

**May 28, 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, Dwayne Burney, Debra Sheffield, and Mark Peacock. Others present were City Manager Spencer Barron, Attorneys Rita Llop and Chris Gordon, Police Chief Billy Cooper, City Clerk April Sheffield, Assistant City Manager Dayna Winslette, Fire Chief Derl Maxwell, and City Inspector Jack White. Other department heads and employees present were Matt McDaniel, Brandon Brisco, Wynnon Pittman, Josh King, and Gerald Fordham. Downtown Development Authority members present were Andrea McCranie, Loraine Aguayo, Willie Mae Nash, Mark Studstill, and Paula McCain. Those present from the community were Susan Coffee, Derek Hutchinson, Doug Bovee and Glenn Smith from Hive Construction, Ken Lowery, Dr. Clay Oliver, Chris Holder, and Tiffany Fordham.

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Snyder.

The invocation was given by Councilor Burney.

Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

**On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Burney, the agenda was unanimously amended to add two more items: Clay Oliver to the #2 spot and Susan Coffee in the #3 spot. All other items have shifted down as well as the Executive session was moved to the end of the agenda. The amended agenda was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Williams.**

**APPROVE MINUTES:**

**A motion was made by Councilor Burney and seconded by Councilor Peacock to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2025, regular meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**NO UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**APPROVE BILLS:**

**On a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Peacock, the bills for May 13 - 28, 2025, were unanimously approved.**

**DR. CLAY OLIVER:**

Dr. Oliver comes forward to request a road closure on Main Street between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He is having an event at the Outdoor Venue on Sunday, June 8, 2025. This event will be from 6 – 9 PM and is for Jackie Dotson and her family as she battles breast cancer once again. Her husband was the former pastor at Grace Baptist Church for many years. There will be several different groups providing music including First Baptist Eastman and Cochran. There will be a raffle along with a silent auction. They are expecting several kids considering Jackie's involvement with the children in the area. Chief Cooper will put in the request for the train to slow down. **With no objections, the council voted unanimously to allow the road closure on that section of Main Street from 5 – 10 PM on Sunday, June 8, 2025. This vote came after a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Burney.**

**SUSAN COFFEE:**

Ms. Coffee came forward to discuss an issue with the flooding of her property after the massive rain that came the evening before. But because of the great response from Manager Barron, the police and fire department, and several of the other department heads, she feels that after 12 years she has finally been heard. She has had a problem with that area ever since the treatment plant was moved to the Rhine Highway and they ran a line down by her property. After this morning, she feels that they have come to an agreement with the city to share the expense to finally get this problem solved. She had originally intended to complain but instead, was thankful to the city for rallying the troops to come together. Manager Barron feels confident that Wynnon has or will come up with a solution to get the area under control.

**RESCHEDULE JUNE 23, 2025 COUNCIL MEETING:**

Because of the council members attending the GMA Conference in Savannah, the meeting was rescheduled for Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 6:00 PM. This change was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.

**SECURITY AT THE CLUB:**

Manager Barron states that the city has put hundreds of thousands of dollars into the Club. Dayna is currently working on grants for it right now in order to move forward with it as a city park. However, a security system is desperately needed. Chris Holder has put together a plan to take place in six phases. **The grand total from Holder Maximum Security comes to \$81,807.78.** This includes hard drives, cameras, motion sensors, and mag locks to make it one of the safest city parks. That is the goal. Chris comes forward to explain the different phases. The first phase is going in and getting all of the network racks up and groundwork done. There will be access points for the WIFI, cameras, badge readers, and mag locks on the doors. He will also be updating the actual burglar alarm. All entrances to the buildings will be covered as well as the surrounding area. Councilor Peacock asks where the data storage will actually be at. Chris says it won't be on a cloud-based system. It will be in Maya's office. Peacock feels that Chief Cooper needs to have all of that. Hard drives are too vulnerable to steal. Manager Barron agrees with the cloud-based system even though it will be an added cost. Councilor Snyder asks about a timeline with going from phase to phase. Depending on supply, it would be basically a month and a half according to Holder. Once all of the equipment arrives, it will take them about 45 days to complete the project. Snyder is concerned about the cost and how to pay for it if all of the equipment is really needed. Barron's opinion is to pay for it out of SPLOST. However, keep in mind that some other things may be sacrificed in order to get this park going.

