

May 13, 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, and Administrative Assistant Dayna Winslette. Also in attendance were Fire Chief Scotty Whitten, Police Chief Billy Cooper, and Wastewater Operator Matt McDaniel. Audience members included Commissioner Sharon Cobb Flanagan, EM Harrington III, Martin Kehayes, John Battle, Vicki Cannington, Nevelle Simmons, Brian Dennis, and Mitchell and Susan Coffee.

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Snyder.

Invocation was given by Councilor Hamilton.

Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Manager Barron asked to add the Georgia Southern grant opportunity to the agenda and also Mr. Hamilton's announcement. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield, the agenda was amended unanimously. The amended agenda was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of the April 22, 2024, regular meeting were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

TREATMENT PLANT A/C BIDS:

Department head Matt McDaniel presented the 2 bids that were acquired for the replacement of the 7.5-ton treatment plant A/C. One was from Barlow Air in the amount of \$28,388 with 10-year warranties on the parts, labor, and compressor. A service contract is not required but a once-a-year tune-up will cost about \$110 a year. The other bid was from Pruett Air Conditioning in the amount of \$21,929 with a 1-year warranty on parts and labor and a 5-year warranty on the compressor. A service contract is not required with them either, but it would be the best way to keep the warranty valid and up to date. There is a \$6500 difference, but a new compressor will cost around \$3,000 and the freon is running \$800 an ounce. Typically the policy is to take the lowest qualified bid, but council decided to take into consideration the time limits on the warranties. **Councilor Peacock made a recommendation for Barlow Air and was seconded by Councilor Hamilton. Barlow Air was unanimously chosen on a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

NEW BUSINESS:

MONTHLY FIRE REPORTS:

Chief Whitten presented the calls for the month of April. A total of 66 calls were ran with 42 inside the city and 24 outside of the city. There was 1 structure fire, 1 electrical fire, 2 brush fires, 2 vehicle fires, 2 natural gas leaks, 20 medical calls, 9 vehicle rescues, 5 electronic alarms, 13 lift assistance for EMS, 9 power line/trees down, and 3 public service calls.

Councilor Snyder did congratulate Whitten and his staff with the success they have had with the Give Burns the Boot initiative. Whitten says they have done well in the last 2 weeks from being at Harvey's,

Chas Mar, and the red light. He thanks the citizens of Eastman and Dodge County. They are still striving forward to reach their \$10,000 goal.

MONTHLY POLICE REPORTS:

Chief Cooper presented the stats for the month of April. They used 1,088 gallons of gas, answered 754 calls, worked 18 traffic accidents, patrolled 16,265 miles, collected \$21,845.70 in bonds/fines, and made 166 arrests/citations.

Councilor Snyder asks what the average number of calls is for the first quarter of the year. Cooper states that it has ranged from 750 - 850 calls per month.

APPROVE MONTHLY BILLS:

The monthly bills from April 22 – May 13, 2024, were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.

NEVELLE SIMMONS, ROAD CLOSURE:

Business owner Nevelle Simmons came before the council requesting to close Main Street in front of Timeless Grace to the edge of the Magnolia Theater. It would be on Saturday, July 20, 2024, from 1 – 4 PM. He plans on having 2 bouncy houses and a game truck for the kids and a small cornhole tournament for the adults. He will have some food and drinks for refreshments. There will also be a couple of vendors on site. This event will be a small token of appreciation to his customers and the community for supporting him. It will also give some of the small business owners a chance to gain some exposure. When asked if he has consulted with the businesses inside of Timeless Grace, he says yes, they are okay with blocking it off. Chief Cooper is good as long as the city street crew will handle the cones and barrels. Councilor Peacock requests to get something in writing from the business involved with Timeless Grace. Mr. Simmons points out that they usually don't get asked if they mind when other functions are held that close the street in front of their businesses. Council Snyder asks that it become a policy from this point forward to have written consent for documentation. **Councilor Peacock suggested to go ahead with approving the closure for Saturday, July 20, 2024, from 12PM – 5PM. Councilor Williams made the motion and Councilor Peacock seconded the motion. All approved.**

SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY:

Council met with the County last week to discuss some concerns with the Service Delivery Strategy. Council members have had several discussions lately and feel confident that it is time to start renegotiating that document. **A vote is needed to be able to officially notify the commissioners to start the process of renegotiating. It was unanimously approved to move forward on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

FIRST READING OF CODE VIOLATION ORDINANCE:

