



**APPROVED MINUTES
Cochran City Council
Tuesday, April 16, 2024
Special Called Meeting @ 6:30 PM**

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

Present: Mayor Billy Yeomans

Mayor Pro-Tem Carla Coley

Councilmembers: Keith Anderson, Gary Ates, Andrew Lemmon, Lonnie Tedders

City Manager, Richard Newbern, Interim City Clerk, Julie Peche

- I. Call to Order by the Mayor**
- II. Invocation**
- III. Pledge of Allegiance**
- IV. Attendance**
- V. Adopt Agenda**
- VI. Agenda Items**

- I.** Call to order by Mayor Billy Yeomans @ 6:31PM
- II.** The invocation was given by Councilmember Tedders.
- III.** The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilmember Coley.
- IV.** The Mayor noted 5 council members were present. Councilmember Savant was absent. There is a quorum.
- V.** Mayor asked for any corrections, additions, or deletions to the April 16, 2024, Special called meeting agenda. There were none. Councilmember Ates made the motion to accept the agenda with a second by Councilmember Lemmon. Motion passed 5/0. The Mayor noted that this is a special called work session for the 24/25FY City Budget. There will be no executive session. There will be no public input at this session unless solicited by the city council.
- VI.** Agenda Items:

ITEM #1- Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Mr. Newbern presented the line-item draft budget for the 4 primary funds of the city. Those funds are the general fund, water and sewer fund, natural gas fund and solid waste fund. Next budget meeting will be during the work session at the regular council meeting on May 14, 2024, at 6 pm then a scheduled special called work session for May 21, 2024, at 6:30 pm and the public hearing on June 4, 2024, at 6:30 pm. The public hearing is a special called meeting scheduled 1 week prior to the adoption of the budget at the regular council meeting on June 11, 2024, at 7 pm. The city is required to make the budget public 1 week prior to the public hearing. Copies will be available at City Hall on May 28, 2024. If additional information is needed for line items, Mr. Newbern will forward the requested information to all council members by email.

Budget includes:

City employee proposed cost of living increase at 3.5%. Mr. Newbern addressed the increase in the contingency benefits under Clerk/Administration from \$15,000 to \$47,075 which includes the previously discussed merit pay (at the city retreat) for all city employees.

The general fund budget is approximately \$4.5 million. The total personnel expenses, for 49 full-time employees, is close to \$2.9 million or 66% of the general fund budget, which is in line with most city budgets. This total expense includes salaries, overtime, and all benefits including the \$14,000+ increase for insurance coverage previously approved by council.

All positions are fully budgeted whether they are currently filled or not. The Fire department has filed for a federal AFG Safer grant which would fully fund 3 additional positions and the Police Department has requested 1 additional full-time officer which is not included in the current budget. This additional officer would add \$50,000 to \$60,000 to the budget.

The budget includes the 5% increase on water/ sewer/ gas/ solid waste rates which go into effect on July 1.

The millage rate remains at 10.931 which generates \$103,375 per mill.

SPLOST is up for renewal on May 21, 2024.

Per the auditor's request, the hotel/motel tax and Chamber budget has been set up separately in the 24/25 budget and is noted on page 16. The Chamber has requested an increase in funding.

All outside agency funding currently remains the same in the current draft.

Gas fund expenditures include \$16,500 for a rectifier bed upgrade, \$42,000 for a steel gas pipe replacement that must be completed this year, and \$33,000 for the proposed gas meter upgrade project.

Debt service is fully funded.

Note: \$25,000 for the Airport's new building was not funded in the 24/25 budget. It was funded from the current budget as voted on by the council at the April meeting.

"Insurance other than employee benefit" is the property and casualty coverage (GIRMA) for all property owned by the city, which currently is budgeted at \$125,000. These charges are divided as line items between all the departments.

This ended the summary by Mr. Newbern.

The Mayor asked the council for input. Councilmember Coley asked if the council could go through the budget page by page. The Mayor and all council members agreed.

Budget review-Page 1

Council member Coley asked why mobile home revenues are down. Funds come from the county. Mr. Newbern will confirm revenues.

Technology fee on fines. Mr. Newbern will verify collected amount with the police department for these fees.

Check on revenue for sign permits. Mr. Newbern will verify sign permit revenues.
Council member Ates asked about Alcohol license fee. Mr. Newbern verified that was the fee for the original application.

