



**APPROVED MINUTES
Cochran City Council
Tuesday, April 9, 2024
Regular Scheduled Meeting @ 7:00PM**

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

Present: Mayor Billy Yeomans, Mayor Pro-Tem Carla Coley
Councilmembers: Keith Anderson, Gary Ates, Andrew Lemmon, Shane Savant, Lonnie Tedders
City Manager, Richard Newbern, Interim City Clerk, Julie Peche

- I. Call to Order by the Mayor**
- II. Invocation**
- III. Pledge of Allegiance**
- IV. Attendance**
- V. Adopt Agenda**
- VI. Approve Minutes**
- VII. Agenda Items**

- I.** Call to order by Mayor Billy Yeomans @ 7:00PM Mayor Yeomans asked for a moment of silence to honor City Engineer, Skip Layton who passed on 4-7-2024. Next, he asked that we remember Andy Lucas, IDA Director as he recovers from surgery.
- II.** The invocation was given by Councilmember Savant.
- III.** The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilmember Lemmon.
- IV.** The Mayor noted all council members were present.
- V.** Mayor asked for any corrections, additions, or deletions to the April 9, 2024, agenda. Councilmember Coley asked to add as Item #9, determination of Council's involvement in the interviews for City Clerk. Councilmember Savant made a second with all council members in favor. Motion passed unanimously 6/0.
Councilmember Coley made a motion to add the discussion of approval of additional funds for the airport from the 23/24 budget as agenda item #10. Councilmember Tedders made a second with all councilmembers in favor. Motion passed unanimously 6/0. Councilmember Lemmon made the motion to accept the agenda with additions. Councilmember Tedders made a second. Motion passed 6/0.
- VI.** Mayor asked if additions or corrections were needed for the Tuesday, March 12, 2024, council meeting minutes. There were none and a motion was made to accept the minutes as presented for the Tuesday, March 12, 2024, Council meeting by Councilmember

Savant with a second by Councilmember Anderson. The vote was unanimous 6/0, motion passed.

Mayor asked if additions or corrections were needed for the April 6-8, 2023, Retreat meeting minutes. Councilmembers Savant and Tedders must recuse themselves since they were not on the Council at that time. There were no corrections, and a motion was made to accept the minutes as presented for the 2023 Retreat by Councilmember Ates with a second by councilmember Lemmon. The vote was unanimous, motion passed 4/0 with 2 abstentions.

Mayor Yeomans stood and stated he would like to address those in attendance and listening on social media.

He apologized for any inconvenience or misunderstanding concerning the delinquent tax letters that were sent to City property owners. At the February 6, 2024, Council meeting, the City Council voted unanimously to contract with GTS, Governmental Tax Services Inc., to start the collection process for past due property taxes. Letters were sent to anyone showing a balance owed to the City for taxes. Some letters were sent to property owners that had already paid previous year's taxes. We appreciate those that have provided proof of payment to clear past due tax amounts.

Next, he stated that he had spoken with the GBI to verify that the City is not under any investigation. The unrecorded tax payments was caused by a glitch in the data base.

VII. Agenda Items

ITEM #1- Presented by Mayor, Billy Yeomans

Mayor Billy Yeomans read a proclamation recognizing April 21 to April 27, 2024, as Georgia Cities Week in Cochran.

ITEM #2- Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Mr. Newbern gave overview of the Variance request petition for Chris Steeley to build a tiny home of 384 Sq. Ft. at 132 Rose St. in an R-2 zoned neighborhood with a required minimum house size of 1,200 Sq. Ft. Mayor Yeomans called the Public Hearing to order at 7:23pm.

Mr. Steeley addressed the Council and stated that the lot is small and was originally platted in 1912. Wants to build this home for his personal use only, will build with a certified house plan, and follow all fire codes. Several attendees made statements for and against the proposal for tiny homes in the R-2 district. Mayor Yeomans closed the public hearing at 7:35pm.

