

**February 12, 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, Attorney Chris Gordon, City Inspector Jack White, Administrative Assistant Dayna Winslette, and Department Heads Wynnon Pittman and Paul McCranie. Also in attendance were Fire Chief Scotty Whitten, Police Chief Billy Cooper, Assistant Chief Wesley Dyal, Investigator Josh Roberson, and Officer Nick Hulette. Audience members included Jill and Mark Studstill, County Manager Conner Bearden, Commissioner Sharon Cobb Flanagan, Mitchell and Susan Coffee, EM Harrington III, Dwayne Conley, and Raymond Mullis.

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Snyder.

Invocation was given by Councilor Hamilton.

Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

**On a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Peacock and a unanimous vote, the agenda was amended to add #13, Adopt a resolution for fee schedule. The amended agenda was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**On a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Hamilton, the minutes of the January 22, 2024, regular meeting and the February 1, 2024, called meeting were unanimously approved.**

**NO UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**MONTHLY FIRE REPORTS:**

For the month of January, Fire Chief Whitten reported a total of 63 calls, 40 inside and 23 outside. 1 stove fire, 1 electrical fire, 1 storage building, 7 brush fires, 3 vehicle fires, 6 natural gas leaks, 15 medical calls, 6 vehicle rescue, 5 electronic alarms, 7 lift assistance, 2 check smoke, 7 power line/trees, and 1 public service.

**MONTHLY POLICE REPORTS:**

For the month of January, Police Chief Cooper reported that they used 986 gallons of gas while patrolling 11,806 miles. They answered 772 calls, worked 17 wrecks, and made 108 arrests. The total for cash bonds/fines was \$14,463.20.

**APPROVE MONTHLY BILLS:**

**The monthly bills for January 30 – February 12, 2024, were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

**FIRST READING OF AMENDED SEWER ORDINANCE:**

A simple ordinance change is being made. We have taken the fee for the tap out of the ordinance, and it will be kept on file with the city clerk. A copy of the ordinance is available for anyone who requests.

**The first reading of the amended sewer ordinance was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

**FIRST READING OF BLIGHT ORDINANCE:**

There is a serious problem with blight around the city. This ordinance will streamline the process of how to identify and deal with the blight issue. It is clearly defined in the ordinance. **The first reading of the blight ordinance was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

**FIRST READING OF AMENDED TRASH ORDINANCE:**

We currently require residents to use the city's preferred provider. This ordinance will require all commercial establishments to use the city's preferred front-loading provider. It is clearly outlined in the ordinance and gives the city the power to create a fee schedule for it. **The first reading of the trash ordinance was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

**APPROVE OUTSIDE WATER RATES:**

At a previous work session, we looked at the outside water rates and the cost of providing that to them. It was decided that there was a need to double the rates for county residents on water and sewer to offset the cost of sending that water outside of the city. Chairman Snyder points out that this will help in maintaining the infrastructure that is out there on county property and not city property. County Manager Bearden wants to clarify that water on the county right of way does not service the county.

**On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton, it was unanimously approved to double the outside water rates.**

**LICENSE PLATE READER:**

Police Chief Cooper got quotes for a license plate reader for one patrol vehicle. It would be 2 cameras that go on that said vehicle. The purpose would be to catch vehicles with no insurance, vehicles with an expired tag or registration, or even stolen vehicles. The quote that includes the cameras and the software is \$17,440. The quote from Two-Way Communications out of Dublin for the laptop mount and equipment that would be needed is an additional \$4,391. The total would be \$21,831. These were the only quotes that he could procure. Councilor Peacock comments that this system will allow for us to pick up on vehicles that come through our city that may already have a warrant or anything attached to their vehicle. It would help in preventing that. It would also help find those that are not doing what they are supposed to and causing our insurance rates to go up. I would consider it a safety mechanism. It is a source of revenue if for nothing but issuing citations as you would have written anyway. Cooper states that when the camera picks up on something, you will get a ding. The officer will still need to verify it through the 911 center or GCIC to make sure that it is accurate before you make a stop. City Manager Barron states that is equipment can be paid for out of the SPLOST account. Chief Cooper states that if he orders today, it would be about the end of April before he would get the equipment. Susan Coffee asks if this would be affected by the law currently in legislation about the school cameras. Councilor Peacock assured her that they would not. License plate readers fall under different legislation and have been around for years.

