



APPROVED MINUTES
Cochran City Council
Tuesday, May 21, 2024
Special Called Meeting @ 6:30PM

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 by the Mayor**
- II. Invocation**
- III. Pledge of Allegiance**
- IV. Attendance**
- V. Adopt Agenda/Minutes**

I. Call to Order

Mayor Billy Yeomans called the meeting to order 6:33.

II. Invocation

The invocation was given by Council Member Carla Coley.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Yeomans led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. Attendance

Mayor/Council Members Present: Mayor Billy Yeomans, Keith Anderson, Carla Coley, Andrew Lemmon, Lonnie Tedders, Shane Savant (by phone)

Council Member Absent: Gary Ates

City Staff Present: Richard Newbern (City Manager), Candace Summerall (City Clerk)

City Staff Absent: Jim Elliott (City Attorney)

Mayor Yeomans noted that Council Member Savant participated by telecommunication but would not count towards quorum or have voting privileges.

V. Adopt Agenda/Minutes

A motion was made by Council Member Lemmon and seconded by Council Member Coley to accept the agenda as provided. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Agenda Items

Mayor Yeomans stated this was a special called work session solely to discuss the proposed FY 2024-25 city budget. No other topics would be entertained.

ITEM #1 - Discussion of Proposed FY 24/25 Budget Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern

City Manager Richard Newbern thanked the council and department heads for their work on the budget proposal. He noted a change from the previous version - the Social Security contribution rate was corrected from 0.0762% down to 0.062%, decreasing most department budgets slightly. However, the roughly \$30,000 in savings was reallocated to the Clerk Administration budget for employee merit pay, longevity pay, certification pay and degree incentives, increasing that budget line from \$1,103,325 to \$1,147,425.

Employee compensation programs discussion:

Merit Pay

- Based on annual performance evaluations
- Council requested City Manager model various percentage increases

Certification Pay

- Incentivize employees to obtain certifications/training beneficial to city
- Concerns about retroactively paying current staff for certifications already obtained
- Council asked to see costs for certifications current staff already have as well as go-forward policy

Longevity Pay

- One-time payments at 5, 10, 15, 20+ year milestones
- Council discussed various dollar amounts per milestone year
- Requested cost modeling on doing \$100 per year (e.g. \$500 at 5 years, \$1000 at 10 years)

Degree Pay

- 5% pay increase for completing degree program relevant to job duties
- Potentially 2-3 current employees eligible

Retention Challenges

Council Member Coley cited retention challenges in the fire department and suggested to allocate an additional \$30,000 to \$35,000 to the fire department salary budget in order to provide raises for current staff, especially lieutenants, college firefighters and lead firefighters. The suggestion was seconded by Council Member Savant.

Council Member Anderson argued that raises should be considered across all departments if market rates are not competitive. City Manager Newbern agreed to model budget impacts for various raise scenarios across all departments.

Highlights:

- The current proposed budget draft is Version 4.0 dated 5/21/2024
- Full-time salaries equate to \$2.3 million
- Social Security contributions were corrected from 0.0762% to 0.062%, reducing department budgets

- \$62,125 is allocated for merit raises, certifications, longevity, and degree incentives under Clerk Administration
- Review of longevity pay tiers at 5, 10, 15, and 20 year milestones, potentially \$100 per year of service. Council Member Tedders recommended \$100 for every five years.
- Review of percentage pay increases for certifications earned by employees
- Review of 5% pay increase for earning a college degree relevant to job duties
- \$30,000-35,000 proposed increase to Fire Department salaries to provide raises for firefighters, lieutenants, etc.
- Discussion of past police department raises and desire to provide comparable adjustments for fire department

Council provided guidance on finalizing numbers for salary adjustments to present at the public budget hearing on 6/4/2024.

VII. City Manager Discussion/Updates

City Manager Newbern discussed the services provided under the gas contract with the City of Hawkinsville and a need to review invoices in more detail.

VIII. Council Discussion Items

Hawkinsville Gas Contract

Council Member Coley asked about the contract with the City of Hawkinsville to provide gas services. She noted the contract states the city will provide receipts of actual costs each month, but the invoices only show the \$11,000 flat monthly fee. She requested details on which two Hawkinsville employees are providing services and copies of the receipts for actual costs incurred.

Mayor Yeomans explained the background - that the joint contract was negotiated when the city could not afford to maintain gas services independently. He stated the \$132,000 annual cost seems high but is necessary to have trained personnel.

Water/Streets Staffing

Council Member Coley also requested details on staffing levels and positions in the water department versus the street/drainage department over the past 4 years. The budget for streets/drainage has increased significantly despite no new positions being added. Willie Farrow, Public Works Director, stated no net new positions were added, but there was a transfer of one employee from water to streets about a year ago, impacting that budget. He also referenced the 2022 budget, stating that it was more in line with what numbers were needed in the budget for 2024/2025 due to two full time maintenance techs with vacant posts this previous year.



IX. Announcement of Upcoming Meetings

- Public Budget Hearing: 6/4/2024 at 6:30pm
- Council Work Session: 6/11/2024 at 6:00pm
- Council Meeting: 6/11/2024 at 7:00pm

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:47 pm.

- A. Meeting to discuss pending or potential litigation with legal counsel and to discuss or vote on settlement provided in O.C.G.A. §50-14-2(1).
- ✓ B. 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).
- ✓ C. Meeting to discuss or vote on the acquisition, disposition or lease of real estate by the city O.C.G.A §50-14-3(b)(1).
- ✓ D. Meeting to discuss hiring, compensation, evaluation, or disciplinary action for a specific public officer or employee as provided in O.C.G.A §50-14-3(b)(2).
- ✓ E. Meeting to discuss or interview an applicant to be executive head of a department O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(1).
- F. Meeting to discuss records that are exempt from disclosure 50-14-3(b)(4).


Candace Sumner
City Clerk

