



APPROVED MINUTES
Cochran City Council
Thursday, October 10th, 2024
Regular Session @ 7:00 PM

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

City Council

City Staff

Billy Yeomans, Mayor	Richard Newbern, City Manager
Keith Anderson, Council Member <i>(District 1, Post 1)</i>	Candace Summerall, City Clerk
Gary Ates, Council Member <i>(District 1, Post 2)</i>	Jim Elliott, City Attorney
Carla Coley, Council Member <i>(District 2 Post 1)</i>	
Lonnie Tedders, Council Member <i>(District 2, Post 2)</i>	
Andrew Lemmon, Council Member <i>(District 3, Post 1)</i>	
Shane Savant, Council Member <i>(District 3, Post 2)</i>	

I. Call to Order

Mayor Billy Yeomans called the regular session meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Invocation

Council Member Keith Anderson led the invocation.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Council Member Savant led the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. Attendance

Present: Mayor Billy Yeomans, Council Members Keith Anderson, Gary Ates, Lonnie Tedders, Andrew Lemmon, Shane Savant

Absent: Council Member Carla Coley

City Staff Present: City Manager Richard Newbern, City Clerk Candace Summerall, City Attorney Jim Elliott

V. Adopt Agenda/Minutes

1. Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Lemmon, to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2024 regular meeting. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Motion by Council Member Savant, seconded by Council Member Ates, to strike agenda item #3 regarding amending the utility ordinance. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Agenda Items

1. Public Hearing and Consider Setting the Millage Rate for 2024

Mayor Yeomans opened a public hearing at 7:04 PM to discuss setting the millage rate for FY2024. He explained the current rate is 10.931 mills, which would generate \$1,354,200 in property tax revenue. The rollback rate is 10.875 mills, which would produce \$1,350,528.37.

City Manager Newbern provided additional details on the millage rate options and impacts.

No members of the public spoke during the hearing. Mayor Yeomans closed the public hearing at 7:07 PM.

Council discussion followed. Council Member Savant asked clarifying questions about the calculations and public notice requirements. He expressed concerns about rushing the decision and recommended Council take additional time to thoroughly evaluate the millage rate options and their long-term impacts on city operations before proceeding to a vote.

Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Tedders, to set the millage rate at the rollback rate of 10.875 mills.

The motion passed 4-1, with Council Members Anderson, Ates, Lemmon and Tedders in favor, and Council Member Savant opposed.

2. Consider Accepting \$84,900 Land and Water Conservation Grant for Willie Basby Park

City Manager Newbern presented information on the \$84,900 grant from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for improvements at Willie Basby Park. The grant requires an \$85,000 local match, for a total project cost of \$169,500 to construct a walking trail, playground, outdoor grill, and landscaping.

Extensive discussion followed, with Council Member Savant expressing concerns about the proximity to other parks and suggesting the funds could be better used for the new Ash Street park project. Council Member Ates strongly advocated for accepting the grant to benefit District 1 residents.

Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Anderson, to accept the \$84,900 grant and provide the \$85,000 local match from recreation SPLOST funds.

The motion passed 4-1, with Council Members Anderson, Ates, Lemmon and Tedders in favor, and Council Member Savant opposed.

3. [Agenda item struck]

4. Consider Option to Provide AirMedCare Insurance to Employees

Wendy Simpson from Air Evac presented information on offering AirMedCare membership as an optional benefit for city employees, to be funded entirely through payroll deductions.

Council members asked clarifying questions about the program structure and city obligations. No formal action was taken, but there was consensus to move forward with offering the benefit during the next open enrollment period.

5. Reappointment of Debra Turner to Cochran Housing Authority

By consensus, the Council approved reappointing Debra Turner to another four-year term on the Cochran Housing Authority.

6. Consider Amending Business License Ordinance Due Date

City Clerk Summerall requested changing the business license due date from March 15th to December 31st of the preceding year to align with the fiscal year.

Motion by Council Member Lemmon, seconded by Council Member Ates, to amend the City Business License Ordinance to change the due date to December 31st. Motion passed unanimously.

VII. City Manager Discussion/Items/Updates

City Manager Newbern provided updates on:

- Recent CDBG workshop attendance
- Administrative assistant and code enforcement position openings
- Plan First renewal application status
- Annual agreement with Symphona as accounting consultant
- Upcoming GICH housing seminar
- Hurricane Helene recovery efforts and FEMA reimbursement status

City Clerk Candace Summerall provided updates on

- Thanked city leadership and council members for their teamwork during Hurricane Helene.
- Mentioned an existing emergency operating procedure is in place.
- Reported on House Bill 451 (PTSD-Ashley-Wilson Act) implementation by January 1, 2025 for first responders.
- Announced upcoming events:
 - o Christmas parade on December 6th
 - o Veterans Day ceremony on November 11th at 11:00 AM in the city auditorium
- Provided a tax sale update: reduced from 57 parcels to 10 final parcels over the last seven years.
- Mentioned inclusion of standard operating procedures for charge-off implementation as requested in the previous meeting. Indicated a final report on charge-offs would be presented at the January Council meeting.

VIII. Council/Mayor Discussion Items:

1. Council Member Keith Anderson:

- Thanked city employees for their efforts during the storm.
- Expressed gratitude that Cochran wasn't severely impacted compared to other areas.

2. Council Member Gary Ates:

- Thanked city employees and emphasized the team effort during the storm.

- Expressed gratitude that no lives were lost.

3. Council Member Lonnie Tedders:

- Thanked city workers and Alignment for restoring power.
- Requested prayers for surrounding counties still dealing with storm impacts.

4. Council Member Andrew Lemmon- no comment

5. Shane Savant:

- Echoed thanks for city response during the storm.
- Clarified the city's limited influence on power restoration priorities.
- Suggested implementing an official spokesperson for public updates during emergencies.
- Inquired about the Plan First application that wasn't selected.

6. Mayor Billy Yeomans:

- Thanked full-time personnel for their work during the storm.
- Emphasized Cochran was blessed compared to other areas.
- Clarified that the city doesn't determine power restoration priorities.
- Announced changes to tax bill procedures - bills will now come from and be paid to the county.

IX. Announcement of Upcoming Meetings and Events

- Next Work Session: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 @ 6:00 PM
- Next Regular Council Meeting: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 @ 7:00 PM

X. Public Comments

Melissa Barker Cochran Bleckley Chamber of Commerce President provided information on the upcoming Country Fest event.

XI. Executive Session

Motion by Council Member Anderson, seconded by Council Member Tedders, to enter executive session to discuss personnel matters. Motion passed unanimously.

Council entered executive session at 8:30PM

Motion by Council Member Anderson, seconded by Council Member Tedders, to exit executive session. Motion passed unanimously at 8:33PM

Motion by Council Member Anderson, seconded by Council Member Tedders, to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously Meeting adjourned following executive session 8:34 PM

Minutes prepared and submitted by:



Candace Summerall

City Clerk