There was a public comment from Ken Lowery. He is all for the cameras. You can't have enough in a park. Hold anyone accountable that damages the property and make them pay for it.

**The council unanimously voted to move forward with the camera system on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Williams.**

**APPROVE PEST CONTROL FOR CITY PROPERTIES:**

The city received four bids for a year contract of pest control for the City Hall, both Fire Departments, Police Department, Shop, Karate building, and all buildings at the Club. The bids came in as an annual price of **\$1640 for Bug House**, \$1800 for White and Lavendar, \$2600 for 4K Pest Solutions, and \$3220 for Knox Pest Control. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second from Councilor Burney, Bug House was unanimously awarded the contract.**

**FIRST READING OF THE AMENDED FIRE ORDINANCE:**

Chief Maxwell approached to explain the changes. There have previously been questions about what could or could not be burnt in the city. He, Chief Cooper, and Attorney Llop met together to take care of what one sentence in the current ordinance could not. The new ordinance addresses the distance from a structure in terms of grilling, fire pits, etc. They did use another city's ordinance to model by. They now have the option to have some discretionary power if something does come up. Violations will be considered misdemeanors and can be handled in municipal court. Councilor Burney asks how we plan on getting it out to the public. Barron says that it will go on the website, the paper, and social media. Copies will be available for the public.

Councilor Snyder asks about the event scheduled for the new fire truck. On June 7 at 10 am, there will be a celebration to honor the new fire truck. It will be a "Push-in Event" and all of the public is invited to come by and see it. There will be a big event with food and games and Sparky the Fire Dog.

**On a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Williams, the first reading of the amended fire ordinance was unanimously approved.**

**FIRST READING OF THE AMENDED YARD WASTE ORDINANCE:**

Gerald Fordham came forward to explain what he and Attorney Llop have been working on. Basically, biodegradable bags were taken out, the limb pile sizes were made bigger, and a few other changes. It also addresses abandoning furniture and other items. The ability to charge fees or fines was also added. The exact fees are not included in the ordinance but kept on file in the clerk's office so that the council can amend them as needed. He will keep records of all warnings, fines, and violations. Verbal and written warnings will be issued first. Barron reminds everyone that the reason for this is so we can continue with the limb and leaf pickup and still follow all of EPD's requirements. **Councilor Peacock made the motion to proceed with the ordinance. Councilor Sheffield seconded and all approved.**

**PURCHASE OF A TRUCK FOR THE STREET DEPARTMENT:**

Currently, the street department is working with a 2021 F-150 with low mileage and in good condition. A 2016 F-150 that was previously the fire chief's truck that has over 100K miles and has already had a timing chain replacement. There is a 2006 F-150 that was previously an investigator's truck in years past. The transmission in it has slipped. The police seized 2000 Ford Ranger needs a new front end with 300K miles but is still in better shape than the other Ranger that is being used as the mosquito truck. The bug truck has 201K miles and is leaking 2 quarts of oil every week out of the rear main seal. Gerald has tried to work on them as much as possible, but it leaves the street department without a vehicle. Barron states that it is past time to get new vehicles and he suggests two. The department is no longer effective due to pairing people up because of vehicles. Gerald presented several options including a new Dodge and a new Chevrolet. He also got prices of several used ones with Goodman Auto Sales and also a dealership in Wrens. Wrens has a work truck with a lift gate that would be extremely beneficial even though it has some miles on it. Snyder asks what the plans are if new vehicles are purchased. Gerald suggests getting rid of the current Ranger and replacing it with the other and also retire the Black F-150 because it is not sensible to fix. Barron assures the council that the city has the money in SPLOST currently to go ahead and do this, and it seems to be a priority. Since Gerald is currently acting as the mechanic, Snyder feels that Gerald would know what he is looking for and trusts his judgement. Several of the council members are concerned about buying all used vehicles and one with some sort of warranty. Gerald and Jack and Brandon assured the council that purchasing 2 used vehicles would be perfectly fine with the wear and tear that the street department will give it. They have had good luck with used vehicles in the past. Jack reminds them of the need for a lift also. Mark suggests one new and then the used diesel that has the lift gate. Debra suggests getting the costs of all needs and prioritize from there. Councilor Burney asks that they continue to look for some more used low mileage vehicles

for the near future, even after these two trucks are purchased. Barron comments that other cities recommend going with new vehicles due to a guaranteed life span with a warranty. Snyder says he is deferring to Gerald and Brandon in this case. **After much discussion, Councilor Peacock makes a motion to go with the 2013 Dodge Ram with the lift gate at \$15K and the 2012 4x4 Chevrolet at \$10K. The motion was seconded by Councilor Burney and approved by all.**

