

January 9, 2023

The Eastman City Council met in a regular scheduled meeting on the above date at 6:00 p.m. The following members were present: Raymond Mullis, Buddy Pittman, Sebrina Williams, Ronnie Woodard and Jermayne Hamilton. Others present were City Attorney Rita Llop, Police Chief Billy Cooper, Fire Lieutenant Mark Sheffield, City Manager Spencer Barron, City Clerk April Sheffield, City Inspector Jack White, Engineer Jesse Bearden and Dayna Winslette. Other city employees present were Whitney Rogers, Valerie Butler, and Officer Chris Screws. Present from the community were County Commissioner Sharon Cobb Flanagan, Tad Coleman, Dwayne Conley, Tracy Cooper, Graham Law, Charlotte Hopkins, Emory Tuff, John Battle, and Opera Jordan. Tim Ingram was also present.

The meeting was called to order by City Manager Barron.

Invocation was given by Councilor Hamilton.

Pledge of Allegiance.

APPOINT CHAIRMAN:

CITY MANAGER BARRON: Our first order of business for the first meeting of the year is to appoint our chairman. So, at this point, I will entertain a motion from our council to appoint a chairman of the Eastman City Council.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: I vote Buddy Pittman for the Chairman.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: We need a second.

COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Second.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: I have a second. All in favor, please raise your hand.

APPOINT VICE-CHAIRMAN:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is to appoint a vice-chairman. The floor is open for nominations for vice-chairman.

COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: I nominate Raymond Mullis as vice-chair.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: We have a nomination from Ms. Sebrina for vice-chairman. Do I hear a second on that?

COUNCILOR WOODARD: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Okay, have a motion and a second for Raymond Mullis. All in favor, show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

APPOINT CHAPLAIN:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is to appoint a chaplain. I'll open the floor for nominations for chaplain.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: I nominate Jermayne Hamilton.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a nomination for Jermayne Hamilton. I need a second on that.

COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: I have a second from Ms. Sebrina. All in favor of having Jermayne Hamilton as chaplain, show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

APPOINT ATTORNEY:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next is to appoint the city attorney. I will open the floor for nominations.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: I nominate Ms. Rita.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: I have a nomination for Ms. Rita Llop. I need a second.

COUNCILOR WOODARD: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Second from Councilman Woodard. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

APPOINT RECORDERS COURT JUDGE:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next is to appoint Recorder's Court judge. I'll open the floor for nominations.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: I have spoken with Joey Marchant. He is interested in the position if the council still sees fit to have him serve.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: I nominate Joey Marchant then.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: I have a nomination for Joey Marchant for Recorder's Court judge. I will need a second for that.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Councilman Hamilton. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

SWEAR IN NEW POLICE CHIEF:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next is to swear in our new police chief. It's been a long time since we have done this.

ATTORNEY LLOP: Mr. Cooper, if you will raise your right hand. *Do you William P. Cooper swear or affirm that you are not incumbent in any office in this state, of the United States, or any foreign state? And should you seek any office of trust, your separation from the City of Eastman will be instant. You are not beholden to any unaccounted-for public monies due to this or any other State, or any political subdivision. And you are qualified to hold the office to which you are appointed so long as you are employed with the city. That you will support or defend the Constitution of the United States of America and the Constitution of the State of Georgia. And will faithfully perform and discharge the duties of your position conscientiously, without malice or partiality, to the best of your ability. You agree to affirm, obey, adhere to, and uphold, to enforce the laws of the State of Georgia, and the United State of America at all times. And you will bear true faith and allegiance to the Governor of the State of Georgia, the Chief of Police for the Eastman Police Department according to law. So help you God.*

CHIEF COOPER: *I do, so help me God.*

ATTORNEY LLOP: Thank you. I will have a written oath for you to sign after the meeting. Thank you.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Folks, please welcome our new police chief, Mr. Billy Cooper.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is to approve the agenda.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: We have one addition. Ms. Tuff would like to address the council with a request tonight.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Just one addition and no deletions. Alright I need a motion then to amend the agenda and adding #11, Ms. Tuff to address council.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: We've got a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Ms. Sebrina. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous. And now I reckon I need a motion to approve the amended agenda as it stands now.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a motion from Councilman Mullis to approve the amended agenda. I need a second.