Budget review-Page 2

Councilmember Coley: Cemetery lot fees. Fee per lot? \$750 for 1 and \$1,500 for 2. Verify charges. Did we only sell 5.3 lots this past year. Provide breakdown of fees and lots sold. What is CDP Insurance reimbursements? That is an estimate for any damaged or wrecked vehicles.

Budget review-Page 3

Councilmember Coley: Communications expense. What is this spent on? Mr. Newbern will verify it was used for the microphone system.
With the amount budgeted for employee wellness checkups, that would cover 60 employees. Mr. Newbern budgeted over what was needed for 49 employees. He budgeted for 50 employees at \$300.00 each. Insurance may cover these checkups, which would lower this amount significantly.

Budget review-Page 4

Councilmember Coley asked about ordinance codification of \$2,500. This is maintenance of our website. Looks like there is a cushion on this amount.

Insurance other than employee benefits. Councilmember Coley stated that Mr. Newbern already touched on this earlier to clarify that it is property and casualty coverage. She noticed that in some departments it almost doubled, went down in some, and had a small change in others. Please verify how each department's expenditures were calculated. Mr. Newbern based figures on exposure, slip, and fall and property damage. He will re- run the numbers to check the calculations for all departments.

Who travels under Clerk and Administration? Mr. Newbern stated that covers the Planning Commission training and GICH team.

Will we still be spending \$1,800 on property tax software? Yes, that is GSI's monthly fee that we will continue to pay.

Budget review-Page 5

Councilmember Coley asked about contingency benefits and how that worked because it was built into other departments. Wastewater Treatment Plant at \$10,000, Water Division at \$15,000, Gas at \$10,000, Solid Waste at \$12,000 Mr. Newbern stated those contingency funds are always there if needed. The Administrative contingency fund has always been in the budget at \$15,000 but we added \$32,075 for the merit bonuses. Mr. Newbern will work on the Merit pay plan.

Budget review-Page 6 no questions

Budget review-Page 7 no questions

Budget review-Page 8 no questions

Budget review-Page 9 no questions

Budget review-Page 9

Councilmember Coley questioned the \$52,000+ increase in the salaries under the Street and Drainage budget.

Mr. Newbern clarified that this is the actual funding for a full crew of 9 positions. There is not an increase in positions. There is currently 2 positions open. Councilmember Coley stated that it looks like we are funding new positions. Mr. Newbern will check on this allocation for the previous years but there are no new positions.

Councilmember Tedders asked about Code enforcement and the funding for demolitions. Mr. Newbern stated that the position was vacant for parts of this last year and that is why the numbers are down. We have plenty of potential houses for demolition which we do plan to pursue.

Budget review-Page 10 no questions

Budget review-Page 11

Councilmember Coley asked where the funding, that we moved from the DDA budget, was used. Mr. Newbern stated that the funding was unspent and remains in the general fund balance. Why are we anticipating the funding to decrease for water charges by \$42,100? Mr. Newbern based the amount on current collections for this year. We do have several meter heads to be replaced. Will provide an update on this replacement.

Questions on figures on water tap fees. Projected income includes the fees for Havenwood II that have not been paid.

Budget review-Page 12

Councilmember Coley questioned the jump from \$600 to \$6,000 in general supplies and materials. Is this a typo? Mr. Newbern will confirm but thinks \$6,000 is more accurate based on the current cost of supplies.

Budget review-Page 13

Councilmember Coley asked about education and training for the water department. Increase from \$3,000 to \$18,200. This is not accurate. There is education and training but no more than \$3,000 is needed. Mr. Newbern will make the correction.

Budget review-Page 14 no questions

Budget review-Page 15

Councilmember Coley asked why administrative overhead reimbursement went from \$61,730 to \$120,000? Mr. Newbern stated this is the support of the city general fund, or the rebate from the gas system to the general fund.

Councilmember Coley asked for a copy of the contract for gas services from the City of Hawkinsville. Mr. Newbern stated that this covers 2 employees and their vehicles at \$11,000 per month. Mr. Newbern will provide a copy of the contract for review.

Budget review-Page 16 no questions.

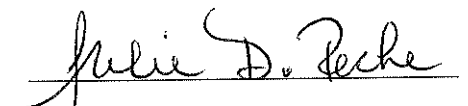
Mayor stated that if there were additional questions, councilmembers can address them at the next budget review.

Mr. Newbern will provide a report to the council and update the draft budget for the next review. The Mayor thanked all council members for their work on this review.

Motion to adjourn by Councilmember Ates, with a second by Councilmember Anderson.

Motion passed. 5/0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:48PM


Julie D. Peche, Interim City Clerk