Comments from Council included concern for setting a precedent for tiny homes in all neighborhoods. Variance requests were granted for hardships and this request was not seen as a hardship. The council asked for the Planning Commission to investigate options for allowing tiny homes in all zoning districts in Cochran. Mayor asked for the Council's recommendation. Councilmember Anderson made a motion to deny the variance petition for 132 Rose St. Councilmember Ates made a second. The vote to deny was unanimous. 6/0.

ITEM #3- Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Mr. Newbern presented a contract from Tax Commissioner, Paige Baggs, for services to the City to bill and collect 2024 property taxes for a fee of \$18,000 per year. Ms. Baggs addressed the Council and

listed services that would be provided under this contract. This contract would also apply for future years tax billing and collection. Councilmember Ates made a motion to approve the contract presented by the Bleckley County Tax Commissioner for tax collection services at a fee of \$18,000 annually beginning in 2024. Councilmember Lemmon made a second. All councilmembers were in favor. Motion passed 6/0.

ITEM #4- Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

The council is asked to amend the 23/24 budget to shift \$1,791,927 in ARPA funds into the general fund as recommended by the city accountants from Symphona. ARPA funds must be spent by 12-31-2024. This will allow the city more time to spend the funds. ARPA funds will be spent on approved items and will be tracked on a monthly spreadsheet. Councilmember Coley made a motion to move ARPA funds to the general fund with accounting procedures as requested. Councilmember Anderson made a second. All were in favor, motion passed 6/0.

ITEM #5 - Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Mr. Newbern asked if the Council would like to amend the FY 24/25 budget calendar or leave as approved at the January 9, 2024, council meeting. Current calendar is: work session Tuesday, April 16, 2024, at 6:30, work session, Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at 6:30, public hearing, Tuesday, June 4, 2024, at 6:30, with budget approval at the regular council meeting, Tuesday, June 11, 2024 at 7. Councilmember Savant made a motion to leave the budget calendar as set at the 1-9-2024 council meeting. Councilmember Anderson made a second. The vote was unanimous 6/0.

ITEM #6- Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

The Council was asked to consider a policy for citizens or civic groups to follow to receive approval prior to use of City owned properties for public events. The council asked for more development of a policy and supporting documents before their consideration. The council asked for this item to be deferred. All council members concurred.

ITEM #7- Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

The council has been asked to consider an amendment to the TSPLOST paving project for Mac Thompson Road. Consultation with GDOT has requested a review of this request. The \$350,000 for this project will not resurface the total length of this project. The council is asked to select which segment to resurface. Councilmember Coley made a motion to resurface and mill the south segment of Mac Thompson Road from Colonial Road to Faulk Rd and to use ARPA funding if needed to complete this segment. Councilmember Tedders made a second to this motion. The vote was unanimous 6/0.

ITEM #8- Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Council was asked to approve the bids for 2 new police vehicles which were approved for purchase at the March 12, 2024, council meeting. Chief Trawick addressed Council and answered questions. Councilmember Lemmon made a motion to accept the bids from Brannen Ford for the purchase of one F150, and one Ford Explorer/ Interceptor. Councilmember Ates made a second and the vote was unanimous 6/0.

ITEM #9- (Added agenda item) Presented by Mayor Billy Yeomans

Mayor Yeomans stated that this item was previously discussed during the work session and council voted to add to the regular agenda. He asked what the Council would recommend. Councilmember Savant suggested that 1 councilmember from each district be allowed to observe the 2nd round interviews for City Clerk and asked to have an application review by all councilmembers. Councilmember Coley agreed. Councilmembers Ates and Lemmon clarified that the recommendation to council would come from City Manager, Richard Newbern. Councilmember Coley made a motion for 1

councilmember from each district to observe the 2nd round interviews and any councilmember could review all applications submitted for City Clerk with the final recommendation to council presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern. Councilmember Savant made a second to that motion. All councilmembers were in favor, motion passed 6/0.

