

Work Session
May 24, 2021

Members Present: Mayor Buddy Duke, members Terry McClain, Greg Paige, Walter Cowart, Vivian Sharpe and Jody Greene.

Others: John Flythe, Rhonda Rowe, Tim Tanner (by teleconference), and members of the public.

A general work session was held to discuss an ordinance creating a “commercial racetracks” article of the amusement and entertainments section of the code of ordinances of the City of Adel. This is a work session only; therefore, no action can be taken.

Billy Langdale, an attorney representing Ozzy Moya, owner of South Georgia Motorsports Park, was present on behalf of his client who was unable to attend due to having surgery. Mr. Langdale asked they be allowed 2 to 3 weeks in order to get a sound study performed and further indicated Mr. Moya should be able to attend the June 7th council meeting. Linda Weeks of South Georgia Motorsports Park advised their next big event was not until June 25th. Councilwoman Sharpe asked if the sound study would be completed by then and Mr. Langdale advised they hoped they would have it by then. The sound study would be to get information to try and determine what sound barrier they might need. Councilman McClain stated he wished they had already had the sound study performed. Councilman Cowart expressed that he didn’t know what a sound study would do; we already know its loud.

Mr. Langdale stated the racetrack is a good corporate citizen and they contribute to this community. They have built a wall and are willing to look at mitigation efforts. You don’t mitigate cars on the interstate or 42 trains per day; the well-being depends on commerce. You can’t shut everything down based on some smell, noise or something to the eye you don’t like. He stated that Ozzy will run the track right. If you look at history, the track has contributed close to \$300M. Businesses should have the opportunity to continue, you need to look at economic impact. You can’t throw the baby out with the bath water. They have rights as well that need to be considered; not based on a few that don’t like it. They should be considered. He stated these are national races. If you restrict them, you are restricting families from vacation as well.

Mike Williams stated that he saw lifelong friends in the room and realizes the “previous owner was not very respectful to you”. He stated that his company benefits from the track and it is important to other businesses. The race track spends many dollars trying to promote tourism, which is the #1 generator of tax income. They want to be respectful to the neighbors.

Ozzy has stated he wants to work with the neighbors. He wants to do a study to see what would be a good buffer. He is very concerned with a curfew as the promoters won’t come because of potential weather. The racetrack will have substantial impact on everyone.

Jerry Connell, chairman of the Adel Tourism Authority, spoke stating that this is the 3rd time he has done an economic impact study on the race track. There is no magic to the numbers as the Georgia Dept of Economic Development has a matrix you download. The track operates essentially 90 days per year.

The other 75% it sits idle. On the days of operation of the track, the average attendance is 2500 people per day. They will also stay the night before or the night of the race. In Adel, there are 3 hotels providing approximately 216 rooms. Out of 2500 people, 450 are staying in hotel rooms. They eat, drink, sleep and buy things. With 90 days of events, \$20M is generated to the community based on hotels alone. Not money the race track is seeing, but coming into Wal-Mart, restaurants, gas stations, etc. It is a huge economic driver in Cook County and is easily \$20M for Cook County per year.

He further noted an iron clad rule in economic development is that you don't ever forget your existing industries. He knows we have issues we need to resolve, but the numbers presented are very lean.

City attorney Tim Tanner noted that ordinances don't have to be read at two consecutive meetings.

David Wall stated the numbers presented by Mr. Connell are astounding. They are not contributing \$225K per weekend. They come in with campers and don't leave once they get there. It is affecting people all the way to Futch Road. He asked the council to keep in mind they had asked for the hours of 9:00 end time during the week and 11:00 on weekends. He suggested extending the races a day or 2 to be finished on time. He added that the Gator Nationals are not running at 2:00 a.m. They've asked for noise barriers over and over. He noted one owner was run off and didn't want the wall.

Mr. Wall asked why did Adel annex and take away the time restrictions? He stated it was because they wouldn't follow the rules and were down to their last chance that they wanted to annex. The people deserve an opportunity to sleep in their bed. They pay taxes. They shop in stores. They found out the race track hadn't paid taxes in 5 years. If they didn't pay then, how do we know they're paying now?

Mayor Duke asked if the rain or interstate bother him? He replied, no, there is no comparison. Mr. Wall stated there are so many variables. It depends on the car, whether there is wind or humidity.

City Manager John Flythe stated he didn't believe there was no sales tax paid. Was it sales tax or ad valorem tax? Mr. Wall was not sure.

Mayor Duke stated we can annex anything that is contiguous. Mr. Wall stated you had to get Williams to annex first. Mayor Duke stated but it was annexed to land that was contiguous. It was done for economic development.

Mr. Wall asked how many stores are open at night after 11:00? He didn't know of any.

Altheia Paige stated that Mr. Langdale had first mentioned smell, odor and then noise. We hear trains all day and all night, and we hear the race track. To me, we are all family. If you go the racetrack, you see rv's and grills. We don't get tax money when they take up money at the gate. What has the city/county made? There has got to be a stopping point when it comes down to people. None of yall live in the city/county to make these decisions that affect all of us. You shouldn't show favoritism, it's time to stop doing back door deals. We are ready to do what is right and are asking yall to stand for us. It should help yall make better decisions, dollars shouldn't matter about doing things right. It shouldn't matter whether you've got money or not. She is asking "don't post-pone tonight". The sound study

should have been mentioned before now. You drag your feet when it comes to doing something affects people. She is asking to take this and the smell they're dealing with into consideration.

George Fiveash stated he has thought about this since it was on the Commission side. He doesn't understand how they can be in the county and everything is fine, then move and take it into the city. At the first meeting, he came away – nobody said a word. What Ms. Paige is saying is exactly what he was thinking. He's been going through this for years and getting upset about it.

Phil Morris had one question. \$20M? He only sees three constants here. 216 rooms, \$193 avg. per night and 90 days. Mr. Connell stated it's not just the hotel rooms. It's the trickle-down effect of people being in the community. Mr. Morris stated put yourself into what other people are doing. We know people that are staying in campers, not spending money. They are grilling on the premises. Mr. Connell stated \$20M is conservative. Mr. Connell stated, ask the managers at Piggly Wiggly what they're doing during weekends of the race?

Mayor Duke stated it took him a long time to figure that out. Other businesses are going to take that \$1 to pay wages, insurance and gas. Each person that got money is going to turn around and spend it somewhere else. That's the way the state determines it.

Mr. Morris questioned "what about the impact of their life"? It's not about closing a business down. At the last meeting, you stated Mayor Duke, you are about businesses. Mayor Duke said I'm for businesses and voters. Mr. Morris said he wanted to convey that the love of money is the root of evil. He said to Mayor Duke that at the National Day of Prayer, he heard Mayor Duke pray and he done a great job. Prayer has to be sincere from the heart and he is asking that they listen to the people. Make your money, but also listen to the voices of the people. People may have to get up at 5:00. We know the train is going to come. We're used to that. Consider other things. If God has granted you that ability, get it, but consider the others.

Mr. Morris said we don't want to kick you off the council, but if we need to flip over the tables and kick yall off the council, that's what we'll do.

Mr. Wall said, when are we going to decide.

Mayor Duke concluded by saying he was always told there was two things you didn't want to see being made, laws and sausage.

The work session was concluded at 6:25 pm.

Rhonda P. Rowe
City Clerk