

**March 28, 2022**

The Eastman City Council met in a regular scheduled meeting on the above date at 6:00 p.m. Members present were Buddy Pittman, Raymond Mullis, Sebrina Williams, Jermayne Hamilton, and Ronnie Woodard. Others present were City Manager Spencer Barron, City Engineer Jesse Bearden, City Clerk April Sheffield, Police Chief Becky Sheffield, Attorney Rita Llop, Parks and Recreation Coordinator Maya Clark. Present from the community were John Battle, The Club Chairperson Phil Bearden, and County Manager Conner Bearden.

All attendees practiced social distancing guidelines due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The meeting was called to order by Council Member Barron.

Invocation was given by Council Member Hamilton.

Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVE AGENDA:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** First item of business is to approve the agenda as it stands.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS: So moved.**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Have a motion from Councilman Mullis to approve the agenda. Council, is there anything else y'all want to add? If not, I need a second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Second.**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Got a second from Councilwoman Williams. All in favor show of hands? Motion carried unanimous.

**APPROVE MINUTES:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Next is to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2022, regular meeting.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS: So moved.**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Have a motion to approve the minutes. Council, is there any questions about them or did y'all see anything that needed respelling or anything? If not, I need a second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER WOODARD: Second.**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Have a second from Councilman Woodard. All in favor show of hands? Motion carried unanimous.

**NO UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**THE CLUB PROJECT:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Under new business, number 1 is The Club Project. I think most of you are aware, we met last week with several different architects that had sent in bids. We had some members of the Club here with Ms. Sebrina and myself, who sat on that committee. At this time, I will ask Mr. Bearden to come forward and give us their recommendation from the Club. Ms. Sebrina and I, I think we have the same group. And we will go from there.

**PHIL BEARDEN:** Good evening. I just want to say that before we were here, we had already perused these things and looked them over. They all looked really good. There was one that stood out the most and it was unanimous among our board members that looked and listened to this stuff. We would cast our vote for the Wood Engineering Firm to go forth with planning this project and moving forward with it.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** The Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions Group is who Ms. Sebrina and I, they impressed us the most also out of the ones that were there and presented also.

**PHIL BEARDEN:** The gentlemen did a great job presenting it. And with the prices and everything, that looked like the obvious choice.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** With that being said and with the recommendation from the Club board members, Ms. Sebrina and myself, I reckon we present to the Council that we would entertain a motion to hire Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions, Inc. group to do our planning for the Club park and all.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** So moved.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Have a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS:** Second.

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

**PROPERTY & CASUALTY INSURANCE BIDS:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Next on the agenda is property & casualty insurance bids.

**CITY ENGINEER BEARDEN:** Yes, we only received one response for insurance, and it was GIRMA, which we have used before. It is our property and casualty insurance and their rates for 2022 would actually go up \$12,584. But the majority of that is due to us absorbing the Club and adding newer vehicles and more vehicles that we have had to obtain.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** What's that total?

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** \$109,058 for 2022. And that is an increase of \$12,584 over last year.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** So, that was the only bid that we had. I will entertain a motion to select GIRMA for our property & casualty insurance coverage for a cost of \$109,058 and we will move forward with that.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** So moved.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Got a motion from Councilman Mullis. Council, do y'all have any other questions or anything? If not, I need a second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER HAMILTON:** Second.

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

**MAGNOLIA THEATER AWNING BIDS:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Next on the agenda is the Magnolia Theater awning bids.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Yes, I believe we are going to ask permission from the council to rebid it with more specifications and consultations with the Dodge Arts Guild. We only received one timely bid that met the requirements. I believe there is some discussion that we need to include more details and rebid with exactly what we wanted. If the council will let us do that. Rita, would that be your suggestion, since Rita is also on the Arts Guild?

**ATTORNEY LLOP:** Yes. The bid that was prepared did not have any specifications. We asked primarily for ideas from the people that sent in the bid. Even the person that sent it in late had some designs proposed. So, we probably just need to be a little more specific than I was in the original bid that ran last week or the week before and closed last Friday. With Council's permission, we will be a little bit more specific and bring it back to you.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Not a problem at all. Council, did y'all here all of that? Alright. I need a motion then to rebid the Magnolia Theater awnings again, with some more specific specifications, and materials, and building dynamics.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** Can I ask a question? Can we give, or do you know how you want it?

