



DRAFT MINUTES
Cochran City Council
Tuesday, August 13, 2024
Regular Meeting @ 7:00

City Auditorium, 102 N Second Street, Cochran, GA 31014

City Council

City Staff

Billy Yeomans, Mayor	Richard Newbern, City Manager
Keith Anderson, Council Member <i>(District 1, Post 1)</i>	Candace Summerall, City Clerk
Gary Ates, Council Member <i>(District 1, Post 2)</i>	Jim Elliott, City Attorney
Carla Coley, Council Member <i>(District 2 Post 1)</i>	
Lonnie Tedders, Council Member <i>(District 2, Post 2)</i>	
Andrew Lemmon, Council Member <i>(District 3, Post 1)</i>	
Shane Savant, Council Member <i>(District 3, Post 2)</i>	

I. Call to Order

Mayor Yeomans called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Invocation

Led by Ken Land

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Council Member Keith Anderson

IV. Attendance

The City Clerk noted that four council members were present, constituting a quorum. Council Members Coley and Lemmon were absent due to medical issues.

V. Adopt Agenda/Minutes

1. Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Anderson, to approve the minutes of the July 9, 2024 regular meeting. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Tedders, to approve the minutes from the March 14-16, 2024 council retreat. Motion passed unanimously.
3. The work session minutes from July 9, 2024 were provided for information only and not adopted.
4. Motion by Council Member Savant, seconded by Council Member Ates, to amend the agenda to add item #13: Approval of the Strategic Plan. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Agenda Items

1. Presentation by Georgia Association of Water Professionals

Gary McCoy, President-elect of GAWP, presented two Gold Awards to the City of Cochran for excellence in water quality at its groundwater system and Well No. 2. McCoy highlighted the strict standards required to receive this award and commended the city for its dedication to providing safe drinking water.

2. Presentation to Firefighters

Fire Chief Brock Wilcher recognized Sergeant Randy Brown, Firefighter Colton Kleinfeld, and Firefighter Quang Nguyen with the life-saving award for their actions on June 27, 2024. The firefighters successfully revived a young man in cardiac arrest, showcasing the importance of their training and quick response.

3. Public Hearing on Annexation Petition from Paulk Investment Properties, LLC/ Casey Paulk Parcel # B37A-189A

Mayor Yeomans opened a public hearing at 7:17 PM to consider annexing a 2.5 acre tract on Mac Thompson Road owned by Casey Paulk. No public comments were made. The hearing closed at 7:20 PM.

Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Savant, to approve the annexation. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Hearing on Zoning Request from Paulk Investment Properties, LLC/ Casey Paulk Parcel # B37A-189A

Mayor Yeomans opened a public hearing at 7:22 PM to consider zoning the newly annexed 2.5 acre tract as R-1 Residential. Mr. Paulk confirmed his intent to build single-family homes consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. Some residents asked questions about lot size requirements. The hearing closed at 7:31 PM.

Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Tedders, to approve R-1 zoning for the property. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Mac Thompson Road Resurfacing Bid

Motion by Council Member Tedders, seconded by Council Member Savant, to award a \$381,445 bid to The Scruggs Company for resurfacing Mac Thompson Road from Colonial Road to Faulk Road. \$350,000 will come from T-SPLOST funds and \$31,445 from SPLOST funds. Motion passed unanimously.

6. CHIP Housing Rehabilitation Grant

Motion by Council Member Savant, seconded by Council Member Ates, to accept a \$500,000 HUD CHIP grant for housing rehabilitation. The city's required match is \$15,893. Six owner-occupied houses in Districts 1 and 3 will be rehabilitated. Motion passed unanimously.

7. CHIP Grant Compliance Documents

Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Anderson, to approve various required compliance documents for the CHIP grant, including plans and resolutions. Motion passed unanimously.

8. DDA Board Appointment

Motion by Council Member Savant, seconded by Council Member Tedders, to appoint Chris Carney to a four-year term on the Downtown Development Authority board, replacing Jackie Bowen. Motion passed unanimously.

9. FirstNet Communications Proposal

Jeremy Hall of FirstNet presented information on switching the city's telecommunications to FirstNet's system, which prioritizes public safety communications. Chief Trawick noted improved coverage in problem areas during testing.

Motion by Council Member Savant, seconded by Council Member Ates, to award the contract to FirstNet for phones and communication services. Motion passed unanimously.

10. GMA-GIRMA Safety Grant Application

The council agreed by consensus to allow staff to apply for a \$7,800 grant from GMA for safety equipment, with no formal vote required.

11. Water Testing Contract

Motion by Council Member Tedders, seconded by Council Member Ates, to contract with M.E. Sack Engineering for \$42,000 per year to conduct required water quality testing. Motion passed unanimously.

12. Alcoholic Beverage Ordinance Amendment

Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Tedders, to amend the alcoholic beverage ordinance regarding distance requirements between package stores, as recommended by the city attorney. Motion passed unanimously.

13. Approval of Strategic Plan

Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Anderson, to approve the city's strategic plan. Motion passed unanimously.