ITEM # 10- (Added agenda item) Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

This item was requested by the council to be added to the regular agenda. This is a discussion of providing additional funding from the FY 23/24 budget for the Airport Authority. Mr. Newbern stated that the request made by Bill Coody on behalf of the Airport Authority is to cover the cost of a portable building to be purchased for use by the MGSU’s School of Aviation. This facility would be used for scheduling student flights arriving and departing from the airport. Councilmember Coley made a motion to amend the FY 23/24 budget to provide funding of \$25,000 to the Airport Authority for the purchase of the building to be used for the MGSU’s School of Aviation. Councilmember Tedders made a second to that motion. All councilmembers were in favor. Motion passed 6/0.

City Manager –

- o Clean Up Day – 4-20-24.
- o GMA Convention June 21-25, 2024.
- o Planned work session on Strategic Planning with Dr. Carrie Hamilton Saturday, May 18, 2024.
- o Ossoff Grant awarded for over \$700,000 in sewer system upgrades. Match funds were approved from the ARPA funds.
- o David Arnold has finished the Fire Station Plat which needs review by the Fire Chief.
- o CDBG Grant 2024 was filed on April 5, 2024, for \$920,000.
- o Land and Water Conservation grant for Willie Basby Park made it to the final review.
- o GICH conference is April 16-18, 2024. 4 team members will be attending.

City Attorney – N/A

City Clerk – No Comment

Mayor – Be safe, call for help when needed.

Remember our next Council meeting on May 14, 2024, work session at 6pm and regular meeting 7pm. Work session for the FY 24/25 budget is Tuesday, 16, 2024 at 6:30 pm.

Council Discussion Items:

District 1

Anderson – Please remember Skip Layton’s family in our prayers.

Ates – Spoke of how the City Council had a great retreat. Asked Police Chief Trawick to have Animal Control to patrol District 1 for stray cats and dogs.

District 2

Coley – Remember Skip’s family as they approach the funeral on Thursday.

Tedders – NA

District 3

Savant – Great retreat. Thank you, Julie, and staff, for the GMA registration. Requested update on tax collection.

Lemmon – NA

Public Comments (Please note that every individual who signs up to speak prior to the meeting will be given a total of 3 minutes to address the Mayor and Council.)

Mike Ware of Deep South Construction wanted to introduce himself and let everyone know he bought the old gas station across the street (from the auditorium). He has bid on several CHIP and CDBG rehab projects here. Wonderful programs. Complimented Willie, Richard, Julie. The city staff is great to work with. Stated no other town has anyone like Willie. Will not be bidding on grant projects in the future but would like to continue to work with the city. Councilmember Coley asked why he would not bid on grant projects. Mike responded that it requires heavy investment and does not want to assume the risk.

Rufus Veal, city resident, discussed water billing issues, cut-offs, fees charged, asbestos testing for demos.

Melissa Barker, President of the Chamber of Commerce, reminded everyone of the upcoming Chamber events. Thursday, 4-11-24 at 6:30 pm in the auditorium, meet the candidates a Q&A for County Commissioner, Magistrate Judge, SPLOST. Thursday 4-18-24 from 4:30 to 6:30 Small business expo. Saturday, 4-20-24 from 9 to noon, Cochran Clean Up Day. Lastly, Friday, 5-3-24 the Golfers Classic.

Councilmember Savant wanted to thank Connie Dupree for her 19 years of service to the citizens of Cochran.

This ended public comments.

Mayor asked if Council needed to go into Executive session. Councilmember Ates stated yes for a personnel issue.

8:53pm, Councilmember Ates made a motion to go into executive session with a second by Councilmember Anderson. Motion passed 6/0.

9:34pm, Councilmember Ates made the motion to go back into back to regular session with a second by Councilmember Lemmon. Motion passed 6/0.

9:35pm, Motion to adjourn by Councilmember Ates, with a second by Councilmember Anderson. Motion passed. 6/0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:36 pm



(SEAL) Julie D. Peche

Julie D. Peche, Interim City Clerk