



DRAFT Minutes

April 28, 2025

Cochran City Council

Special Called Meeting @ 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 <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>	
Dianne Lester <i>(District 3, Post 1)</i>	
Shane Savant, Council Member <i>(District 3, Post 2)</i>	

I. Call to Order by the Mayor

Mayor Yeomans called the special called meeting to order at 6:01 PM

II. Invocation led by Council Member Ates

III. Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Lester

IV. Attendance

Mayor Yeomans confirmed that five and a half council members were present, with the "half" being Trecia Gardner who would be sworn in during the meeting. A quorum was established.

V. Adopt Agenda

Mayor Yeomans noted that an executive session for personnel matters would be added at the end of the meeting.

Motion: Council Member Ates moved to approve the agenda with the addition of an executive session for personnel matters.

Second: Council Member Savant

Vote: Unanimous approval

VI. Agenda Items

1. Trecia Gardner - Swearing-in as a Council Member

City Clerk Summerall administered the oath of office to Trecia Gardner. Ms. Gardner was surrounded by family and friends for the ceremony and photos.

Mayor Yeomans noted that with Ms. Gardner's swearing in, the Council now had six members.

2. Consider appointment of two board members to the Planning and Zoning Commission

City Manager Newbern explained that there were two vacancies on the Planning and Zoning Commission. Three candidates had expressed interest: Pam Tolbert, Eric Bisher, and David Helms.

Council Member Savant noted that current board members had recommended Tolbert and Bisher. The concern about Ms. Tolbert potentially having a relative on the board had been resolved, with the city attorney determining it was not an issue as long as she recused herself from decisions involving the relative.

Motion for Pam Talbert: Council Member Savant moved to appoint Pam Tolbert to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Second: Council Member Ates

Vote: Unanimous approval

Motion for Eric Bisher: Council Member Ates moved to appoint Eric Bisher to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Second: Council Member Savant

Vote: Unanimous approval

3. Discuss proposed FY 25/26 Budget

City Manager Newbern presented the proposed FY 25/26 budget and outlined the budget timeline:

- Current meeting (April 28): First work session on the general fund budget
- May 13th meeting: Opportunity to discuss the budget further
- May 20th: Additional work session at 6 p.m.
- After May 20th: Advertisement of the draft budget
- June 3rd: Public hearing on budget at 6 p.m.
- June 10th: Second public hearing followed by budget adoption

Budget highlights presented by City Manager Newbern included:

- General fund increase of 3.44% (total \$4,865,874)
- Water and sewer fund budgeted at \$2,415,000
- Gas fund increase based on projections from Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia
- Solid waste fund increase of about 5.7%
- No change to millage rate (remains at 10.875 mills)
- Fee increases:
 - 2.5% increase in water and sewer fees
 - 5% increase in solid waste and garbage fees
 - \$1 increase on natural gas base charges
 - Fire fee increase from \$7 to \$10.50 per month
 - Stormwater fee increase from \$4 to \$6 per month

Newbern further detailed fund allocations:

- General Fund: \$4,865,374
- Solid Waste Fund: Over \$1 million
- Water and Sewer Fund: \$2.4 million
- Gas Fund: \$934,500

He broke down general fund expenditures:

- Clerk administration: 26%
- Police department: 26%

- Public works: 20%
- Fire department: 17%
- Code enforcement: 2%
- Animal control: 2% (50% reimbursed by county)
- \$2,350,000 (of \$4.8 million) spent on public safety
- 65.2% of general fund budget spent on personnel

Council Member Savant questioned why fire and stormwater fees were proposed to increase by 50% while other fees had smaller increases. Newbern explained they had looked at surrounding communities' rates and found Cochran's rates were significantly lower.

Council Member Coley noted that the fire fee was originally implemented to provide additional funding for the fire department but had been absorbed into the general fund. She suggested that if they were going to raise the fee, it should be used for its original purpose of improving the fire department.

Mayor Yeomans proposed not imposing the increased fire and stormwater fees on senior citizens. City Clerk Summerall suggested charging vacant lots for fire and stormwater fees since they are not currently charged.

Council then began reviewing specific line items in the budget, focusing on areas such as:

- Travel expenses
- Mayor and Council salaries
- Professional purchase services
- Technology fees
- Insurance costs
- Employee incentive programs

Due to time constraints, the Council agreed to continue the detailed budget review in future meetings.

VII. Executive Session at 8:07

Motion: Council Member Ates moved to go into executive session for personnel matters.

Second: Council Member Tedders

Vote: Unanimous approval

A five-minute break was taken to allow the public to exit before beginning the executive session.

Motion: Council Member Coley moved to exit executive session

Second: Council Member Gardner

Vote: Unanimous approval

ADJOURNMENT at 8:37 PM

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

Candace Summerall
City Clerk

SEAL

