



DRAFT MINUTES
December 9, 2025
Cochran City Council
Regular Session 6:00 PM

City Auditorium, 102 N Second Street, Cochran, GA 31014

City Council

City Staff

Billy Yeomans, Mayor	Richard Newbern, City Manager
Trecia Gardner (District 1, Post 1)	Tiffany Lapp, Interim City Clerk
Gary Ates, Council Member (District 1, Post 2)	Jim Elliott, City Attorney
Carla Coley, Council Member (District 2 Post 1)	
Lonnie Tedders, Council Member (District 2, Post 2)	
Dianne Lester (District 3, Post 1)	
Shane Savant, Council Member (District 3, Post 2)	

- I. Call to Order by the Mayor**
- II. Invocation**
- III. Pledge of Allegiance**

Call to Order, Quorum, and Opening Business

- All six council members were present; a quorum was confirmed.
- The mayor welcomed attendees and those watching via social media.
- Council approved:
 - Regular meeting minutes from **November 6, 2025** (unanimous).
 - Special called meeting minutes from **October 21, 2025** (unanimous).
- Agenda was amended to add a discussion item regarding **vape shop ordinances** and then approved unanimously.

Public Comment

- **Chamber of Commerce Updates**
 - Christmas After Hours event was announced for Saturday (indoor market, Santa, cocoa stations, carolers).
 - Lunch & learn on fraud prevention.
 - Joint Business After Hours in Hawkinsville.
 - Christmas parade details, tree lighting, market vendors, live music, trolley rides.

- Bingo event and Community Park ribbon cutting on December 22 at 11 a.m.
- **Citizen Concern – Water Billing**
 - Residents reported unusually high-water bills after a meter change.
 - City staff committed to reviewing the issue and meeting the residents the next morning.

Mayor Recognition

- Interim City Clerk and staff presented the mayor with a plaque recognizing **eight years of service**, including his time serving without pay.
- Photos and brief remarks followed.

Public Hearing – Circle K Signage Variance

Hearing from 6:13-6:16

- Request to exceed ordinance limits for sign **size (120 sq. ft.)** and **height (30 ft.)** at Circle K on Highway 26.
- Applicant cited safety and visibility concerns due to high traffic speeds.
- Council discussion emphasized:
 - Variances are intended for hardship.
 - Approval could set precedent for nearby gas stations.
- **Vote Result**
 - Motion to deny the variance passed **5–1**.
 - Councilmembers Tedders, Savant, Coley, Gardner, and Lester (YES)
 - Councilmember Ates (NO)

Agenda Item Approvals

- **MLK Day Parade**
 - Approved NAACP request to use North 2nd Street on January 19, 2026 (unanimous).
 - Motion by Councilman Tedders 2nd by Ates
- **2026 Holiday Calendar**
 - Approved with 12 observed holidays for city employees (unanimous).
 - Motion by Savant 2nd by Tedders

FY 2024–25 Budget Amendment

- Amendment required to align budget with actual expenses before audit completion.
- Key adjustments discussed:
 - Increased revenues (motor vehicle tax, property tax, LOST).
 - Adjustments in salaries, insurance, energy, professional services, public works.
- Extensive discussion included:
 - Timing of amendments vs. fiscal year end.
 - Use of “catch-all” budget line items (Clerk/Admin).
 - Confusion over shifting account ID numbers.
 - Importance of clearer line-item budgeting for council oversight.
- Consultant explained this process is common and due to staffing limitations.
- **Action Taken**
 - Council approved adoption of an ordinance amending the FY 2024–25 budget.
 - Motion by Ates 2nd by Tedders

Solid Waste Services Contract

- Two companies considered: **Ryland** and **Am waste**.
- Council reviewed:
 - Customer service history.
 - Cost comparisons (residential, commercial, roll-offs, recycling).
 - Fuel surcharge concerns.
- Strong emphasis on improving customer service and communication.
- Yard waste pickup confirmed to remain **weekly**.
- **Vote Result**
 - Ryland was selected as solid waste provider (unanimous).
 - Motion by Councilwomen Coley 2nd by Councilman Savant

2026 Council Retreat

- Location selected: **Little Ocmulgee**.
- Dates: **February 11–13, 2026**.
- Estimated cost: **\$5,000**.
- Council cited benefits of off-site collaboration and relationship building.
- Approved unanimously.

Motion by Councilman Ates 2nd by Councilwomen Coley

Infrastructure & Housing Items

- **Peacock Street Drainage Project**
 - Approved \$252,330.96 contract using T-SPLOST funds (unanimous).
- **Roofs, Windows, and Doors Program**
 - 14 owner-occupied homes approved for repairs.
 - Funded with ARPA funds.
 - Brown Construction (11 homes) and JW Price (3 homes).
 - Homeowners must remain in the home for 3 years or repay improvements.
- Discussion topics:
 - Repeat grant recipients.
 - Life-safety driven scope of work.
 - Whether fewer homes with deeper investment might be more impactful.
- **Vote**
 - Contractors approved unanimously
 - Motion to accept Ates 2nd Tedders.

2026 CHIP Grant Application (\$500,000)

- City authorized to file application with Georgia DCA.
- Match estimated at ~\$30,000 over two years.
- Extensive discussion included:
 - Grant writer and administrator fees.
 - Per-unit project delivery costs.
 - Concern over lack of full cost transparency to council.
 - Clarification that approving the application implied use of the current consultant.
- **Vote Result**
 - Passed 4–2.
 - Motion made by Councilman Ates 2nd by Tedders
 - 4 in favor of Tedders, Gardner, Ates, & Lester.
 - 2 not in favor Savant & Coley

2026 CDBG Grant Application (\$1,000,000)

- Council discussed whether to:
 - Proceed now or
 - Issue an RFP for a new grant administrator.

- Deadline not until April 2026.
- Decision postponed to a **January work session** for further review.

Vape Shop Ordinance

- Council addressed growing number of vape shops and youth exposure concerns.
- Current situation:
 - Three vape shops in city limits; one just outside.
- Ordinance adopted with amendments:
 - Cap of **two vape shops** within city limits.
 - Existing shops are grandfathered.
 - Hours limited to **6 a.m. – 10 p.m., seven days a week.**
 - Defined vape shops as businesses with $\geq 25\%$ vape sales or floor space.
- **Vote**
 - Approved unanimously.
 - Motions by Councilman Savant 2nd by Councilwoman Coley

Closing Remarks

- City Manager thanked:
 - City staff.
 - Department heads.
 - Council and Mayor.
- Reminder of **Community Park ribbon cutting – December 22 at 11 a.m.**
- City Clerk encouraged council participation in the Christmas parade.
- City Attorney expressed appreciation and reflected on his tenure.

Mayor's Farewell

- Mayor thanked citizens, staff, and council for eight years of service.
- Reflected on accomplishments and personal faith.
- Acknowledged \$97,000 in personal donations made to the city.
- Offered encouragement to incoming leadership.
- Concluded with a faith-based message.

Additional Business & Executive Session

- Council asked to consider refilling a **cemetery technician** position following reassignment.
- Council voted to enter **executive session for potential litigation**.
- Meeting recessed from public session.

Executive session was needed for litigation matters

- 8:24 PM- 8:34 pm

Adjournment at 8:34pm