**ATTORNEY LLOP:** I am not an architect or an engineer, but I do want, well perhaps the sign and the awning should be bid together to tell you the truth. Because it does need a new sign. The theater needs a new sign, and we could have it bid separately, the sign and the awning separately. But it does need to be replaced and you do have to tie into the outdoor venue in how it looks. The design and both the awning and the sign. It is such a spectacular outdoor space with the curves and arches. Maybe it would be better to do that. To tell you the truth, maybe it would be better to do that with the sign and the awning. You could have it bid separately. Have them give a price for each. What we have gotten, the Sign Store in Macon, for example, was for a sign and an awning. When you look at the building, you do need a sign and an awning. And you kind of want to tie it into your outdoor venue. I would suggest that you authorize the sign and awning bids. You could look at them and see. The awning has been there quite a long time.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** That awning is about to fall off.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** We could sit down with representatives of the Arts Guild and a couple of city councilman. And also, Jack White, our building inspector, has done carpentry work also. He could give us some ideas too, maybe design it up the way that everyone wants.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** Well instead of getting bids now, and this is my opinion, why don't we go to them first and see what we want, instead of somebody coming and give us a bid and it may come back the same as the other bid, give them something that..

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** I think that is kind of what we are deciding on. We want to have a design specified and then we want to bid it out.

**ATTORNEY LLOP:** We want to give them specifics before, well in the bid. That is what we are asking permission to do. We will be more specific and put those specific specifications in the bid request.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Ideally, this is what we are wanting to do. We want to be able to give them a picture and bid that out, but we haven't found exactly what we want yet.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Do y'all want to try to come up with something in the next 2 weeks before the next meeting and see if we can come to a consensus on what we are looking for and then we can come back and approve to rebid stuff.

**COUNCIL MEMBER WOODARD:** Would it be out of line to have maybe the art classes at school? Have a contest.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Oh, that would be interesting. I hadn't even thought of that. Yeah, get them involved.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** I have seen some of them kids draw some pretty pictures.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Let's do that. We can reach out, if the council wants to. I think that is a great idea.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** Do I need to make a motion to table this?

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Can we have permission to ask the high school art class or any interested engineering students, they have a pretty significant engineering contingent now at the high school, to design possible ones and then bring those into the council?

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** That would be great.

**COUNCIL MEMBER HAMILTON:** I can definitely reach out and see if that is possible.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** That's right, you are involved in the school system.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** We don't need a motion, do we?

**ATTORNEY LLOP:** Well, you don't really need it. You are just not taking any action.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** We will just look at getting the art departments at the schools. How do you want the base of it to look, the sign and awnings?

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Let's get them in it and interested and see if they can help us with some ideas and how they want it to look. And then y'all weigh them out.

**COUNCIL MEMBER HAMILTON:** That's a great idea. Alright, Mr. Ronnie.

**APPROVE MONTHLY BILLS:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Next on the agenda is to approve the monthly bills for March 15 – March 28, 2022. I need a motion to approve the bills from March 15 – March 28..

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** So moved.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Have a motion from Councilman Mullis. Any questions about them? If not, I need a second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER WOODARD:** Second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Have a second from Councilman Woodard. All in favor show of hands? Motion carried unanimous.

**GA CITIES WEEK RESOLUTION:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Next on the agenda is the Georgia Cities Week Resolution.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Yes, GMA has declared April 24 – 30, 2022, as Georgia Cities Week. I believe that it is our customary activity to pass a resolution honoring that. So, we have one in your packet if you see fit to pass it.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** Is this where we have the kids come in and all that?

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** In the past, I believe we have had contests.

**CITY CLERK SHEFFIELD:** We just had one this past fall because they extended the date out with everything going on last year. This past fall we had the student council come and Chase also went around and organized some questions about history and took some pictures downtown and stuff. We have done meet and greets with commissioners and other people around town.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** So be thinking about some activities that you would like. We had the mock city council last year. I think that was a big success. Darci Rogers kind of led that from the high school. We had several come. We can plan to do that. I think we had an art contest, a scavenger hunt, and some kind of trivia.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** That was fun.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** That's in the next few weeks. You might can tie the art contest in with the theater and the front appearance of it.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** Well one thing that I like you see is that we had it down here and they wasn't but one or two council here. It was a lot better when we done it at the high school and all of the council was able to be there. I don't know about them, but I think each council got to ask questions.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** I will ask Dr. Long then if we can settle on a date and the schools and the board will let us. We can have it at the high school if that is what you are asking.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** Yes, ask their opinion now.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Yes, I would ask their opinion before any arrangements are made. So, make the request to the high school to have the mock city council meeting on the campus at the high school. I will find out and have you an answer by the next meeting.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** So y'all aren't having it here?