After recent work sessions, a specific list of fines and fees were compiled to go along with any violations of the codebook. **The first reading was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

FIRST READING OF WATER ORDINANCE AMENDMENT:

Recently adopted policies have been incorporated into the water ordinance to accommodate those changes and also attach some necessary fees and other specific charges and rules. Water employees

gave input to help with the details. It gives everyone clear guidelines to go by. Mrs. Coffee and Mr. Battle asked if everyone would have access to read the proposed ordinances. They were assured that there would be paper copies at City Hall, and they would also be posted on the city's website. Mr. Brian Dennis asked if customers were given notice of all of the changes that took place. The answer was yes, inserts were mailed out in their bills, written on their bills, posted in the lobby, put on Facebook, and in the paper. There were also numerous work sessions and council meetings where all changes were discussed. Another question was what if a tenant did not pay their bills and the water was cut off? Would the water automatically go back into the property owner's name? No, it is not automatic. The bill follows the person or tenant. The property owner would be responsible for putting the water into their own name. After the completion of these comments, **the first reading of the water ordinance amendment was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

FIRST READING OF CITY MANAGER PURCHASING AMENDMENT:

The current policy in place states that the spending limit of the city manager is \$2,500. The purpose of the proposed amendment is to increase that limit to \$10,000. This would match what the county manager has. Barron states that this would make things neater and cleaner. It also gives him the opportunity to make emergency decisions and expenses. **The first reading of the city manager purchasing amendment was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Peacock.**

PURCHASE OF HYDRO STOP VALVES:

This is in relation to the new insertion valve apparatus that we have which is used to be able to cut off active or live lines. Barron reported that it has been used twice already. History was made by being able to isolate certain city blocks with water mains that were all looped together and unable to turn off for any repairs. To continue with this process, we need two more of these valves with plugs which amount to a little over \$9,000. The goal is to continue moving throughout the city to ensure that each area is isolated. **The purchase of two valves and cartridges were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield**

GEORGIA SOUTHERN GRANT OPPORTUNITY:

There is an opportunity to partner with Georgia Southern and the city of Marion, Alabama in an Innovation and Opportunity Across Georgia Grant. Our part of the grant project would focus on water and sewer and ways to help Marion and they help us. All of this will be guided by Georgia Southern experts, researchers, and professors. Barron is asking to be able to try this and include any employee that is willing to participate. It would possible only involve 1 -2 hours per week. This is costing the city nothing but time. Hopefully this will get about \$16,000 back into the city to go towards the employees that have participated in the program. This will be a 12-month project or pilot study. **It was unanimously approved to move forward on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Hamilton.**

COUNCILMAN HAMILTON:

Councilman Hamilton turned in his resignation as of today, May 13, 2024. A lot of opportunities have come through his job at Department of Juvenile Justice while working as an instructor and school resource officer. He has acquired some more obligations and don't want to take away from his full-time job. He has come to the realization that he is unable to do both job and council and be effective. It has

been nice and well. He reminds everyone to keep their word and their credit. Those two things in life will take you anywhere you want to go. It has helped him and his family to progress and be able to build a home and make the move to Kathleen, GA. Hamilton's resignation was unanimously accepted on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Williams. Councilor Snyder thanked Hamilton for all he has done for the city, and he was wished well by all. This resignation will trigger a special election to be held in November.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:

Manager Barron thanks everyone for what they are doing. Thank you to the citizens for being patient. Also, don't forget the blight initiative that has started. If you have any question about what qualifies, contact Inspector White. If you get a letter, please comply.

OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:

Councilor Hamilton gives appreciation to the current council and the former council. Many decisions are not easy to make as a council member. He asks the council to continue to do what is right. Councilor Williams wishes Hamilton the best and good luck. Councilor Snyder wishes all of the mothers a belated Happy Mother's Day.

Snyder also thanks Chief Whitten with his Give Burn the Boot and feels he was exceed his \$10,000 goal. Chief Whitten reminds everyone that the money raised is for the burn center in Augusta and Atlanta. The local department will get 10% of all money donated and be used to continue their fire education. He is currently in possession of the burn education building. If any school or church would like to use it, just contact the station and they will plan. Whitten also commends Admin Assistant, Dayna, for all of the Facebook posts. She jumps on everything that he sends her.

Brian Dennis came forward about a zoning issue that he has in front of the zoning board. It will come before council at the next meeting. He asks if it can be postponed until the first meeting in June so he will be available to answer any questions. Council agreed to postpone it until the June meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

CHAIRMAN

CITY CLERK