



**MINUTES**  
**Cochran City Council**  
**Tuesday, November 15, 2016**  
**Regular Meeting @ 7:00 PM**

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*Community House located at 192 South Third Street, Cochran, GA 31014*

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Present: Mayor Gary Ates, Mayor Pro Tem Andrew Lemmon, Councilmembers Regina Gooch, Jon Thrower, Charles Cranford, Andrew Lemmon and Fleming Gilman.

Call to order by Mayor Ates. The invocation was given by Mayor Ates followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Councilmember Thrower.

Mayor Ates apologized to the citizens for the postponement of the annexation hearing. Mayor Ates also advised that all public comments would be made at the podium and at no time should anyone approach the Council table.

Interim City Clerk Jill Cooper read the minutes of the October 11, 2016 regular session.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Cranford seconded the motion to approve the October 11, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Mayor Ates presented a Proclamation of Appreciation to Boy Scout Troop #77 for their community service and their contributions toward upgrading the facilities and equipment at the Cochran Bleckley Recreation Department.

### **Agenda Items**

#### **Item # 1 – Presented by Chamber and IDA President, Nicole Ward**

Update on activities of the Cochran-Bleckley County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and Chamber of Commerce. Chamber and IDA President Nicole Ward outlined the various projects that the Chamber and IDA are involved in. Meetings have been held with local business owners and board members to get a better understanding of how the IDA can help promote our community. She revealed the IDA's new logo and mission statement. The Chamber and IDA is currently working with WOLF Radio to help advertise local events and increase interest in Cochran and Bleckley County. There was an estimated 4000-4500 who attended last month's OctoberFest.

#### **Item # 2 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern**

Consider acceptance of \$500,000 federal CDBG for Railroad Avenue target area and obligation of local match. There will be a public briefing at the next meeting on the award. SPLOST, TIA, and GEFA funds will be used to pay for the match and therefore there would be no impact on the general fund. City Engineer Skip Layton explained the rehabilitation of the area's roads, storm drainage and water/sewer system would be done with these dollars. Councilmember Gilman asked if bids would be taken for these projects. Mr. Layton said they would but that the plans are still in the preliminary stage. Councilmember

Gooch made a motion and Councilmember Gilman seconded the motion to accept the \$500,000 federal CDBG award for the Railroad Avenue target area and obligation of local match. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

**Item # 3 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern**

Consider appointment of City Clerk. City Manager Richard Newbern advised the position of City Clerk was posted internally in accordance with the personnel policy. He recommended Jill Cooper for the position of City Clerk. Councilmember Gilman made a motion and Councilmember Thrower seconded the motion to discuss personnel matters in Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

**Item # 4 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern**

Notify Council of Fair Labor Standards Acts (FLSA) salary adjustments effective December 1, 2016. City Manager Richard Newbern advised the council that the new FLSA Exempt rule is a requirement and must be implemented. Only two personnel would be affected by the new ruling. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Lemmon seconded the motion to defer further discussion to Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

**Item # 5 – Presented by City Engineer Skip Layton of Falcon Design Engineering**

Award of bid to Griffin Folsom Construction, LLC for Lift Station replacement at Lake Linda in the amount of \$200,000 as part of the GEFA Sewer System Rehabilitation Project-Phase II. Discuss replacement of the 10<sup>th</sup> Street lift station or choose to extend gravity sewer lines to surrounding neighborhood. Discussion regarding the Lake Linda and 10<sup>th</sup> Street Lift Station replacement. Mr. Layton showed a map of the areas affected. Bids were taken November 3, 2016 for the lift station replacements. Replacement of both the Lake Linda and the 10<sup>th</sup> Street lift stations was the original package bid and the low bid was received from Griffin Folsom Construction. The city does have another option of forgoing the 10<sup>th</sup> Street lift station replacement and instead install a gravity fed system. The cost would be \$300,000 to replace both lift stations or \$200,000 to replace only the Lake Linda lift station. Councilmember Gilman asked what the cost would be to install the gravity fed system. Mr. Layton advised the cost would be approximately \$250,000 as this would require digging, EPD permits, and easements. The gravity fed system would allow service to be made available to a larger area than the lift station alone. Councilmember Thrower asked Mr. Layton which he would recommend. He responded that anytime a mechanical system could be eliminated it would be an advantage due to maintenance, repairs, etc. Councilmember Thrower asked Public Works Director Jacob Daniels and City Manager Richard Newbern what their recommendation would be and they both said the gravity fed system. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Lemmon seconded the motion to accept the bid award to Griffin Folsom Construction for the replacement of the Lake Linda lift station and to move forward with a gravity fed system in the 10<sup>th</sup> Street area. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