**The council unanimously voted to approve the purchase of equipment on a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Peacock.**

**PAYOUT OF COMP TIME:**

There are several employees that have over 100 hours of comp time on the books. It is actually a liability for the city. City Manager Barron recommends allowing a cash out of up to 80 hours once a year. **A once per year payout of up to 80 hours was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

**APPROVE BID FOR DISPOSAL OF WATER METERS:**

Two bids were received for the disposal of the old water meters. The bid from McMillen Metals was to pay us \$3000 in order to remove the 2600 meters. The other bid was from NoMo Junk LLC. They were asking us to pay them \$1650 to dispose of the meters. **The council unanimously approved McMillen Metals the project on a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

**REQUEST QUOTES FOR HOTBOX & ROLLER:**

The street has asked to be able to get quotes on a hotbox and a ton and a half roller. This would allow us to be able to do a better job and quality of work of patching the roads when we tear them up doing water repairs and such. Inspector White says he plans on a 2-week window of advertising. Councilor Peacock asks how often this is needed. White and City Manager Barron agree that it would be used frequently, a minimum of 1-2 times a week. Peacock asks about renting the equipment. White says they usually run \$100-150 a day. We have never actually rented them before. They are looking at one that could possibly recycle what they dig up and reuse it. Councilor Peacock says he is open to quotes but would like a better idea of how many times it could have been used in the past year as well as how many we need to do right now. **The council unanimously approved to seek quotes for the equipment on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Williams.**

**APPROVE PURCHASE OF FIRE ENGINE:**

Fire Chief Scotty Whitten approached the council about buying a new fire engine. We took bids on fire engines last year and it was decided to go with the E-ONE engine. The oldest engine the fire department has is 29 years old, the second is 20 years old, and the newest is 10 years old. The cost of an E-ONE engine is \$455,491. There is a 10-year financing opportunity through FireLine, Inc. There may be other ways or option for financing. Spence is looking in to those. If we order a truck today, you are looking at 18 months or a little less before the engine can be built and delivered. The first payment would not need to be made until after delivery. A new engine will enhance our ISO rating. We are currently at a Level 3. The only other surrounding city with that good of a rating is Dublin. Councilor Peacock asked if a good rating would help with businesses that are wanting to come in. Chief Whitten says yes. Chairman Snyder asks for how long the price is good for if they decide not to make a decision tonight. There was a price increase at the first of the year, so there is no guarantee of how long the price will remain. Chief Whitten would have to refer back to the provider. City Manager Barron believes that the engine is needed and trusts the Chief's judgement. CM Barron would ideally like to buy it outright while we have money in the ARPA fund and SPLOST fund. Until numbers are finalized, CM Barron would prefer to finance it and maybe just be able to pay it off earlier if possible. Chairman Snyder suggests tabling this or postponing until time certain when the income from the newly enacted fees start coming in and they can make a better financial assessment. Councilor Hamilton is in favor of getting the engine because of the ages of the 3 pumpers that the department currently has. Chairman Snyder suggests tabling for approximately 3 months. Councilor Hamilton wants to immediately revisit this discussion. He states that the department is well deserving of a new engine but understands the logic of wanting to wait. Chairman Snyder suggests waiting until May 13 council meeting to revisit this. This would give a month or two of data from the new fees to factor into the decision. Questions were raised about the price of the truck going up between now and May. There is no guarantee that it won't. County Manager Bearden stated that they recently bought a recycling truck, and the price went up 20% in 3 months' time. Councilor Hamilton stated again that he doesn't want to wait until May. Could they possibly shorten the time? Fire Chief reminds the council that we aren't locked into a contract if we go ahead decide, but it does lock us into the current price. Manager Barron asks if it would be okay to wait until the called meeting next week. That would give the members more time to think and still possibly get the current price. **Council member Debra Sheffield made a motion to postpone making the**

decision on the purchase of a new engine until the next meeting on Thursday, February 22. The motion was seconded by Councilor Hamilton and unanimously approved.

**ADOPT RESOLUTION FOR FEE SCHEDULE:**

Resolution prepared by Attorney Llop regarding the park fee, limb and leaf fee, public safety fee, and stormwater fee that the council voted for at the previous meeting. This resolution officially adopts it with the understanding that the rate fee will be kept in the clerk's office. **The resolution was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

**On a motion Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Williams, it was unanimously approved to go into executive session in order to discuss legal and property matters.** *(Council exits to go into session.)*

*(Council enters back into the council chambers.)* **On a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Peacock, it was unanimously approved to enter back into regular session.**

**CITY MANAGER HAS NOTHING TO REPORT:**

**OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:**

Councilor Snyder mentions that it has been a long few days and weeks. The new council is trying to create a new vision for Eastman. It is going to be a slow and arduous process, but it will be for the betterment of Eastman and the people thereof.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Per County Manager Bearden, Sharon Cobb Flanagan presented a list of the commercial businesses that the county is currently providing trash bins to.

Susan Coffee appreciates all that the council is doing, the changes, and moving things forward. She asks that the council consider the businesses downtown that are small with very few people. The water bill is already steep for them, doubling them may end up being a deterrent for new businesses.

Mark Studstill comes up concerning the fees. He understands that the four projects coming up are very important projects and he doesn't mind paying the extra fee. He questions whether the money that was allocated in prior years for those projects will be used to supplement the fees that we will generate from the expense. Will those funds be segregated and only used for what they are earmarked for? Chairman Snyder assures him that the funds will be segregated. They are broken down for each one. They are flexible and may not remain the same. Studstill asks if we have a certain dollar amount that we are reaching for? Spence says no, it will be re-evaluated quarterly.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

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CHAIRMAN

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CITY CLERK