**PURCHASE OF A DUMP TRUCK FOR THE TREATMENT PLANT:**

Wynnon Pittman and Matt McDaniel present the statistics for this request. The purpose of investing in a dump truck is mainly to help the plant with hauling their sludge. That process is currently contracted out when they can find someone and is associated with a high cost. With the money spent and several employees having already obtained the CDL, it would save the city money by purchasing a used dump truck to take over the hauling again. They have been looking around for a while. There is one locally from David Oxley that Wynnon, Gerald, and Jack have gone and looked at that is in pretty good shape. They have seen what it can do and how it operates. Wynnon has looked outside of the area for other opportunities and finds this to be the best deal. Once the plant gets caught up with the sludge haul, they will only use it maybe twice a week. It would then be available for the street or water to use for hauling rocks, dirt, etc. When asked why the former council sold the dump truck that the plant had, Matt said that the bed was rotten and was deemed a safety hazard. He is currently paying \$300 a load to be hauled and \$150 for the rental. It is a little less than \$2400 a month. Gerald came forward to attest to the truck being in great mechanical condition. If the decision to purchase is approved, the current owner will put new brakes on the rear along with eight new tires. He will also install a new metal floor. Councilor Peacock asks for Mark Studstill's opinion. Studstill commented that the current owner of this truck is also the person that bought the old dump truck that the city sold which was in very bad shape. He states that hauling sludge is a very corrosive environment. He has supplied the containers in the past several years and it will ruin one in about a year. Matt says that he is looking into getting some liners to use to help save the integrity of the bed. Jack suggests a synthetic liner for about \$5K. Barron's opinion is to buy the truck because it will save the city money in the long run. He would prefer a new one but that is not feasible at the moment. Councilor Peacock reminds them that in the previous request, they had almost agreed to buy a new truck at \$40K+ and voted for the used instead. That money saved can go towards this dump truck and will make it a wash since this truck's asking price is \$35K. **The council unanimously approved the purchase of the 2000 Volvo dump truck for \$35K. This vote came on a motion from Councilor Burney and seconded by Councilor Williams.**

**PLANNING & ZONING:**

**HIVE CONSTRUCTION: PLANS FOR NEW SUBDIVISION IN NORTH LAKES AREA:**

Mr. Bovee from Hive Construction applied for approval of preliminary plans for a subdivision in the North Lakes area adjacent to Orphans Cemetery Road and North Lakes Drive. The Planning & Zoning Board has accepted the application, held the required public hearing, agreed that all requirements in the city code have been met and therefore approved the preliminary application. It now comes before the council for their approval which would allow Hive Construction to continue their investment in the next phase with is all environmental studies, infrastructure, etc. There have been several concerns noted by the residents in the proposed area. When asked for public comments, Ken Lowery came forward to voice his concerns. He stated that he has attended at least 5 meetings concerning this subdivision or one similar. The last P&Z meeting was the best one. His neighborhood has previously stated their dislike for rezoning the area and does not want a subdivision there. They have concerns about traffic, drainage, subsidized housing or apartment complexes. However, he was assured by Mr. Bovee last night that his intentions are to build brick houses with a minimum of 1700 sq feet of heated space. He has built the same types of homes in both Cochran and Hawkinsville. Mr. Lowery states that he hopes

that Mr. Bovee does what he has promised and most of the neighborhood would be okay with the development except for the road he intends to connect to Woodlakes Drive. Councilor Snyder says this preliminary plan abides by code and fire regulations and that is what they must base their decision on. **Councilor Peacock agrees and makes a motion to approve. Councilor Sheffield seconded the motion, and all members approved.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION – PROPERTY MATTERS:**

The Eastman DDA called their meeting to order and then voted to go into executive session. At that time, the Eastman City Council went into executive session with the DDA to discuss property matters on a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Williams.

Upon exiting the executive session, Councilor Peacock made the motion with a second from Councilor Burney to enter back into regular session. No other action was taken.

The City Manager had nothing to report.

There was also no other business from the council.

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

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CHAIRMAN

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CITY CLERK