COUNCILOR WOODARD: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Councilman Mullis. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is to approve the minutes of the December 27, 2022, regular meeting. Y'all got those in your packets over the weekend. Any questions or anything about them? If not, then I need a motion to approve the minutes of the December 27, 2022, regular meeting.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Councilman Hamilton. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

SUNSET PARK:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: First item under unfinished business is Sunset Park.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: If we can, can we go ahead and move Sunset Park to the work session that we have Thursday. Paul couldn't be here tonight, so he asked if I would present it to you.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: And then we will discuss all of this equipment and costs and stuff and things? Yeah, that will be fine. Alright, well I reckon we need a motion to take Sunset Park and add it to #2 the work session.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a motion from Councilman Mullis. Need a second.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Councilman Hamilton. All in favor of moving Sunset Park to the work session, show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

WORK SESSION FOR DEBRIS AND GARBAGE CONTRACTS:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is a work session for debris and garbage contracts. I know at the other meeting we have talked, and we have advertised for garbage and trash pickup, debris pickup. And we have all of those in and you have those in front of you. In order to hopefully make this smooth and as quick as possible, I would like to ask council that we can hopefully set a work session up for Thursday afternoon at 3:00. I think that is when the representatives from Ryland, GFL, Dwayne, and Graham & Studstill can all be here Thursday afternoon at 3:00. So we can have a work session this Thursday at 3:00. And I reckon we need to add that it's for debris and garbage and Sunset Park. Is that good with y'all? I sure hope it is.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: 3:30?

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Everybody is going to be here at 3:00 so we can start going through everything.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: That is when everyone agreed to be available.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: I can be here at 3:15.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Alright. Are y'all good with that? Alright, I need a motion to have a work session this Thursday, January 12 at 3PM.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a motion. I need a second.

COUNCILOR WOODARD: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Councilman Woodard. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS:**MONTHLY FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT:**

LIEUTENANT SHEFFIELD: We had a grand total of 69 calls, 49 inside the city limits and 20 outside the city limits. Total of 1 stove fire, 2 electrical fires, 1 storage building fire. We had 4 brush fires and 2 down power lines. We had 13 medical calls, 11 wrecks, 5 fire alarms, 11 lift assists, and 2 power lines or trees down.

MONTHLY POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT:

POLICE CHIEF COOPER: We used 992 gallons of gas, answered 1,491 calls, and had 28 traffic accidents.

APPROVE MONTHLY BILLS:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is to approve the monthly bills for December 27 – January 9. I think y'all have got those in your packet. Do you have any questions about them? If not, I need a motion to approve the monthly bills for December 27 – January 9.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: We have a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Second from Councilwoman Williams. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

APPOINT ELECTION SUPERINTENDENT:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is to appoint an election superintendent.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: We have used James in the past. I enjoyed that aspect because he does it every day. But now, that is at the discretion of council, too. What is y'all's preference. Do you want to try to handle it in house? Neither April, nor I have ever been through an election. But there is a first.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: What is your suggestion?

CITY MANAGER BARRON: My suggestion is that you pay James Callier to do it.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: I make a motion we pay James to do it.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: Just because he is up to date on training, and he handles it on every major election. Or maybe I should ask for permission to negotiate a rate to hire James Callier and to appoint him as election superintendent.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: All of this has got to be done by the end of January.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: Is there a law that requires it?

CITY CLERK SHEFFIELD: We have to advertise by the end of January. James has already agreed to, but I didn't volunteer to without council.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: I am sure he will be reasonable.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: We have a motion on the floor to appoint James Callier as our election superintendent. Council, do y'all have any other questions?

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: Are his previous fees on record?

CITY CLERK SHEFFIELD: They are but I can't remember the amount off the top of my head.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: If I remember right, somewhere in the back of my brain, it's around 2 or 3 thousand dollars.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: I know it is probably cheaper to pay him than to send me to the training. That would just be my assessment. Not to mention, the liability involved. If the amount is something outrageous, I will come back to you.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: I need a second then.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Councilman Hamilton. All in favor of James Callier being our election superintendent, show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

SET QUALIFYING FEES:

COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN: Next is set qualifying fees.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: I recommend they stay the same.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Which has been \$90 per election per seat. Council, any other questions about that? If not, I need a motion to set qualifying fees at \$90 per office.

COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN: We got a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

COUNCIL MEMBER HAMILTON: Second.

COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN: We have a second Councilman Hamilton. All in favor by show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

APPOINT ABSENTEE BALLOT CLERK:

COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN: Next is appoint an absentee ballot clerk.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: I recommend you appoint April Sheffield. I think we can handle obtaining and storing the absentee ballots in accordance with Mr. Callier's instructions.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Alright, we have a suggestion from Spence to appoint April Sheffield as our absentee ballot clerk.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: I make a motion for that.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Alright, I have a motion for April Sheffield to be ballot clerk. Questions or anything? Alright, I need a second.