VII. City Manager Updates

Richard Newbern provided updates on:

- Upcoming zoning training for staff and planning commission members
- Progress on the roofs, windows, and doors program
- Plans to bid the new city park project
- \$700,000 EPA grant for wastewater treatment plant upgrades

City Clerk Updates

Candace Summerall reported on the following:

1. Utility Billing Overhaul: Conducting a complete review of utility billing processes.
2. Aging Meters: Noted that water meters are aging and discussions are ongoing with Public Works about replacing meter heads.
3. Insurance Broker Issues: Reported performance issues with the current health insurance broker, including slow response times and enrollment delays. Requested to switch to a local broker.
 - Council consensus was given to proceed with changing to a local broker immediately, rather than waiting for an RFP process.
4. Rebranding: Working on a rebranding effort for the city. Offered new business cards to council members.
5. Meter Audits: Conducting audits of both gas and water meters in collaboration with Willie Farrow from Public Works.

VIII. Council Discussion

Mayor Yeomans:

Raised a question about the legal status of council members participating in Planning Commission meetings:

- He asked about the propriety of council members speaking at Planning Commission meetings on zoning matters they may later vote on as council members.

- City Attorney Jim Elliott clarified that while council members have a First Amendment right to speak at public hearings, doing so could demonstrate a conflict of interest under zoning laws.
- Elliott explained that if a council member owns property affected by rezoning, they must disclose this in writing and abstain from deliberations and voting on the matter when it comes before the council.
- The Mayor emphasized the importance of maintaining integrity in the process and suggested that council members who speak at Planning Commission meetings should recuse themselves from related council votes.
- Clarified that there is only one official spokesperson for the city.
- Encouraged residents to contact their district council members with concerns rather than council members from other districts.
- Announced he would be dissolving all mayor's committees currently listed on website.
- Mentioned the need to schedule a special meeting to discuss property tax issues.

Council Member Keith Anderson (District 1, Post 1):

- Stated he had nothing to report.

Council Member Gary Ates (District 1, Post 2):

- Stated he had nothing to report.

Council Member Lonnie Tedders (District 2, Post 2):

- Stated he had nothing to report.

Council Member Shane Savant (District 3, Post 2):

Initiated a discussion about Havenwood II apartments:

1. Leasing Status:

- o Savant asked if Havenwood II was currently leasing and moving people in.
- o Fire Chief Brock Wilcher confirmed that approximately six apartments were currently occupied.

2. Water Pressure Concerns:

- o Savant inquired about the sufficiency of city services, particularly water pressure.
- o Fire Chief Wilcher reported that one building's sprinkler system did not have adequate water pressure.

- Savant expressed concern about this, especially given the potential fire hazard in an apartment complex.
3. Compliance and Occupancy:
 - Savant asked about the complex's Certificate of Occupancy (CO) status.
 - Fire Chief Wilcher clarified that Matt Kelly, the county fire chief, had signed off on the CO for the premises.
 - It was noted that one person had already moved into the building with insufficient sprinkler pressure.
 4. City's Response:
 - Savant emphasized the need to address this issue promptly.
 - City Manager Richard Newbern acknowledged the concern and stated they would follow up on the matter.
 5. Testing and Approval Process:
 - There was discussion about whether all buildings had been tested for water pressure.
 - It was clarified that only one of the five buildings had insufficient pressure for its sprinkler system.
 6. Business Licensing:
 - Fire Chief Wilcher mentioned that Havenwood II was in the process of obtaining a business license.
 7. Jurisdictional Clarity:
 - Savant confirmed that the apartment complex is within city limits, emphasizing the city's responsibility in addressing these concerns.
 8. Next Steps:
 - The council agreed that this was an issue that needed immediate attention.
 - City Manager Newbern indicated they would follow up on the water pressure concerns and compliance issues.
- Commented on the recent back-to-school events:
 - Noted the success of the backpack drive.
 - Suggested combining multiple back-to-school events into one larger event next year.
 - Mentioned that Dre Day organizers are willing to participate in or support a combined event.

IX. Upcoming Meetings

- Next Work Session: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 @ 6:00 PM
- Next Regular Council Meeting: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 @ 7:00 PM

X. Public Comments

1. 1.Melissa Barker, Chamber of Commerce President, provided updates on upcoming events including a job fair, bingo night, small business course, and plans for Country Fest in October.
2. Brian Lucas raised concerns about utility billing procedures:
 - Questioned the requirement for providing lease agreements to the city for utility services.
 - Expressed privacy concerns about sharing lease details between landlords and tenants with the city.
 - Suggested reverting to a previous system where property owners could sign a simple form confirming tenant occupancy for utility purposes.
 - City Clerk Candace Summerall responded that she is reviewing utility billing procedures and considering implementing a rental property registration system to simplify the process.
 - Summerall assured Lucas she would look into his concerns and get back to him with potential solutions.

XI. Executive Session

Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Tedders, to enter executive session. Motion passed unanimously. Regular session ended at 8:42

Executive session was called to order at 8:49

The council entered executive session to discuss real estate matters and potential litigation

Meeting to discuss or vote on authorizing negotiations to purchase, dispose of or lease property as provided in O.C.G.A § 50-14-3(b)(1).

Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Anderson, to Exit executive session. Motion passed unanimously. 9:04 PM

XII. Adjournment

Motion by Council Member Ates, seconded by Council Member Anderson, to adjourn meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM