

Cochran City Council 2022 Retreat
Lake Blackshear, 2459-H US Highway 280 West, Cordele GA 31015
Minutes for Retreat for February 10, 11, 12, 2022

Members Present:

Mayor, Billy Yeomans

Mayor Pro Tem, Keith Anderson

Councilmembers: Gary Ates, Carla Coley, Jimmy Jones, Andrew Lemmon

Councilmembers Absent: Rufus Veal

Meeting called to order @ 8:10AM by Mayor Billy Yeomans.

Fire Chief, Brock Wilcher gave the invocation. Councilmembers and Department Heads lead the pledge of allegiance.

Thursday, February 10

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. – Council Roles/ Conduct of Meetings & Communications/Building Consensus. This was a presentation by facilitator, Dr. Brooke Miller with hand outs and an exercise for Councilmembers who were in attendance.

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.- Business meeting portion of Retreat- items that may need Council Vote.

Mayor called meeting to order at 10:23AM.

Item #1 – Consider approval of Speed Bump Policy. An in-depth discussion was held between Council and Department Heads. Councilmember Jones made the motion to approve the speed bump policy with additions made to add the Fire Chief and Public Works Director to policy and a second by Councilmember Coley. Motion passed 5/0.

Item #2 – Authorize Airport Authority to solicit bids to correct a ceiling condensation problem in main Airport Hanger. The Authority may eventually install either new insulation or spray foam. The Airport Authority will finance this project. The Airport would like to solicit bids to repair the exposed metal so it will not collect condensation in the hanger. The Airport is asking for City approval since this is a city building. Jim Washbrun, Airport Manager, contacted Richard making

him aware the project was complete. Motion to approve Airport to solicit bids to repair roof was made by Councilmember Ates with a second by Councilmember Lemmon. Motion passed. 5/0

Councilmember Lemmon made the motion to come out of regular session with a second by Councilmember Jones. Motion passed 5/0
Mayor adjourned meeting @10:33AM

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.- Break

10:45 a.m.– 12:00 p.m. – Discuss future capital, personnel and operations needs with City Manager/Department Heads; discuss City Strategic Plan.

- ❖ Fire Chief, Brock Wilcher gave his 5-year plan & Goals and Objectives for the fire department which included the fire department duties/activities, mutual/automatic aid, his desire of a ladder truck for the fire department, and a new location for Cochran Fire.
- ❖ Police Chief, Jeff Trawick gave his presentation on the 5-year plan, and Goals & Objectives for the police department which included upgrading the existing Police Department, possible cadet programs, training that is mandated, improved relationships with other agencies and mental health concerns and options.
- ❖ Publics Work Director, Willie Farrow gave his 5-year capital plan, goals and objectives for the Public Works Department His goals and objectives were replacing fleet, possible grants, storm drain improvements, required training, adding positions to PW. He gave update on the Wastewater Treatment plant.

12:00 Noon. -1:00 p.m. Lunch

- ❖ City Clerk, Tracy B Jones gave her 5-year plan with the goals and objectives. This included required and continued training, improving technological resources, cost saving measures, city hall upgrading and financial operations.

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. – Discussion of future finance needs; debt servicing and infrastructure

improvements – Tony King, Financial Consultant. Mr. Tony King from Crews & Associates gave a PowerPoint presentation concerning the water and sewer fund for the city of Cochran. He reviewed what we have accomplished with the water and sewer funds last year. A few recommendations were noted about the general fund balance, a plan to increase fund balance, negotiate a larger percentage LOST revenue, consider milage rate rollbacks and minor millage rate increases.

- 2:30 p.m. – 3:15 p. m. – Skip Layton – review of storm drainage needs and infrastructure financing; discussion of future growth of the City; review of draft Development Standards. Skip started off by discussing the sanitary water system in Cochran and the drainage concept followed up with a rehabilitation concept. Next, he explained the waste water treatment plant and its capacity followed by information pertaining to the water piping throughout the city. Finally, he reviewed the land development standards draft.
- 3:15 p. m. – 3:30 p.m.- Break
- 3:30 p. m. – 4:15 p.m. Skip Layton-review of GEFA Projects, CDBG Projects and Opportunities- water and sewer infrastructure. Skip gave updates on the GEFA and CDBG projects within the city. He explained the types of pipes in the city and how many miles of AC pipes were in the city (28 miles). Backflow preventers were installed throughout the city, rehabilitated all water tanks in Cochran, were just a few projects Skip touched on.
- 4:15 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. Skip Layton- review City responsibilities for installing infrastructure; review/update of City permit and other fees. Skip recommended that water and sewer rates should never be political. An increase schedule needs to be in place. Water and Sewer should be in a capital fund self-perpetuating, he explained, it creates a balance and a capital improvement fund.

Dr. Miller went over some of the points she reviewed with the council earlier in the meeting. She encouraged Council to stay proactive and to take ownership of everything in the City. She pleaded with the Council not to try to tear each other down. Work together and be proud of the City of Cochran.

Mayor Yeomans called the meeting to order @ 4:29PM. The Council requested to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel action relating to evaluation.

Councilmember Jones made the motion to go into executive session with a second by Councilmember Ates. Motion passed 5/0

Councilmember Jones made the motion to come out of executive session with a second by Councilmember Ates. Motion passed 5/0

Friday, February 11

Councilmember Anderson gave the invocation.

- 8:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. – Heart of Ga. Regional Commission- discussion of services. upcoming 17-county T-SPLOST referendum in May 2022. Brett Manning gave a presentation on T-SPLOST along with a handout for all in attendance. He also explained TIA, GDOT and CDBG projects.
- 8:45 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. – Discussion of Havenwood Gardens I & II and Havenwood Daisy Senior – Max Elbe of Lowcountry Housing opportunities and Mandy Young of Affordable Equity Partners. Max Elby spoke on the development that is currently is growing. He stated the GHCI team was a big help and had a big part in getting the 2019 Tax credits. Havenwood Daisy Senior is now under construction and hopefully will be done by the end of the year. The development will only be for seniors 55 years old and over. Havenwood Phase II will be annexed into the city. This project will be another 50 units and hopefully start in the summer and completed in 2023. Mandy Young expressed how the project started and how it has flourished. Mandy was elected as the chairman of the alumina advisory committee housing team. Richard stated the City applied for a grant to help with a walking trail that will lead to Walmart. Max stressed they would be willing to help out with the construction of the trail.
- 9:30 a.m.- 9:45 a.m.- Break

9:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.-

Session with Andy Lucas, Staley Bell and David Canady.

Discussion of economic development opportunities; Industrial Park. Chamber of Commerce plans and opportunities; Downtown Development Authority plans and opportunities. Staley Bell started off with a handout and introducing herself to the Council and she was accommodated by Chair, Mike Stoy and board member Dani Dykes. She gave information pertaining to the chamber and what the rolls of the chamber are. Mrs. Bell also went over the events that were coming up. Chairman, Mike Stoy piggybacked on the information given by Staley.

Dani Dykes, DDA Chairman, stated there has been a lot going on. Elected new officers and hired a new director, David Canady. Currently there are 70 businesses downtown and 17 new businesses came in at 2021. March 12 an event, co-sponsored with the chamber, will take place in the city auditorium.

David Canady spoke about the things he has handled since he was hired. He gave the total businesses that were in the downtown district. 70 active businesses, 11 government and service organizations and 3 churches. 17 new businesses since 2021 with 4 expected to open in February and March. The façade grant is another project that has done well in Cochran. 3 grants in 2021 with 6 façade grant interest requests. He expressed how passionate he was about the trashed buildings downtown that needs to be fixed. These buildings could be a danger to others and other businesses. He stated if everyone works together a lot can happen.

Andy Lucas - He emphasized the passion of each individual boards, IDA, Chamber and DDA. Good team and a good vision of the city in each board. Andy stated he is going to touch on function, fulfillment and faith. The three V's - visibility, value, visionary is what he does for the City of Cochran. He also gave the Council his 2022 IDA activity report, a budget and his narrative. During a conversation with Kevin Brown from GDOT, Andy asked -What is it he reputation in Cochran? - The city does not have a reputation. Andy was very moved by that. In closing, Andy did a critical thinking exercise with the group.

11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.- Advanced Disposal representative- garbage pick-up and limb-pick-up services, recycling opportunities. Justin Callaway, with Waste Management formerly Advance Disposal introduced the ones representing WM. Jeff Turner, James Hightower, and Casimir Babula were in attendance. Justin explained the transition between AD and WM. Services should not change at all. Their main concerns are safety and service. Changes in the leadership team, trying to put strong leaders in place to get the job done. Stressed on communication is key between the city and WM. Some issues were discussed with the WM staff and council. A lot of progress was made during the conversations.

12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. – Lunch

1:15 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Commissioner Mike Davis - discussion of opportunities and upcoming L.O.S.T negotiations. Mike Davis spoke on support from each other and working together to make Cochran and Bleckley County a better place. He touched on working with the IDA and developing the industrial park and get someone interested in the area. He also is working closely with the Chamber and DDA as much as possible. Mike told the mayor he is willing to work with the City at any time. Questions about the Automatic Aid between the fire departments were asked to the Commissioner. Commissioner Davis stated, “They are here to help out anytime” We have a mutual aid. He asked Fire Chief Wilcher if we have automatic aid or mutual. Chief responded; we have a mutual aid but he would suggest it be a automatic aid on both parties solely to structure fires. Commissioner stated they were here to help at any time, and he would like to have a meeting with the Mayor and Cochran Chief and Bleckley Chief to discuss further. TSPLOST was discussed as well. Problems with the water running through the recreation department was discussed and several solutions were tossed around. City Manager did explain the city engineer did research on the pipes and the water flowing through the property. Commissioner gave a list of buildings that have been remodeled.

2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. - Director Andy Brand – discussion of the Recreation Complex, needs, opportunities and future. Carmen, Chairman of the recreation board gave a handout of all the events happening soon at the CBRD. Dixie Softball state tournament 6U/10U 14 teams, Youth Baseball state tournaments 6U/8U 24 teams and the Dixie Softball state tournament 6U/8U 18 teams. Andy followed up with the numbers of the possible people who would be

in the city during those tournament days. He gave a list of the things needed from the city prior to the tournaments. Chan Jones made comments about sink holes, and the pipes. Chan stated they are behind in the funds due to Covid and the loss of revenue. He also requested for health insurance for two employees at CBRD. Would like all the help the city could give.

2:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. – Break

2:45 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.- Wayne James, Director of Mid-State Energy Commission (formerly Jointly Owned Natural Gas) – discussion of revenues and growth opportunities, service contracts. Wayne James was unable to attend the meeting. Mayor Yeomans gave a presentation of the Mid State Energy gas report. Mid-State Energy is fully operational since the transition from Jointly Owned to Mid-State. He gave the industries who are some of the major gas customers. Currently installing new main lines for several industries that are in the process of being built. Funds from the gas company for the next 3 to 5 years will be very lean and possibly be cut 50% in the next few years. 30% of profit we get comes from Cochran, 70% comes from other areas.

Mayor called the regular meeting into order @ 2:59pm for the Council to go into executive session to conduct City Managers evaluation. Councilmember Ates made the motion to go into executive session with a second by Councilmember Lemmon. Motion passed. 5/0
Councilmember Jones made the motion to come out of executive session with a second by Councilmember Ates. Motion passed 5/0.

3:30 to 4:15 p.m.- Bill Coody, Airport Authority Chairman and Jim Washburn, Airport Manager – discussion of Airport Layout Plan, future airport capital needs and opportunities. Mr. Bill Coody and Jim Washburn were in attendance. Mr. Bill stated the current support from the city is \$4,000 per quarter, grass cutting and 2.5 % of the matching funds the airport gets from the FAA and the State each year. The Airport receives \$150,000.00 from the FAA each year. The City provides a courtesy car and shares the maintenance of the main hanger. The county supports with \$2,000 per quarter, grass cutting and other items they may need. In the next five years, it is possible the Airport will receive \$309,000. This will help with some of the projects that need to be done. Finding people to do the work

is the hard part at this time. There are three main structures owned by the City of Cochran at the airport. 1. The Main Hanger 2. The T-Hangers 3. The Vault. There is 3 miles of asphalt surface to include the runways. Fire station - it is extremely important to have a fire station on the airport. It is very rare for an airport that size to have on field fire protection.

4:15 to 5:00 p.m. –

Brad Holtsinger- the City's Class I wastewater treatment operator- discussion of wastewater treatment plant capacity, compliance and condition. Brad covered three areas of the wastewater treatment plant which include capacity, compliance and condition. Development is depended on capacity and EPD can stop development if need be. He stressed the importance of not allowing septic tank haulers to dump in the system. If we allow them to dump, we need to increase the amount per dump to help compensate the cost to treat the out-of-town sewage. He suggested \$300 to \$400 per dump. He also suggested a rate increase on the system so the Council will not have to revisit it each year. Have a 5-to-10-year plan. The WWTP needs an upgrade. It is 20 (plus) years old and most of the equipment is past its life expectance. All repairs, replacements, and upgrades are very costly. Find a way to fund it and serve the citizens.

Saturday, February 12

Meeting called to order at 8:04am. By Mayor Yeomans.
Invocation was given by Councilmember Coley.

8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. -

Continue discussion of Strategic Plan and long-range goals; consider revision of Strategic Plan. Richard went over the Strategic Plan and the goals for the city government. This strategic plan is 2021-2023. The council decided to reduce the goals from 9 to 7. Richard stated going through the plan page by page to see if any additions or deletions needed to be implemented. Councilmember Jones commented about dates and Council member Coley stated most strategic plans have dates and asked for that to be changed. Mayor suggested to put the title of the person instead of the person's name. Richard discussed the pay plan and when this should be completed.

Mayor requested to recognized city employees if they do something over the ordinary. Each supervisor can announce any achievements at the council meeting. Also a written public release can be posted on social media and in the newspaper. Councilmember Coley stated she doesn't think disbanding committees was a good idea. She thinks council needs to relook at how they utilize the committees. The committees should go to the staff meeting of the departments and hear the concerns or needs of each department. Have the committees be more active and then bring a report back to the council with the findings and observations. Richard touched on the wellness program with our insurance for the premiums to decrease.

Short discussion included some of the following: *City Hall and Public Works have a good relationship. *Work orders are communicated between the public works employee and city hall employee. *Merit increases and evaluations with personnel. *Goal to update the personnel handbook with the help of City Attorney and Regional Commission. City website updates and posting on the City Facebook page to allow notifications or any kind of activity to be relayed to residents. *VC3 IT department with cyber security and the funding of IT upgrades may be available with the ARPA funds. *Cost saving measures. *Vehicle replacement. *Upgrade water/sewer systems. *Fire Fee and Storm water fee. *Working well with County. *Recruitments for Fire & Police. *Park development. *Landscaping public buildings *Listing of fees. *Annual audit. * Sidewalk issues. * Storm drain plan.

9:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.-

Discussion of cemetery layout and organization. Willie Farrow introduced Whitney Dykes to explain to Council the updates with the cemetery. She discussed the mapping program that she would like to use in order to locate graves that are unmarked. Richard asked about the ground penetration radar. Willie stated several employees had a demo with the company. Whitney also gave details regarding the cemetery software. This software would allow individuals to navigate through the cemetery online.

Mayor Yeomans – When he wants to get Council's attention, he uses certain words. One word he used was consolidation. He sated he was not for consolidation. The police department is headed in the

right direction. He asked for a head shake yes or no to forget consolidation. Everyone shook yes to forget the consolidation. Park discussion - Councilmember Coley asked to include the kids who drew up the plans. Just start with – two people appointed per district (citizens) one council person to be the liaison between the committee and the Council, to keep the communication between the two. Mayor asked Keith Anderson to be the liaison. Mayor feels a committee should meet. Does anyone know the difference between Council and City Council? Council is the 6 members. City Council includes the Mayor.

10:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. –

Break

10:15 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.-

Discussion of Public Park opportunities 5.2 acre park was annexed in to the city December 31. The deed was transferred by the city from Mr. Earl Arnold. two things need to be done to the park on Ash Street. We need a master plan for the city to receive grants. A phase plan is crucial. What to do first? Max Elby from Havewood Gardens has agreed to help with the sidewalk from the park and also from the HDS to the by-pass. 1. Needs to be a master plan. Councilmember Jones stated a committee needed to be created. Mayor stated that should be done in March. Mayor suggested a fence and lights. Richard explained the park needed to be cleared. Mayor said we may could ask the County to help with the clearing since they will be using it as well. The committee created needs to reflect the community, age, racial, economic lines, all lines to represent the community. Councilmember Jones said Jeff needs to be at most of the meetings due to safety issues. Police Chief Trawick said a lot of the kids from the apartments will come and rules will be posted and closed at a certain time. The March 8 meeting agenda, Council will have to nominate and then appoint those people they are wanting on the committee. Skip will give report at the next meeting on the concept for a master plan and we can get scheduled to clear the land. Councilmember Lemmon stated a sign needed to be placed at the site “Future City Park”.

11:00 a.m. to 12 Noon-

Council discussion items

Councilmember Lemmon asked if there was a policy for the City Council attending meetings or how many meetings council is allowed to miss. Councilmember Ates stated if you missed so many meetings that councilman would not get paid. He followed up with it being disrespectful to the whole council when someone doesn't call. The discussion of the work session being moved to a 6pm was held. Councilmember Jones stated the department heads reports are in the packets, if they are being read, nothing should be said if no one has any questions. Fire Chief Wilcher stated at council meetings in another town, the DH do not say anything. The mayor goes down the list to see if anyone has questions for the Fire Chief, Police Chief, PW and so on. Councilmember Anderson agreed that was a good idea. He stated the reports are in the packets for a reason. Mayor said back to the question Councilmember Lemmon had, the City Attorney will need to be involved.

Mayor said the Work Session will start at 6 Regular meeting at 7. DH will be present at the meeting but will not come to microphone unless a Councilmember has a question only.

IDA/DDA/Chamber will give report once a quarter.

Brock stated if a councilmember has a question about the report, it should be emailed to that DH, Richard and the rest of the Council according to Dr. Miller.

Councilmember Anderson stated he would like for everyone to be on the same page because sometimes it looks like they trying to embarrass somebody or personal attack against a department and that does not look good on none of the Council.

Councilmember Lemmon stressed if something happens in your district and you are unaware of, the Council in that district should be the first to know. If the councilmember is called and asked about it, and they don't have a clue what is going on, it is embarrassing.

Willie stated he normally puts it out on Facebook and makes sure the notifications are put out.

Willie had a conversation with Council regarding the side loader truck with Waste Management. They discussed the pros and cons of the side loader vs the rear loader.

Mayor thanked everyone for attending.
He called to adjourn the meeting at 11:47am.