COUNCILOR WILLIAMS: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Councilwoman Williams. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

APPOINT AUDITOR:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is appoint an auditor. This is not an election auditor. This is our actual city auditor. Frank Erwin has been doing it for the last 3,6,7,8, whenever. I think he is one of the only auditors that does governments in town. We had gotten to where we were doing this in 3-year terms instead of every year. That way, with last years audit, he can be working on that now. I will entertain a motion to appoint Frank Erwin as our city auditor for another 3-year term.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: I have a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Got a second from Councilman Hamilton. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

RESCHEDULE JANUARY 23 MEETING:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is to reschedule the January 23 council meeting because of the Cities United Summit training sessions and all in Atlanta. That is January 23. And I think what we normally try to do is move it to Thursday afterward, which would be January 26. Are y'all good with that? Alright, I need a motion then to reschedule the January 23 meeting to January 26 at normal time, 6PM.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: I have a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Councilman Hamilton. All in favor by show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is the intergovernmental agreement.

POLICE CHIEF COOPER: This is basically an MOU between the City of Eastman, the Sheriff's Department, the hospital, and also the schools. It will cover us as officers if something were to happen and we are not in our jurisdiction because our schools and hospital are actually on property in the county not the city. It also covers the hospital and the schools if they need emergency help. It gives us the right to go and perform our job until the sheriff's department can take over because they are so far out sometimes.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Council, do y'all have any questions? I know in the past we have had some incidences at the hospital where that is county property and there is someone up there tearing the place up. They call the police department, and the police department is not technically in their jurisdiction and the sheriff's deputy may be down in Rhine or Chester somewhere and can't get there. So, this will cover them. And if y'all read this thing, the sheriff will deputize all of the city police officers and the chief. And this is not deputizing them for them to be calling them to all of the sheriff's calls and everything. It is just for them to go when they need to go to the school building or an emergency at the hospital.

CHIEF COOPER: It only pertains to those locations.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: They are covered by our workers comp and insurance. So if anything happens, they are covered under it. I think talking with LaDon and all that he is okay with this. Brian is on board, and he will come as soon as Chief Cooper calls him and will deputize everybody. That is as soon as everybody signs this thing.

CHIEF COOPER: This is basically just to keep people safe. If something was to happen at either the hospital or the schools and it was going to take them 20 or 30 minutes to get there, you would hate for us to be sitting there waiting or standing by 100 feet away and not being able to do anything legally.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: This is what this is for. Anybody have any questions? If not, then I will entertain a motion to approve this intergovernmental agreement upon all of the signatures and we will move forward.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Councilman Hamilton. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

DDA POSITIONS:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next on the agenda is the DDA positions.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: We have 2 positions opening up in February I believe. Mr. Mark Doss and Mr. Gene Dennis. It has been our custom in the past with permission from council to advertise for those slots.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Council, do y'all have any questions? If not, then I will entertain a motion to advertise for 2 becoming open DDA positions for the City of Eastman.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: We will have the applications on the city webpage. Or also you could stop by city hall and pick up an application.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: Second.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Have a second from Councilman Hamilton. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous. Advertise away.

CITY CLERK SHEFFIELD: How long would you like to advertise for?

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: A couple of weeks.

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: 2 weeks.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: That will give us plenty of time to go through them and give us all time to go through them and see.

CITY CLERK SHEFFIELD: Possibly have the applications for you at the next council meeting and then vote on them at the first meeting in February?

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: That will probably work. If you get them in the paper Wednesday, or tomorrow, then come out and do it for 2 weeks. Because actually the next council meeting will be Thursday after that. That will give us enough time to.

CITY CLERK SHEFFIELD: And that way they will be in place by the end of February.

EMORY TUFF:

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Next is Ms. Tuff to address council.

EMORY TUFF: Good evening. I spoke with y'all some time ago about the cleaning of the ditch that is located at 5532 Norman Street here in Eastman Ga. The trees were moved from the ditch, and it was cleaned. And it is open now. It would be a benefit to the city as well as the neighborhood to put drainage lines or cement pipes to run down that line and cover them up where that water drains back out. When they did the trees, they were in the neighborhood of that whole area. They discovered that there are areas that have never been done before. It's a whole opening that goes all of the way to Coleman Paint and Body. In that area where the drainage ditch is, is on my property. And I want to know if the city will put the drainage ditches in and cover it to give me back access more to my property. Because the water or the rain has totally corroded it out. They cleaned it in a way for the water to drain in a way for this last rain we had. But it would be beneficial to the city if the pipes were there to take that water all the way back down to that part to join into that. I call it a little pond, but I don't know what that would be back there. But it holds all of that water that is in that neighborhood. I think you (*Spence*) has rode there and saw it. And I know that Jack has seen it. It opens up in a way that goes behind the auto part place. And then there is another section of it that drains into the back of the fish market the way it goes out. All of that water has a way of coming down that neighborhood. That is what I am asking the city. If it is possible to put those pipes there and cover it up where that water will go completely off, and I can go ahead and do some building on that property.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: So what she is explaining is that after y'all approved the excavator and the mulching head, we've been going around and cleaning these drainage ditches. In the process of doing that, we found a whole network of historical ditches that I couldn't tell you when they were put in. Probably 40 or 50 years ago. But one of those ditches, and it is essential to get the water out of Eastman and off of the road, cuts through her property as it meanders or drains through that network carrying it out of town. Ms. Tuff is asking, since it is to the city's benefit, if we can put a pipe in there where she can get more use out of her property.