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** That's what we did last year in the morning, and there was hardly nobody here. No city councilman here but me. They asked some questions, boy!

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Now that was not the same as the city council meeting. That is just where the council folks went, and they had 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders asking all these things.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** I will reach out. I am sure that they have a government or a civics class. Between Jana and Darci, the council might could visit one of those classes and let them ask.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Now that ain't the same as before. We had it in the evening like this. We filled the room up cause their friends would come, the parents, the grandparents would come. I think last year we did it early.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** We had it at 10 in the morning. It wasn't the same?

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** No, it wasn't the same.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** We usually have it at 5:30 or 6:00 like a regular council meeting and we fill this place up.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Oh okay, last year was my first one. I hadn't experienced the others.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** They have like zoning stuff and other city council issues.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** It is a lot funner if you have more council here.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Now, do we schedule it at the same time as a regular city council meeting or do we pick another date? Another evening? Ok, y'all just let me know.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** They sit up here just like regular council members, and we sit out here in the crowd, and they carry on. They have their own agenda and such.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Okay, we will set it up then.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** Well, another thing they done is, one class come up here and they got through. Then another come up here, well, you know how it lasted, for a long time.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Yeah, I think everybody enjoyed that one last year too. Like you said though, there was not a lot of public because it was during business hours. Whereas with this one, setting it afterhours, more people would, and maybe the parents could attend too. They are the future. Anything that we can do to get them involved in government, we need to.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Like in the past, you and April can come up with an agenda similar to what or pretty close to what we actually have to go by and do. Then you have folks out in the audience to ask questions and how come this, etc. I think one year we did it and it was about restaurants and why don't the city put in restaurants. About the same thing we hear every day.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Until they figure out that the law is the law.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** Does that mean that we get to put Ms. Rita up here to help them when they do something wrong?

**ATTORNEY LLOP:** Let's not go there.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** They may have an attorney wannabe in that high school class. We may have a pre-law major out there somewhere.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** We have had some good ideas. I reckon we need a motion to approve the resolution for Ga Cities Week, April 24-30, 2022.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** So moved.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Have a motion to approve the Ga Cities Week resolution. Council, do y'all have any more questions about that, thoughts, ideas?

**COUNCIL MEMBER HAMILTON:** What were the dates?

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Well, the dates for Ga Cities Week is April 24 – 30. Now Spence will have to get with the schools to see when a good date for them to get the kids down here and do the other projects.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** The Board of Education has to approve some of those activities for them off campus. It may take us a week or two, but we will get you some dates.

**COUNCIL MEMBER HAMILTON:** Quick question. We still got Small Cities Conference that week also in Dublin on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, right?

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Yes. For everybody that signed up. It is supposed to be a real good group and a lot of good ideas should come out of it.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Alright, any more questions councilors about the Ga Cities Week resolution? I had a motion; I need a second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER HAMILTON:** **Second.**

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

**WATER RATES:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Next on the agenda is city water rates.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Yes, as y'all all know, we have met several times to try to figure out the best way to deal with our water fund. I think it has now been over 12 years, on some accounts 14, since we have adjusted the water rates any. As everyone knows, expenses have gone up over 14 years. Electricity costs more, chemicals cost more, and labor costs more. I think this council and the previous councils and managers have done an amazing job in being able to hold those rates down for that long. But, with the problems we are having with infrastructure, the lift station on the Chester Rd, the WPA road, the lift station on Pearl Bates. We are going to have to sink some money into it to keep it or to solve it. We are just going to have to put an adjustment to those rates, which hopefully we can do it as painless as possible by breaking it into 2 sections. We anticipate going up 17.4% May 1, and then in November or December, going up another 17.4%. I know that it sounds a little alarming, but it isn't. The basic water rate will go from \$12.05 up to \$14.15 in the first jump and to \$16.25 in the second jump. So, it would be a total of \$12.05 to \$16.25. We have a chart of what the rates will be. We anticipate sending out a letter to each customer explaining why we are doing this and how it will impact their bill. Again, this will not happen until May if the council approves it.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** And on with what you are taking about, senior citizens rates, the first increase is \$1.50 and 6 months later it will be \$1.50. So, it's not that we are trying to put a financial burden on anybody. As Spence has said, it is groceries, gas, everything you spend, and touch now has increased. I think we have done a good job over the last 14 years, keeping it where its at. We are getting to a time or point to keep that water fund solvent, we have got to make a move and do something. Council, do y'all have any more comments or questions?