**Item # 6 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern**

Consider approval of Cochran Insurance & Realty contract for one (1) year. Louis Abbott and Ken Duffy of Cochran Insurance and Realty presented their proposal for liability coverage for the City of Cochran. The coverages and premium costs were presented, showing a \$25,000 decrease in premiums from the previous year. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Andrew Lemmon seconded the motion to accept the contract with Cochran Insurance and Realty for the liability coverage for the City of Cochran.

**Item # 7 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern**

Update on Mayor's office due to recent resignation. City Manager Richard Newbern presented each councilmember with a copy of the City Attorney Leo Phillip's opinion of the Secretary of State and the City Charter's requirements for filling the vacancy of mayor. Mr. Newbern summarized that, based on the

City Charter, and the City Attorney's opinion, that the Council may appoint a Mayor in January 2017. Because this appointment would be made with less than a year left in the current term, the need for a special election would be eliminated. The appointed Mayor can serve the remainder to the Mayor's term and an election would be held in November 2017 to elect a Mayor for a new term. Gary Ates will continue to serve as Mayor and Andrew Lemmon will continue to serve as Mayor Pro Tem until the Council appointment in January 2017.

**Item # 8 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern**

**Resolution 21-16;** Consider approval of **Resolution 21-16** that renews the City's natural gas supply contract with the Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia (MGAG). City Manager Richard Newbern explained that there is an amendment to the contract to allow users of the Municipal Gas system outside the state would be allowed representation with the Municipal Gas Authority. This amendment also allows members to opt out if so desired every five years. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gooch seconded the motion to approve **Resolution 21-16**. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

**Item # 9 – Presented by Public Works Director Jacob Daniels**

Consider approval of application to the Georgia DOT Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) in the amount of \$75,963.77 to finance the replacement of storm-drain pipe under Porter Road at Westside Road and under Peter Street near Fifth Street. Public Works Director Jacob Daniels explained there would be no paving with this LMIG. It would be used solely for the replacement of storm drains. Next year's LMIG funds would be used for paving. The city's match would be \$7596.00. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Lemmon seconded the motion to approve the Georgia DOT Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) in the amount of \$75,963.77. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

**Item # 10 – Presented City Manager Richard Newbern**

Consider authorizing staff to prepare documentation for Council consideration on submitting a legislative request for annexation of several road segments and properties, including the Cochran Airport, GA Hwy 126 to the Airport, Jac Arts Road, portions of the Cochran By-Pass and GA Hwy 87 to the Cochran By-Pass. City Manager Richard Newbern explained this request was for authorization to proceed to investigate annexation. Councilmember Lemmon made a motion to table this item. Councilmember Gilman made a motion to drop the whole thing, citing that citizens were angry about it and he did not see any benefit to the City to proceed. Councilmember Gilman was concerned that the City limits signs had been moved and it was not known by whom or why. Councilmember Thrower requested that the motion be amended to authorize Richard Newbern to determine where the City limits are and then revisit the annexation. Councilmember Cranford seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

**Item # 11 – Presented City Manager Richard Newbern**

Consider approval of Christmas Holiday Schedule. City Manager Richard Newbern cited the City's personnel policy which states City employees would receive 10 paid holidays each year. It specifically states that Christmas day, and Christmas Eve or the day after Christmas (Council's discretion), would be paid holidays. Due to the fact that Christmas Eve and Christmas Day fall on Saturday and Sunday, respectively, Mr. Newbern presented Friday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> and Monday, December 26<sup>th</sup>, would be paid holidays for staff. Discussion was deferred to Executive Session. Councilmember Thrower asked Public Works Director Jacob Daniels if the Advanced Disposal garbage pickup would be affected by the holidays. Mrs. Daniels advised that due to the holiday falling on the weekend, there would be no interruption in service.