EMORY TUFF: Right, because like you said, that area is maybe 80 or 90 years old

CITY MANAGER BARRON: So I explained to her that as city manager, I couldn't do that. It is above my paygrade. But some ditches are covered in the city and some ditches are not covered. Now how in the past that was chosen to be done, I assume it was by council. If not, I assume it is within the power of the council to do it. But that is going to be something that y'all are going to have to decide. If y'all are going to cover that ditch or not. Did you get an estimate on that pipe?

EMORY TUFF: I know that it is about or will take about anywhere from 7 to 8 pipes.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Alright, why don't y'all look at it and see what it will cost to do it. And in the process of that, will that alleviate anything?

CITY MANAGER BARRON: I don't know. How do you decide whose ditches you fill with pipe and whose you don't? That also becomes an issue. Because with every ditch I tell you, we can go broke doing it. There are probably places where we need to do it and where we have done it in the past. But how that was decided among this body in the past, I don't know. And it goes back that we have easements on some of these ditches. Some of them we still don't. Rita, we said this year that we were going to work on getting formalized easements from the property owners.

ATTORNEY LLOP: I don't recall whether we have an easement on her property but if you do that, we will need one.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: And it would be an absolute calamity if that ditch stops up. I can go ahead and tell you. It would mess up several houses. We need to work through that. If the council will okay it, we can take Jesse and Jack and go up there and do some measuring and some figuring, if y'all will approve it.

COUNCILOR PITTMAN: Alright, y'all got any issues with them doing that?

COUNCILOR MULLIS: No, I think it's a good idea. Do we need a motion?

ATTORNEY LLOP: Well, you want some additional information on that. So, why don't you just table that until the next meeting? Or whenever we can get the information. And I will check on the easement.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:

CITY MANAGER BARRON: I just want to remind everyone that we do have an opening on the planning and zoning committee if anyone is interested in getting involved in municipal government. We would greatly appreciate it. Please let us know if you have any questions.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: Who come off?

CITY CLERK SHEFFIELD: Deborah

CITY MANAGER BARRON: Ms. Deborah. And we have been told that they may be another vacancy on it too. So we really may be 2 down in the coming month or two.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: Doesn't that come from each person's district?

CITY MANAGER BARRON: Yes Sir. It is Mr. Jermayne Hamilton's district is the opening right now. If y'all know anybody that is interested, we really, really need one, possibly two on that committee.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: Who would the other one be?

CITY MANAGER BARRON: I would rather not say until it is official.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: Okay, sounds good to me.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: Nothing further from the city manager.

OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:

COUNCILOR HAMILTON: I just want to thank Mr. Jack for all of the hard work he has done in the city. Everybody has done hard work, but I have been watching Mr. Jack work and he does a great job. So, I want to thank you.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: If anybody hasn't been up in front of the Sidetrack Café today, you need to go up there and see what is there. It has been redone. As far as I know, we are going to do the whole downtown like that, right.

CITY MANAGER BARRON: Yes Sir. And the store owners will be notified before we close so they will be able to plan accordingly.

OPERA JORDAN: It looks good.

COUNCILOR MULLIS: How did Wynnon do with this?

CITY MANAGER BARRON: It might have caused a few problems and we apologize to Wynnon and Sidetrack. But hopefully we won't have to do this again for another 5 – 10 years.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

OPERA JORDAN: I want to tell the city council and Mr. Jack that I am very grateful for the good job that y'all are doing around the city. It is looking better, and it is looking good. And I appreciate y'all so much.

COUNCILORS: Thank you.

EMORY TUFF: Thank you all. (claps) The reason I said it was 80 years for the paving of that street. And I still commend y'all on that. And I commend Mr. Jack for getting the trees up and he did.

JOHN BATTLE: I would just like to say that we are inviting all citizens on Monday, January 16 at 1PM. The MLK parade will take place in Eastman. And we are expecting our new police chief to look tall like he did tonight. We are inviting all to come out and participate. It is for the citizens and the surrounding counties to support the MLK parade. And be safe.

ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion from Councilor Mullis and a second from Councilor Woodard, the meeting was adjourned.

CHAIRMAN

CITY CLERK