

**March 24, 2025**

The Eastman City Council met in a regularly scheduled meeting on the above date at 6:00 p.m. The following members were present: Sebrina Williams, Graham Snyder, Debra Sheffield, and Mark Peacock. Others present were City Manager Spencer Barron, Police Chief Billy Cooper, City Clerk April Sheffield, Assistant City Manager Dayna Winslette, City Inspector Jack White, and Gerald Fordham. Present from the community were Susan and Mitchell Coffee, EM Harrington III, Sharon Cobb Flanagan, Jesse Bearden, and John Battle.

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Snyder.

The invocation was given by Councilor Peacock.

Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

**On a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Peacock, the agenda was unanimously amended to add #5: Speed Hump Petition for 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The amended agenda was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

**APPROVE MINUTES:**

**A motion was made by Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Williams to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2025, regular meeting and the March 21, 2025, called meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Councilor Snyder expanded on the reason for having the special called meeting. It was to approve funds to repair a well that went down behind Harvey's. It is one of our larger capacity wells and its 30-year-old pump basically disintegrated. Ms. Susan Coffee asks where the funds will come from to pay for the repair. Snyder answered that it would be paid out of SPLOST, approximately a little more than \$76,000, to pay for the pump, labor, casing, and such.

**NO UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**APPROVE BILLS:**

**On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield, the bills for March 11 – 24, 2025, were unanimously approved.**

**APPROVE CDBG BID FOR BACON HEIGHTS SEWER PROJECT:**

Bids were advertised for a contractor to perform the CDBG Sewer Project in Bacon Heights. There were four contractors who submitted bids ranging from \$1,074,710.05 to \$1,787,353.00. They were CaJenn Construction & Rehabilitation Services, KDUG Corporation, RDJE, and Southeast Pipe Survey. The engineering firm, Hofstadter and Associates, recommended the apparent low bidder. Councilor Snyder asks if there is a detailed plan for us to follow and be able to keep the public informed on what areas are being worked on and when they will be in the area. Manager Barron assured him that it was possible. Jesse Bearden asks if this work was being done only on the existing sewer or were there new lines expected. He was concerned that a pump station may need to be upgraded if there were any additions.

**On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield, KDUG Corporation was unanimously approved to be awarded the 2023 CDBG Sewer Project in Bacon Heights in the amount of \$1,074,710.05.**

**APPROVE BID FOR PROPERTY & LIABILITY INSURANCE RENEWAL:**

It was time again to bid out the property and liability insurance. The only response to the bid was from GMA in the amount of \$171,162. Last year it was \$157,795. That equals a \$13,367 increase. **The GIRMA renewal bid of \$171,162 was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Williams.**

**RFQ FOR INSURANCE BROKER:**

The Council has requested to explore options for health insurance brokers this year. The city has been with the same one for several years now. Manager Barron asks for permission to put out the RFQs. **It was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield to move forward with seeking quotes for health insurance with other brokers.**

**13<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE SPEED HUMP PETITION:**

Citizen Clay Bearden has submitted a speed hump request for 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Pine Drive and Creighton Street. His father, Jesse, came to represent him. Mr. Bearden says that there are a lot of kids on 13<sup>th</sup>, especially down around Bay Street. He feels that traffic has picked up in that area due to avoiding the speed humps on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Creighton Street. The front yards in that area are small for kids to play in. The road is not a high-density area but does have small families with kids. Councilor Snyder points out that the petition had only a few signatures from that specific area, and they looked like they came from only 2 households. The council would love to hear from the rest of that area that it would affect. If the neighbors could be on board and sign the petition also, the council would have no problem with inserting a speed hump to help with the safety of the area. Mr. Bearden agrees to rescind the request and proceed with getting more signatures and submit the petition at a later date.

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:**

As mentioned before, there is a well down at the moment. The other three wells are handling operations, but the city would appreciate any effort from the citizens to conserve water until it is back up and operational. There is also a ribbon cutting at the Chamber of Commerce tomorrow for Conexon if anyone is interested.

**OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:**

Chairman Snyder spoke his feelings concerning a matter from Mr. Terry Coleman. He stated: go unchallenged. I have received several calls and have been asked several questions from people in the community about an apparent text they have received from Mr. Terry Coleman about the need for Eastman to have a mayor. I mentioned this in our last council meeting that City Hall was presented with a letter from Mr. Coleman that he intended to seek legislative changes to our city charter to reinstitute the office of a mayor, which we have not had in more than half a century, if not longer. I don't have any questions as to why Mr. Coleman is so intent on rewriting how Eastman is governed. And I hope he can at some point have a conversation with us on the Council and help us understand or provide some answers to some of these questions. But I can say unequivocally that I do not appreciate Mr. Coleman's impugning the honor or integrity of myself or any person on this Council by insinuating decisions are being made without the people being duly informed. It was stated in his text, sent out countywide that quote "Big decisions are being made without your vote here in Eastman." I vehemently disagree with that comment. We on this Council value openness and transparency. We have no secrets to hide, nor do we make any decisions that are not done in a public meeting, made after much reflection, deliberation, and consultation from the community and done so with the conformance to all rules and requirements

within state and local law. We on this Council serve at the pleasure of the people who elected us to be their voice and make the hard decisions to help better this city. We do not need a single mayor who wields all executive authority and answers to no one but themselves. Sitting at this table are 5 mayors, each in their own right, duly elected by the people to serve for the people, each carrying the same weight and responsibilities of the executive and legislative powers as the person sitting beside us and all with an equal vote. You say a single mayor provides better leadership as they are elected by the entire city. I argue that five elected representatives working together, talking through differences, fighting for what is right and creating a level playing field of fairness and equality, shows more leadership and demonstrates the fundamentals of our representative democracy. And that is exactly what you have here on this council. We on this Council have worked diligently these past 15 months to get Eastman on the better footing. We have invested in our infrastructure and added key pieces of equipment for public safety and city services. And utilized the capabilities and resiliency of our wonderful city workers to tackle more projects in house to save on paying outside contractors to do the same work. Saving tens of thousands of dollars in the process. If you review our 2023 financial audit, you would see that Eastman was dealing with a deficit of nearly \$340,000 at the end of 2023. As you can imagine, that is a significant hurdle to overcome as a new councilperson who assumed office in January 2024. But through hard work and tough decisions, we were able to pull Eastman out of that hole and based on all data to this point, ended 2024 with a positive balance sheet in our general, water, and sanitation funds, with room to add much needed human capital to our depleted police and fire departments. This is what leaders do. They identify a problem, find solutions, and make the hard decisions, when necessary, even if it may not be politically beneficial. I stand behind each one of our councilpersons at this table. I thank them for their selfless service to this community. I stand by and support our city manager and the thankless job he is tasked with doing. It is a daunting responsibility, and we are honored and grateful to have Doctor Barron leading in that capacity. And I stand behind each and every one of our city employees who dedicate their time, energy, and effort into making Eastman a better community. Thank you, Mr. Coleman. From the bottom of my heart, with all honor and respect, I sincerely appreciate all you have done for this community. You have been a true ambassador for Eastman and Dodge County throughout your career in politics. But the people in Eastman, in my view, do not want to return to the old ways of politics where they feel things are being done in secret or they perceive it as only for the benefit of some. They want to see openness and transparency where the light shines into all dark corners of politics and works for the benefit of all. And we on this Council are working each and every day to make that a reality. I implore for you and everyone in this community to choose to work with us in the light and not against us in the shadows, and Eastman will be all the better for it. And I thank you to each and every one of y'all that are here today. I thank y'all for what y'all do to help make it better.

Councilor Peacock thanked Snyder for making his comments.

**On a motion from Councilor Peacock, a second from Councilor Sheffield, and a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned.**

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CHAIRMAN

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CITY CLERK