**COUNCIL MEMBER HAMILTON:** I have a comment. You said we are going to let the city know? And that is before we actually do it right?

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Yes. My anticipation is the middle of April. We would have a letter out to every customer. Again, we are going to post this either by the end of this month or by the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. We are trying to figure out exactly how long it will take to get 3,000 letters mailed individually.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** Will you individually put the letters in with the water bill?

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** I am not sure if our automatic process will allow that. We are still working out the bugs. I hope we can. I hope we can put a message on the water bill. But if not, we are going to have to just send out individual notices. But we will make it known to each customer. I believe we have over 3,000?

**CITY CLERK SHEFFIELD:** We print about 2,700 each month.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Ok, 2,700 bills roughly, give or take during the month.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Any other questions? Alright, with that being said and no more questions, I will entertain a motion that we raise our water rates 17.4%, effective May 1. And then another 17.4% December 1.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** **So moved.**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Have a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER HAMILTON: Second.**

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**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** I have a second from Councilman Hamilton. All in favor show of hands? Motion carried unanimous.

**DEPARTMENT HEAD CREDIT CARDS:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Next on the agenda is department head credit cards.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Yes. We ran into a situation last night where I am going to make a request that the council will allow the fire chief and police chief to have their own credit card. As most of you know, we had a serious fire last night. We were needing water and Gatorade out there. Our fire chief didn't have his own credit card to be able to send someone to Walmart. Fortunately, Becky and her officers stepped up and were able to get some. All we would need to do, if the council would approve it, is amend our policy. It will take a vote to do that, to allow the fire chief and the police chief to have their own city credit card for emergencies.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Are you going to tell them how you plan to monitor them?

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** It will require multiple checks. If say a police officer needs to use it at Wal-Mart to buy a pair of boots or something. He is going to sign off and give a statement explaining why he made the purchase. The Chief of Police in turn will sign off on that agreeing that it is needed. It will then come to city hall where both April and Vicki will check it before coming to me where I'll make a determination whether it was relevant and sign off on it. And then whichever of the city council signs checks that week will also make the end of the month sign-off on that credit card. So, there is multiple levels of checks and balances to make sure that nobody buys something on a city credit card that they shouldn't be.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Well, it makes sense. I know this is not the first time we have run into other issues and problems. It is always late at night when nobody is here or its always on the weekend when you can't find anybody.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Or the credit cards are always locked up in the vault and you can't get to them.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** I don't have a problem with that. I mean Becky you have been here about 420 years. I don't think you are going to try and beat us now. Council, do y'all have any other comments or questions or thoughts? If not, then I will entertain a motion to approve a city credit card for Chief Sheffield or Chief Whitten.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS: So moved.**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Have a motion from Councilman Mullis. I need a second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Second.**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Have a second from Councilwoman Williams. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous. We won't run into that again.

**BUILDING INSPECTOR:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Next on the agenda is the Lote Group @ 6110 Oak Street for a Popeye's. the contractor is SSC Bovee & Company.

**ENGINEER BEARDEN:** Again, all of the paperwork is in order. They have purchased the building permit. Of course, the demolition of the existing building is not included in the building permit, so we allowed them to go ahead and get the old foundation, tanks, and concrete blocks off the ground. So all of that is out and they are ready to start work. We got all of the paperwork finished up today. April was good enough to let's get it on the agenda, and Popeye's is willing and ready to start.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Do they have everything worked out with DOT.

**ENGINEER BEARDEN:** That is the last thing that we have been waiting on for months, the DOT permit. I already had the land disturbance permit, finally the DOT permit, and now the building permit. So, we are ready to go. I am ready to eat a fish sandwich.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** I will entertain a motion to approve the building for Lote Group @ 6110 Oak Street for Popeye's.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** So moved.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** I have a motion from Councilman Mullis. Council do y'all have any other questions or comments? If not, I need a second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER WOODARD:** Second.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** I have a second from Councilman Woodard. All in favor show of hands. Motion carried unanimous.

