

March 25, 2024

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, Mark Peacock, and Jermayne Hamilton. Others present were City Manager Spencer Barron, City Clerk April Sheffield, City Attorney Rita Llop, City Inspector Jack White, Administrative Assistant Dayna Winslette, Fire Chief Scotty Whitten, and Police Chief Billy Cooper. Audience members included EM Harrington III, John Battle, Vicki Cannington, Mary Brown, Lillie Pitts, Bertha Johnson, Dwayne Conley, and Johnzelle Woodard.

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Snyder.

Invocation was given by Councilor Hamilton.

Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

No changes were made to the agenda. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock, a second from Councilor Hamilton, and a unanimous vote, the agenda was approved.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The regular meeting minutes for the March 11, 2024, were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Williams and a second from Councilor Hamilton.

NO UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

SKINNERTOWN MEMORIAL WALK:

It will held Saturday, May 11, 2024. Warmup @ 8:30 AM. It will conclude with a 1PM – 5PM Family Community Day at 829 Mount Moriah Street. They have attached the route they will walk, which is down Main Street, Mt. Moriah Street and making a loop. Chief Cooper says that he is good with the route. They have never had any problems with this event in the past. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second from Councilor Hamilton, the council unanimously approved this event.**

Lillie Ann Pitts arrived just after the vote and spoke on behalf of the event. The Community Walk was created to honor those in the community who had lost loved ones. It was started around 2015 or 2016 when Ms. Pitts lost her mother.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH GROUNDED USE OF THE CLUB:

Councilor Peacock spoke on behalf of the Grounded pastor of FBC, Noah Hughes. They would like to use to front grounds of The Club for some ultimate frisbee. It would be April 13, from 6:30 – 8:30 PM. They have spoken to Maya and her board is in favor with the use because they have no intention of using anything other than the front grounds. **On a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Hamilton, the event was unanimously approved.**

DODGE COUNTY EASTMAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY APPLICATION:

One application was received by the deadline. Another was sent in time but was blocked in an email and therefore not received until the day of the meeting. It had been sent to two of the council members by text. (Later verified by the IT department.) Because of this issue, the council wanted more time to look over both of the applications. **It was unanimously decided to postpone the decision until the next meeting on a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Peacock.**

VIA FACEBOOK:

Jodi Reddock commented on Facebook against the postponement of the decision and asked why the council was accepting another application when the due date had already passed. Manager Barron explained that an applicant had informed the council that they had sent in an application to the city clerk. However, the city clerk cannot find record of it in her email. A decision was made to accept it from the text message and make a final vote on April 8 in order to take part in the DCEDA meeting on the 9th.

Ms. Reddock continues to comment on this subject throughout the meeting. Manager Barron explains that the council received the application by the due date, but the manager and the clerk did not. And yes, there were specific instructions on how to turn in the application. *(It was later found out that the proper procedure was followed but an IT issue blocked the incoming email.)*

SECOND READING OF THE FAULK ANNEXATION ORDINANCE:

The Dodge County Board of Commissioners have sent their letter approving the annexation. Everything is in order. On a motion from Councilor Williams and a second from Councilor Hamilton, the annexation ordinance of the Faulk property was unanimously approved.

FIRST READING OF THE SHEFFIELD ANNEXATION ORDINANCE:

We have a petition from Reggie and Ellen Sheffield to annex their North Lakes properties into the city. Everyone including the city attorney has reviewed the petition. The first step is to have the first reading of the ordinance and then send the letter to the county along with notice to the planning & zoning board. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton, it was unanimously approved to move forward with the annexation.**

RESOLUTION TO REFER SHEFFIELD ANNEXATION TO PLANNING & ZONING:

All discussion has already transpired in the above topic. **The resolution is unanimously approved to be sent to P&Z on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

MEMORIAL DAY CELEBRATION:

The American Legion has requested to move their Memorial Day celebration from the old courthouse to Veterans Park. They have also requested for us to close the 'off-ramp' from the bypass/Hwy 341 coming into town. Chief Cooper does not have a problem with this and says they will be there if needed. Manager Barron says the he will get police, fire, and street department involved to do the barricading, etc. He wants to support our veterans if the council approves it. **The Memorial Day Celebration was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

LIMB/LEAF BIDS:

