



DRAFT MINUTES
March 10, 2026
Cochran City Council
Regular Session @ 6:00 PM

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

City Council

City Staff

Carla Coley, Mayor	Richard Newbern, City Manager
Trecia Gardner <i>(District 1, Post 1)</i>	Candace Summerall, City Clerk
Gary Ates, Council Member <i>(District 1, Post 2)</i>	Jim Elliott, City Attorney
Rufus Veal, Council Member <i>(District 2 Post 1)</i>	
Lonnie Tedders, Council Member <i>(District 2, Post 2)</i>	
Dianne Lester <i>(District 3, Post 1)</i>	
Shane Savant, Council Member <i>(District 3, Post 2)</i>	

I. Call to Order

Mayor Carla Coley called the Regular Session of the Cochran City Council to order 6 PM

II. Invocation

Invocation was led by City Attorney Jim Elliott.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Carla Coley

IV. Attendance

Mayor Coley noted all Council Members were present with the exception of Council Member Ates. Quorum was established.

V. Adopt Agenda/Minutes

Agenda Modification

Mayor Coley requested that Agenda Item #1 (Public Hearing – Sign Variance request) be tabled and moved to the April 14, 2026 meeting due to a death in the applicant’s family, noting the item will not require re-advertisement.

- Motion: Made by Council Member Shane Savant
- Second: Council Member Rufus Veal
- Vote: Unanimous approval

Approve Agenda as Amended

- Motion: Made by Council Member Lonnie Tedders
- Second: Council Member Dianne Lester
- Vote: Unanimous approval

Approve Minutes

Council considered approval of the following minutes:

- January 13, 2026 Regular Council Meeting (with corrections)
- February 10, 2026 Regular Council Meeting
- February 19, 2026 Special Called Meeting

No additional changes were requested.

- Motion: Made by Council Member Shane Savant
- Second: Council Member Lonnie Tedders
- Vote: Unanimous approval

VI. Public Comments

1. **Billy Yeomans** expressed appreciation for City Manager Richard Newbern's 11 years of service to the City of Cochran, highlighting his leadership, knowledge, and dedication. He wished Mr. Newbern and his family continued success.
2. **Mary Pitts** thanked Mr. Newbern for his contributions to District 1 and the City as a whole, specifically recognizing his work on housing, parks, and grant funding. She expressed gratitude for his role in developing the City park and wished him and his family well.
3. **Deborah Turner**, along with a group of citizens, presented a statement of appreciation recognizing Mr. Newbern's service, particularly his work in District 1, including parks and community improvements, and expressed their gratitude for his leadership.

VII. Department Head Reports

Finance Department

Finance Administrator Bonnie Raffield presented financial updates, including expenditures related to recreation improvements and vendor payments. Council requested clarification on specific line items.

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Willie Farrow provided updates on equipment needs, including issues with a slope mower requiring replacement, staffing needs for part-time labor, and upcoming cleanup day scheduled for April 25. Director Farrow also discussed road coordination with the County and upcoming meetings to address jurisdictional responsibilities.

Council discussed water usage reporting, equipment costs, and contract labor, including prison labor availability and future staffing needs.

Fire Department

Fire Chief Brock Wilcher reported on departmental operations and advised that the department would assist Locust Grove by providing ladder truck coverage during a funeral service for a fallen firefighter. Chief Wilcher also discussed recent in-house physical training exercises conducted for staff.

Police Department

Police Chief Jeff Trawick provided staffing updates, noting current shortages and overtime management. He also reported that newly purchased vehicles are in the process of being equipped and prepared for service.

VIII. Agenda Items

1. Cochran-Bleckley Chamber of Commerce Tax Relief Request

Council considered a request for tax relief/waiver for the Commons Building for a three-year period.

- Motion: Made by Council Member Lonnie Tedders
- Second: Council Member Shane Savant
- Vote: Unanimous approval

2. Downtown Development Authority Street Closure Request

Council considered a request to close a portion of North 2nd Street (Ash to Cherry) on April 25, 2026 for Downtown Day.

