

April 22, 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. Department heads Matt McDaniel and Terry Hardeman were also present. Audience members included EM Harrington III, John Battle, Susan and Mitchell Coffee, Loraine Aguayo and spouse, Eugene Brannen, Jack Taylor, Martin Kehayes, and Sharon Cobb Flanagan.

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 Sheffield, and a unanimous vote, the agenda was approved.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes for the April 8, 2024, regular meeting and the minutes for the April 17, 2024, called meeting were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Sheffield and a second from Councilor Peacock.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

On a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Peacock, it was unanimously approved to move into executive session to discuss legal and property matters. (*Members entered into executive session.*)

(*Members entered back into council chambers.*) On a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Peacock, it was unanimously approved to come out of executive session and into regular meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

DDA APPLICATIONS:

One application was received, Ms. Loraine Aguayo. Councilor Snyder feels that she is a good choice. **On a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Sheffield, Ms. Aguayo was unanimously voted to fill the empty seat on the Downtown Development Board.**

LIMB/LEAF MULCHING BID:

There were 2 bids received. One was on time and the other was received after the due date. Council has reviewed the accepted bid. A decision was made to reject the bid and put this out for bid again. **This was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Williams.**

CHAS MAR PUMP BID:

Department Head Terry Hardeman presented the 2 bids that were received on the Chas Mar Pump Station. Popco submitted a bid of \$77,500 to install and \$88,700 for the pump. Smith & Loveless quoted the pump alone at \$79,800. Terry contacted another contractor that has worked on things for the city in the past. Mora Electric. They were willing to help the city install the pump for about \$3,500.

The city would need to furnish the materials, the bypass pump, and the equipment to set the pump station in. Terry says that cost will be around \$10,000. That calculated to roughly \$14,000 (+/- \$5,000) on top of the cost of buying the pump itself. It still will save the city around \$65,000. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second by Councilor Hamilton, it was unanimously approved to buy the S&L pump and coordinate with Mora Electric for the installation.**

NEW BUSINESS:

MONTHLY BILLS:

The bills for April 9 -22, 2024, were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Peacock.

XPRESS BILL PAY:

Clerk Sheffield presented a new option for credit card payments. Currently being used is the company suggested in 2015 at the time of swapping to new software. Xpress bill pay is what our company is suggesting for us to go to. It will allow customers to view their bills online, make a one-time or a recurring payment, receive notifications of bills, payments, etc., and allows the customer to view 24 months of billing information. If any issues arise, the customer will call Xpress Bill Pay to handle any problems, not the city. They will also help get a working credit card reader in house. There may be a monthly fee for the city, but all other costs should go toward the customer as before. City Manager Barron encouraged the council to move forward with this. He also thanked Ms. Sheffield and Ms. Winslette for looking for a solution to move forward with progress in the right direction. Audience member Eugene Brannen commented that he felt this was a good idea. Mrs. Coffee asked if this could be expanded to be able to pay taxes with a card. It is Clerk Sheffield's understanding that you should be able to.

On a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Williams, it was unanimously approved to move forward with the change to Xpress Bill Pay system.

COUNTY SESSION REQUEST:

The city council and the county commissioners have asked to have a joint work session again. After some discussion with the county manager, Spence presents the date of **Thursday, May 9, 2024, at 6 PM**, at the Pearl Bates Courthouse Annex. **This date and time was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

WATERSHED PROTECTION:

Department head Matt McDaniel presented the requirement of needing watershed monitoring because of our wastewater permit. The city will be fined if they fail to do the testing. The company, PSI, has done the testing since at least 2010. They are the only ones that Matt is aware of that does this kind of testing around here. We have normally considered this professional services and not bid it out. They are very familiar with our layout. Every other year it costs more because of the test that is required on those years. The total cost of this year will be \$25,446. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second from Councilor Hamilton, it was unanimously approved to move forward with PSI.**

A/C FOR THE TREATMENT PLANT:

Department Head McDaniel also presented the need for A/C replacement at the treatment plant. The original unit is in there from 1988. There is a valve going bad and it is also absolute. He requests to be able to put this replacement out for bid. The lab equipment needs a cool environment to be able to work properly. **On a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Sheffield, it was unanimously approved to move forward with the bid process.**

PRESSURE RELIEF GAUGE FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT:

Chief Whitten comes forward to request a pressure relief valve. In early March, pumps tests were done on all engines by Brackett Firetruck Repair. He discovered that the valve on Engine 8 was going bad and needs to be replaced. The cost of Mr. Brackett to come replace and install a new valve will be \$2,971.01. This will be paid for out of SPLOST. **It was unanimously approved to move forward on this project on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

2024 DISTRICT 9 BALLOT:

Typically the chairman of the council is nominated to cast the ballot for the GMA District 9 officers every year. This year there was no opposition in any category. **It was unanimously approved for Chairman Snyder to sign and cast the ballot for this year on a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Peacock.**

CODE VIOLATION FINES:

Rita has gotten together with Chief Cooper and Inspector White to get information on present code provisions that have no fine amount. Instead of having a general fine listed, Attorney Llop has developed a table of civil fines to adopt for certain offenses. The list will be kept on file with the clerk in case it needs to be changed at any time. This simplifies the offenses that didn't have a charge or ones that were hard to find, according to Chief Cooper. Llop requests that everyone review this list to see if any more need to be added or changed. **It was unanimously approved to postpone the vote until the May 13 meeting. The vote was taken on a motion from Councilor Williams and a second from Councilor Sheffield.**

GMEBS DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT PLAN RESTATEMENT:

GMEBS is the Georgia Municipal Employee Benefit Plan. In order to ensure tax qualified status, we must approve the most recent IRS approved adoption agreement. The city attorney has reviewed the agreement and recommends adoption by the council. **It was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

CITY MANAGER HAD NOTHING TO REPORT**OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:**

Councilor Hamilton thanks Fire Chief Scotty Whitten for everything that he has done around the city and his accomplishments.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

CHAIRMAN

CITY CLERK