

**April 8, 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, and Jermaine Hamilton. Council member Mark Peacock was out of town and participated by phone. Others present were City Manager Spencer Barron, City Clerk April Sheffield, City Attorneys Rita Llop and Chris Gordon, City Inspector Jack White, and Administrative Assistant Dayna Winslette. Also in attendance were Fire Chief Scotty Whitten and Police Chief Billy Cooper. Audience members included Commissioner Sharon Cobb Flanagan, EM Harrington III, Martin Kehayes, Paula McCain, Jaye Rogers, Willie McClendon, Loraine Aguayo, Sonia Olmeda, Robert Pruitt, John Battle, Vicki Cannington, 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 Sheffield and a unanimous vote, the agenda was amended to remove #6 Kenneth Little. The amended agenda was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**On a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Hamilton, the minutes of the March 25, 2024, regular meeting was unanimously approved.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

**On a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Williams, the council unanimously voted to enter into executive session in order to discuss legal, property, and personnel matters. After the conclusion of the session, a unanimous vote was taken on a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Sheffield to enter back into regular session.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**DCEDA APPLICATIONS:**

**After receiving applications from both Jaye Rogers and Pam McCranie for the open position on the DCEDA Board, the council unanimously voted on a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Hamilton to fill the vacancy with Pam McCranie.**

**PEABODY STAGE, JOHN BATTLE:**

Mr. Battle presented two bids to the council for the installation of a stage at the Peabody School for Juneteenth. The only reference Mr. Battle used was the request of a handicap ramp. No specifications were given to bid on, and the bid amount came back as the same amount. \$5,000. Inspector White did not get a copy of either bid to look over to make sure they are going to be up to code. Dependent upon the height, rails may be required also. Because of this, it was decided to postpone the award until Jack could inspect them for accuracy. The two bidders were Gene Johnson Concrete Finishing and Otis Grading Land Development, LLC. **Councilor Hamilton made a motion to postpone, and Councilor Williams seconded with a unanimous vote.**

**NEW BUSINESS:****MONTHLY FIRE REPORTS:**

For the month of March, Fire Chief Whitten reported a total of 53 calls, 38 inside and 15 outside. 2 vehicle fires, 1 gasoline leak, 3 natural gas calls, 11 medical calls, 10 vehicle rescues, 6 electronic alarms, 15 lift assists, 1 life flight, 1 check smoke, and 2 public services.

**MONTHLY POLICE REPORTS:**

For the month of March, Police Chief Cooper reported that they patrolled 12,471 miles. They answered 861 calls, worked 47 wrecks, and made 217 arrests including citations. They took in \$19,203.09 in fines and fees.

**APPROVE MONTHLY BILLS:**

**The monthly bills for March 25 – April 8, 2024, were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

**BID OUT CHAS MAR PUMP REPLACEMENT:**

**On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Williams, it was unanimously approved to seek bids to replace the current failing pump at the Chas Mar Lift Station.**

**WILLIE MCCLENDON:**

Willie came before the council with his concerns about the rate increase for water in the county. He asked what metric was used to determine that the water rate should double. And why wasn't the people that lived in the county invited to some sort of quorum to come and listen to the positives and negatives of annexing into the city? Councilor Snyder did inform Mr. McClendon that every meeting that was had was open to the public. There were a number of work sessions in which they discussed the questions that he mentioned. Agendas were posted and the public was informed beforehand in the paper and on social media. Ample opportunity was given to the community over the last several months to have a chance to voice complaints and criticisms and ask questions. Snyder apologizes that Mr. McClendon and others are feeling the effects of the new policies. The decision was not made lightly. Manager Barron stated that they also looked at what other cities were doing.

Mr. McClendon asks since he is less than a mile outside the city limits, how far are they willing to annex in? Snyder states that annexation can go as far as reasonable as long as it is contiguous to the city limits. Barron states that they have no problem annexing in as far as people are willing to go. But as far as getting water and sewer out to all of those far-reaching areas, it is going to take time and a lot of money. There are currently places within the city that still don't have sewer.

McClendon asks if it will lower their insurance rates or keep them the same? Barron says that depends on the outcome of the Service Delivery Strategy and Lost negotiations with the county. The insurance rates are based on what the city and county fire departments respond to.

McClendon also asks what determines the millage rate. Why the disparity between the city and county millage rates? Barron states that in a perfect world, you raise your millage rate to cover your expenses. Some cities cut costs to keep the rate lower. Our previous council decided to dip into a reserve fund in order to keep the rate low. The current council wants to find the revenue somewhere else that reserves.

Last question was if there was a SPLOST fund that could help finance some of these projects. The answer was yes.

**SCHEDULE WATER/SEWER ORDINANCE WORK SESSION:**

It was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Sheffield to schedule a work session to discuss changes to the water and sewer ordinance for Thursday, May 2, 2024, at 5 PM.

**RESCHEDULE MEMORIAL DAY COUNCIL MEETING:**

There was a unanimous vote to move the council meeting that is scheduled for Memorial Day to that Thursday, May 30, 2024, at 6 PM on a motion from Councilor Williams and a second motion from Councilor Hamilton.

**FIREHOUSE SUBS GRANT:**

This grant was applied for in October 2023. We were notified that we received it last week. The grant was for \$25,700 to go toward purchasing bunker gear. New gear is very much needed since the last time bunker gear was purchased was in 2008. **On a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Sheffield, it was unanimously approved voted to accept the \$25,700, grant from the Firehouse Subs Foundation to purchase 10 sets of turnout gear for the full-time firefighters.**

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:**

The limb and leaf truck was down today. We hope to have it up and running tomorrow. He is running a little behind right now. If anyone has or sees a pile that has been there 3 or 4 weeks, please contact us at city hall and we will get it checked out. Also, the mosquito truck will start running this week. It should be driving around at 10 – 15 mph. If you spot him scooting around too fast, please call and let us know.

**OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:**

Councilor Hamilton thanks Jack White again for taking a big part in helping reconstruct the Sunset Park. The community is happy and enjoying the new park and following by the rules.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

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CHAIRMAN

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CITY CLERK