### **Item # 12 – Presented by Interim City Clerk Jill Cooper**

Consider appointing Mayor Gary Ates and Utility Billing Clerk Tracey Hudson as additional co-signatories on the City's bank accounts at State Bank of Cochran, Cochran Bank & Trust, and Citizens Bank of Cochran. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Lemmon seconded the motion to add Mayor Gary Ates and Utility Billing Clerk Tracey Hudson as signers on the City's checking accounts. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

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

Catherine Guyton asked the council why the motion was made to drop the annexation. She feels the City should move forward with the annexation. Mrs. Guyton also asked if the installation of the new ARM meters would affect water pressure. Public works Director Jacob Daniels advised there would be no effect. Mrs. Guyton asked what would be done about the open council seat left when Councilmember Ates became Mayor. City Manager Richard Newbern explained it would be determined based on who the council appoints to the Mayor position in January. Mrs. Guyton also expressed concern over Councilmembers texting during the council meeting.

Tommy Guyton addressed the council concerning travel information he received from his open records request. He questioned Councilmember Thrower, Mayor Ates, and Councilmember Gilman about the need for hotel stays the night before and the night after a conference, the city paying for the return of a personal item left at the hotel, and about reimbursement being made for upgrade charges for family members attending training conferences.

### **Mayor Updates**

- Council Retreat-Mayor Ates discussed having a Retreat for Councilmembers to discuss policies and procedures and to come together as a Council body. There was discussion about possibly planning for January 2017 and asked staff to look into dates and places for the retreat. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Andrew Lemmon seconded the motion to have a Council Retreat to discuss City policies and procedures. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.
- No Guns Allowed-Mayor Ates would like Council to consider prohibiting all guns on premises of any City property. Councilmember Andrew Lemmon made a motion and Councilmember Charles Cranford seconded the motion to prepare an ordinance prohibiting possession of firearms on all City property. The ordinance will be prepared for next meeting.

### **City Manager Discussion/Items/Updates**

- There will be a Chamber meeting at the dining hall at Middle Georgia State College on Wednesday at 12:00 pm. All councilmembers are invited to attend.
- The City Thanksgiving lunch will be Wednesday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Fire Department at noon. All Councilmembers are invited to attend.
- The Christmas parade will be Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 pm.
- An updated Finance Report will be made available soon.

## **Department updates.**

Police Chief Chris Coley announced that the grant request for tornado warning sirens has passed step one in the approval process. GEMA has approved one siren and one mass notification system. Two sirens were requested but only one was approved. He feels one will meet the needs of the City. Chief Coley informed Council that the K-9 Officer, Josh Hasty, had resigned but the K-9 program will continue. The patrol canine will be assigned to Officer Shannon Rowland.

Fire Chief Kevin Noles announced that the Cochran Fire Department responded to a fire on the second story of an apartment at Pecan Point Apartments. A mother and two small children were rescued from the burning apartment where they were trapped. The Fire Department was on site in less than three minutes. There were no injuries and the fire was contained to the one apartment. He commended Firemen Allen, Brown, and Dykes on their excellence in carrying out their duties and saving this family.

Public Works Director Jacob Daniels advised that the State of Georgia was still under burn restrictions and water restrictions. There have been 46 continuous days without rain and it was imperative that all residents conserve water. Further restrictions may come. Currently, outdoor watering is restricted to the hours of 4:00 pm to 10:00 am only. He advised there is also a fireworks ban for the next 30 days. There is the potential for flash flooding in the event there is a heavy rain due to the dry condition of the ground.

## **Council Discussion Items**

Councilmember Gooch expressed a desire for the City to provide Ipads for the Council. She stated it would be more efficient and less paper. Councilmember Thrower also would like each Councilmember to have a City email address issued to them. City Manager Richard Newbern stated that these could be purchased out of the Technical Services budget. City staff will gather prices and bring back to Council. Councilmember Thrower asked Public Works Director Jacob Daniels to contact Mike Brown at 167 Honeysuckle, who is requesting that a street light be put on his street.

Councilmember Lemmon made a motion and Councilmember Gilman made a motion to go into Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gooch seconded the motion to go back into regular session. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Lemmon seconded the motion to approve Jill Cooper as City Clerk. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Cranford seconded the motion to approve City Clerk salary at \$50,000 beginning next pay period. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Charles Cranford seconded the motion to approve Friday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> and Monday, December 26<sup>th</sup> as paid holidays for staff. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Charles Cranford seconded the motion to approve Christmas bonuses based on years of service. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Lemmon seconded the motion to approve raising Captain Jeff Trawick's salary to meet FLSA requirements to \$47,476 effective next pay period. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Lemmon seconded the motion to approve officers, while on duty and who live within a 25-mile radius, may drive their patrol cars home. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Charles Cranford seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Adjourn @ 11: 25

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Jill Cooper, Interim City Clerk

(Seal)