970	ctaylor@auburnalabama.org
Ward 2	Kelley Griswold	256.975.8183	kgriswold@auburnalabama.org
Ward 3	Beth Witten (Mayor Pro Tem)	334.740.8575	bwitten@auburnalabama.org
Ward 4	Brett Smith	334.740.8847	basmith@auburnalabama.org
Ward 5	Steven Dixon	334.707.3091	sdixon@auburnalabama.org
Ward 6	Bob Parsons	334.704.3657	bparsons@auburnalabama.org
Ward 7	Jay Hovey	334.319.6654	jhovey@auburnalabama.org
Ward 8	Tommy Dawson	334.559.3021	tdawson@auburnalabama.org
City Manager	Jim Buston	334. 501.7260	jbuston@auburnalabama.org