**COUNCIL MEMBER WOODARD:** Does that have a projected date for completion?

**ENGINEER BEARDEN:** I do not have their timeline yet but when they come by to pick up the building permit tomorrow, I will get a timeline from them. But I would say less than 60 days.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Probably going to be pretty quick.

**ENGINEER BEARDEN:** The only thing that could slow them down is they, instead of the city of Eastman, part of the deal is they are putting in their own water lines. We are allowing them to tap onto our 6-inch water main that is on North Main Street, right there in front of the cotton mill, on that side of the railroad tracks. Because that we have been so short-handed in the past, they agreed that they would do their own tap and plumb their own water lines. Instead of all the trouble it is to get a DOT permit, they are getting their water and sewer off of 16<sup>th</sup> and Main. That is going to speed them up a lot.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** Umm. Sounds like that about the first of June they might be slinging chicken out the front door.

**ENGINEER BEARDEN:** I am hoping so.

#### **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:**

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** I just want to take a second and say thank you to Scotty Whitten and the Eastman Fire Department. Conner Bearden is here. I want to thank him and the Dodge County Fire Department and all of the other surrounding departments that came out and helped us last night. We had that major fire at Valence out on Airport Rd. The last information that I got, no one has been injured and the fire is out. They have done a great job in trying to mitigate the damage. I just to tell everybody thank you for a job well done. That's it. Well, we do have a meeting tomorrow night with the County. Do not forget about that. 6:00, right here. Please, come on out. We are going to cover a few things of mutual interest. We are going to talk about them and have some good discussions. Well talk about them in a good way as how we are going to work with them and hopefully how they want to work with us.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:**

**COUNCIL MEMBER HAMILTON:** I think we are moving in the right direction.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** I know that we talk about a ladder fire truck. Is that in the motion?

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Conner and I were actually talking about that today. I think that he & I have come to an unofficial agreement that we are going to join together and try to leverage.

**COUNTY MANAGER BEARDEN:** One of the things that hurts everybody on fire grants is, especially in places that are not that large, you have got to have call volume. You have go to show where you are going to use that truck and are waiting for somebody to give you the money. They are not going to pay

for it alone. I think that based on our combined county numbers along with the City of Eastman, I think we have got a stronger chance to get a grant of that size to purchase that.

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**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** We desperately need one and we have a much better chance by joining with the county than either organization trying it independently.

**COUNCIL MEMBER MULLIS:** That was my question. I am glad to hear that.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**JOHN BATTLE:** Did I understand you to say that when this water rate goes up and is put in place, that each customer will receive a letter? In that letter, will it have a brief description of why the water rate is going up? Busted lines, fixing roads, and all of this here stuff like water standing in the middle of the road.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Yes Sir. It is going to lay out a lot of the problems that we have got and what our solutions are. Also, to add to that, I forgot to mention earlier that we are under an agreement, and Jesse can elaborate, with EPD now. We have got to do this. They are not going to give us a choice if we don't get some of these repairs made.

**JOHN BATTLE:** That is what I am saying. We got water leaking, throughout the city, where water is seeping up through the black tops.

**CITY MANAGER BARRON:** Yes Sir, I agree with you.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** The last time that we had an increase, Mr. John, was back in 2008. It was when we built or did the new treatment plant. And we got that grant from USDA to go along with the rest of it. And they actually came up with the water rates and they said that you have got to charge this for us to give you this \$3.5 million grant. And, we have not touched them since then. We are getting at a point that the number sounds like a huge number, but dollar figure is not. The senior citizens, the whole amount over the next 6 months will be a \$3 increase. For regular, I know at my house it will be like \$4.20. I know it sounds like a huge number, but it is just a few dollars. But we have not touched the water rates since we did the new treatment plant.

**JOHN BATTLE:** I understand. But most people, some of them can't comprehend that. In the sense that you are saying. To some people, \$4 is like \$400. I am just keeping it real because it is going to come up and a lot of people are going to be asking questions. They are going to be saying, why are we going up on water rates when all of these leaks in the highway and the roads in the city failing. I am just saying that because I know that I am going to get questions. They are going to be asking me soon. But I understand. You are absolutely right. We are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in a new decade. Everything is going up basically, except salaries. I know my retirement hasn't gone up.

**COUNCIL MEMBER PITTMAN:** They will get this breakdown sheet and they will get the explanation of why and all of that stuff.

**On a motion from Councilman Mullis and a second from Councilman Hamilton, the meeting was adjourned.**

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CHAIRMAN

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CITY CLERK