There was one submittal from AKA Tree Service, Jason Finley, 4104 W. White Road, Oakwood, GA 30566. Manager Barron suggested to turn the bid over to the attorney's to go over line by line and see if it meets requirements. The package is over 11 pages. There are some referrals, explanations, and other things. Attorney Llop agrees to look over it and take it back to council on April 8. When asked, it was decided not to read the bid out loud until the entire package could be deciphered. **This was unanimously approved by council on a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Williams.**

PROPERTY & LIABILITY INSURANCE RENEWAL:

GIRMA, who has been our provider for the last several years, was the only company to turn in a proposal. The renewal was put out for bid and another company had looked into submitting a proposal but the closest they could get was around \$153,000 and chose not to submit. The 2023 total for GIRMA

was \$115,878 and the 2024 renewal cost is \$157,795. They had said to expect at least a 15% increase. Noted was that the amount of insured property and equipment had also increased significantly.

On a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second from Councilor Williams, the GIRMA insurance renewal was unanimously approved.

REGIONAL COMMISSION/HOUSING STUDY & GRANT APPLICATION:

After meeting with representatives from the Regional Commission, it was suggested to apply for a Georgia Workforce Housing Grant affiliated with the North Lakes Subdivision. Part of that would include a housing study. Georgia Tech has done those in the past. As part of this request, we would like to negotiate out a fee with Georgia Tech to do this study. It is up to \$2.5 million in infrastructure. On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton, it was unanimously approved to move forward.

APPROVE MONTHLY BILLS:

The bills for March 12 – 25, 2024, were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.

AIRPORT APPOINTMENT:

Councilor Hamilton publicly apologized to the Heart of GA Regional Authority for being unable to fulfill his duties to the Authority and resigned. Councilor Williams was unanimously selected to fill this position on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY APPLICATIONS:

The DDA had a member that removed themselves from the Authority. It was decided to open the position and request applications for two weeks. This was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.

14TH AVENUE PAVING BID:

Chad Hofstadter at Hofstadter & Associates for securing us another \$124,399.42 in potential additional paving money with a no match requirement. The general consensus is to pave 14th Avenue which was cut into on the previous CDBG project while replacing water lines. They would like to start at Page Street/Chester Hwy and pave up to Dorough Street. Depending upon the financial situation, some T-SPLOST could be used to help complete. Councilor Hamilton reminds Manager Barron not to forget the area on Page Street that needs repairing.

It is also requested to put this project out to bid along with the upcoming TIA projects and LMIG projects in order to get us the best pricing by using one contractor and doing them all together at one time.

There was a unanimous approval on a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Williams.

SCHEDULE ANY WORK SESSIONS OR CALLED MEETINGS IN APRIL:

It was unanimously decided to schedule a work session on Thursday, April 4 at 5 PM on a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Williams. No other sessions were scheduled due to conflicting schedules.

PEABODY STAGE – JOHN BATTLE:

Mr. Battle has discussed with Inspector White the situation. It was decided that last year's quotes were not any good and he would acquire some updated quotes and bring them back to Manager Barron to be able to move forward.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:

An update on the water meter project was given. It looks like we are past the 95% mark towards completion of the residential meters and have about 50% completed on the commercial meters. An update on the Bacon Heights CDBG project. Hoping that the engineer studies will be completed out by September and can be bid out by December. This particular project concerns the sewer issues. It does not address the drainage problems that were a part of a past CDBG project there. Everyone is aware of the drainage issue, and it is being looked into.

OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:

Councilor Hamilton would like everyone to know that the playground equipment at Sunset Park has been installed and the kids and the community have been able to enjoy it and are happy. Councilor Snyder thanks the County Manager for the new recycling project that they have started and reminds everyone to take note of the blue dumpsters for cardboard that have been placed around the city and county.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

John Battle says he has been approached about the changes of the outside water rates. He asks why or what is the difference since the water has already been there for years and it comes from the same distribution place when it is the same water. Councilor Snyder answers that the county residents are not paying any taxes that go towards the maintenance and upkeep of the lines going there. The council felt that this was the best way to rectify this in the best interests of the city. When Manager Barron mentions annexation into the city, Mr. Battle reminds them about annexing the Airport in and the Walmart area but did not agree to bring in the Edna Moore area. They get water but not sewer. Manager Barron says for them to get a petition together to annex in so the city can get them water and sewer out there. Mr. Battle feels that they should be grandfathered in.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

CHAIRMAN

CITY CLERK