- Motion: Made by Council Member Lonnie Tedders
- Second: Council Member Shane Savant
- Vote: Unanimous approval

3. Police Department Position Change

Council considered moving a part-time administrative position to full-time status to provide benefits for a position already working full-time hours.

- Motion: Made by Council Member Shane Savant
- Second: Council Member Lonnie Tedders

- Vote: Unanimous approval

4. Budget Amendments (FY 2025–2026)

Council discussed proposed budget amendments across multiple departments, including overtime and operational costs.

- Motion: Made by Council Member Shane Savant to adopt the budget amendments by ordinance
- Second: Council Member Lonnie Tedders
- Vote: Unanimous approval

5. Willie Basby Park Project Bid Award

Council considered awarding a bid for the walking trail and playground project. Discussion included funding sources and matching requirements.

- Motion: Made by Council Member Dianne Lester to approve the bid award in the amount of \$171,250, with funding sources to be determined
- Second: Council Member Lonnie Tedders
- Vote: Unanimous approval

6. Landscaping Maintenance Contract

Council reviewed bids for landscaping services across multiple City properties.

- Motion: Made by Council Member Shane Savant to award the contract to Dixie Landscaping in the amount of \$17,148 annually
- Second: Council Member Lonnie Tedders
- Vote: Unanimous approval

7. Additional Lighting for Community Park

Council reviewed proposals for lighting improvements and considered long-term cost efficiency.

- Motion: Made by Council Member Lonnie Tedders to approve Georgia Power rental option
- Second: Council Member Trecia Gardner
- Vote: Unanimous approval

8. Cybersecurity Grant Acceptance

Council considered acceptance of a GEMA cybersecurity grant totaling \$175,283 with a local match of \$43,820.75.

- Motion: Made by Council Member Lonnie Tedders
- Second: Council Member Rufus Veal
- Vote: Unanimous approval

9. Engineering Services – 2026 CDBG Application

Council considered a committee recommendation to select Falcon Design Consultants.

- Vote: Unanimous approval

10. Assignment of City Manager Duties in Absence of City Manager

At the conclusion of the meeting, Council Member Shane Savant made a motion to assign the duties of the City Manager to City Clerk Candace Summerall during the period in which no City Manager is employed. The motion further provided that certain administrative duties may be assigned to Council, with final determination of those responsibilities to be made by Friday, March 20, 2026, by the close of business.

IX. City Manager Discussion/Items/Updates

City Manager Richard Newbern provided updates regarding departmental transition planning and upcoming project coordination as he prepares to depart from the City.

City Clerk Candace Summerall requested completion of GMA attendance sheets and coordination regarding Chamber event participation.

X. Council/Mayor Discussion/Items

Mayor Carla Coley discussed MGA Homecoming Week, recognized March as Women's History Month, and provided updates regarding the Mercer Group meeting related to the City Manager search. Mayor Coley also noted coordination with the Regional Commission for budget planning and referenced meetings with Richard Newbern and Willie Farrow regarding ongoing projects involving gas and water meters, paving of the Police Department parking lot, and restrooms at the auditorium.

Council Member Trecia Gardner expressed appreciation to Richard Newbern for his service.

Council Member Lonnie Tedders thanked Richard Newbern for his service and stated that he will be missed.

Council Member Rufus Veal thanked Richard Newbern for his service.

Council Member Shane Savant thanked Richard Newbern for his dedication and the many hours he invested in service to the City, noting that while they had not always agreed on every issue, he wished him great success.

Council Member Dianne Lester thanked Richard Newbern on behalf of the City of Cochran.

XI. Announcement of Upcoming Meetings and Events

Next Work Session – April 9, 2026 @ 6:00 PM

Next Regular Council Meeting – April 14, 2026 @ 6:00 PM

XII. Executive Session

Council entered Executive Session to discuss personnel. 7:33

- Motion to enter Executive Session: Made by Council Member Dianne Lester
- Second: Council Member Rufus Veal
- Vote: Unanimous approval

Council returned to Regular Session. 8:24

- Motion to exit Executive Session: Made by Council Member Dianne Lester
- Second: Council Member Trecia Gardner
- Vote: Unanimous approval

XIII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made and approved. 8:25

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

Candace Summerall

City Clerk