



MINUTES
Cochran City Council
Tuesday, February 14, 2017
Regular Meeting @ 7:00 PM

Community House located at 192 South Third Street, Cochran, GA 31014

Present: Mayor Gary Ates, Mayor Pro Tem Andrew Lemmon, Councilmembers Regina Gooch, Jon Thrower, Charles Cranford, and Fleming Gilman.

Absent: None

Call to order by Mayor Ates. The invocation was given by Mayor Ates followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Councilmember Thrower.

Mayor Pro Tem Lemmon made a motion and Councilmember Thrower seconded the motion to approve the Agenda. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Agenda Items

Item # 1 – Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Consider approving contract with Georgia DOT to accept a federal and state grant to help finance City Airport improvements; specifically, crack sealing the runway and erecting a forty (40') foot AWOS communications tower. Airport Authority Chairman, Bill Coody, addressed the Council and stated that the addition of the AWOS tower will have a major positive impact on the operations of the airport. This is an opportunity to obtain 75% financing for this tower upgrade and the improvements to the runway. This will also include new striping for the runway. The City's cost would be 25% of the total grant amount of \$151,115, or \$7556. The Airport Authority will reimburse the City ½ of this cost. Councilmember Gilman asked for more specifics about the AWOS tower. Mr. Coody explained this tower would measure wind, cloud cover, humidity, altimeter settings, etc. Councilmember Cranford asked if the fencing project was complete and Mr. Coody stated it has been completed. The airport perimeter is fenced with the exception of the hangar area but that is in line to be done. Councilmember Gilman asked if the County was paying anything towards the airport projects. Mr. Coody said no. He said he had spoken with County Commissioner, Bob Brockman, in the past but he has not been willing to contribute. He will approach Mr. Brockman about a 3-way split in the cost but did not know if he would agree. Mr. Coody made reference to a resolution passed in 2010 by Commissioner Polsky and was optimistic that the County may help with some services to the airport. Councilmember Thrower stated he was concerned that the City is losing revenue because the airport is not in the City limits. He stated it needed to be annexed into the City. Councilmember Gilman stated that there is revenue from hangar rental. Councilmember Thrower clarified that because the airport is not in the City limits, there can be no tax revenue from such rentals. Mr. Coody said the residents of Bleckley County needed to be educated that the annexation of the airport would not affect any private property and that county residents' property around the airport would not be annexed into

the City. Councilmember Gilman asked if the City received any of the tax revenue from fuel sales at the airport. Mr. Coody answered that all that revenue goes to the Airport Authority. Councilmember Gilman made a motion and Councilmember Cranford seconded the motion to approve the contract with Georgia DOT to accept a federal and state grant to help finance City Airport improvements; specifically, crack sealing the runway and erecting a forty (40') foot AWOS communications tower. The motion failed with Councilmembers Gilman, Cranford, and Mayor Pro Tem voting in favor and Councilmembers Thrower and Gooch opposed.

Item #2 – Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Consider one-year renewal of contract with insurance brokerage firm, ShawHankins, for employee health benefits with Blue Cross/Blue Shield and One America. Wes Ross, representative of Shaw Hankins Insurance Brokers addressed the Council giving them a snapshot of the benefits included in the renewal proposal. He explained that the City had a 129% loss ratio last year and because of that it affected renewal premiums. The initial renewal bid from the current carrier, Blue Cross/Blue Shield came back at a 51% increase. Shaw Hankins was able to negotiate rates down to a 34% increase for the exact same plan we have now. After meetings with Shaw Hankins, City Clerk, Jill Cooper, and City Manager, Richard Newbern, and reviewing all viable coverage options, a comparable plan was found with a 27% premium increase. They felt this plan and cost would be the best option for employees and for the City. The City will absorb the entire premium increase, thereby protecting the employees from any payroll deduction increases. The City will no longer offer deductible reimbursement for employees' deductible costs. The renewal will be effective March 1, 2017. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Mayor Pro Tem Lemmon seconded the motion to approve the proposed one-year renewal of the contract with insurance brokerage firm, ShawHankins, for employee health benefits with Blue Cross/Blue Shield and One America. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Item # 3 – Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Mr. Newbern read two ordinances prepared by City Attorney, Leo Phillips. One reduced the distance required from a residence for package sales to be allowed. The other ordinance eliminated the distance requirement from a residence altogether. Councilmember Gilman made a motion and Mayor Pro Tem Lemmon seconded the motion to approve the amendment to the alcoholic beverages ordinance to remove the distance restriction that package beer/wine sales must be from a residence. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Item # 4 – Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Consider appointing a representative to the vacant District 1 Council seat. Councilmember Gooch nominated Keith Anderson to fill the vacancy of the District 1 Council seat. Mr. Anderson addressed the Council and expressed his desire to fill the vacancy. Mayor Ates asked if there were any other nominations from the Council. There were none. Councilmember Gilman asked if there had to be a background check done for anyone nominated for the seat. Councilmember Thrower stated that a background check would need to be done first before an appointment could be made.

Item # 5 – Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Consider approving list of City roads for re-striping. Public Works Director, Jacob Daniels, addressed the Council and stated that South 8th Street would replace Oak Street for re-striping at the request of Councilmember Cranford because he wanted Oak re-paved first. He said this change should not affect the cost estimate. Mayor Pro Tem Lemmon asked if any streets could be added. Mr. Daniels explained that he had a \$40,000 budget for re-striping and it would be tight to add any streets but he would be glad to look at the particular road that the Mayor Pro Tem wanted added. Police Chief Chris Coley asked if this list included 3rd Street and Mr. Daniels said he did not recommend it be done right now. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gilman seconded the motion to accept the re-striping list. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Item # 6 – Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Consider approving changes to City bank account signers to add Tracy Jones, Finance Administrator and deleting Jill Cooper, exiting City Clerk. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Mayor Pro Tem Lemmon seconded the motion to add Financial Administrator, Tracy Jones, as a signer on the City's bank accounts but not to remove Jill Cooper at this time. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Item # 7 – Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Consider approving annexation of several government-owned properties into the City of Cochran. Code Enforcement Officer, Willie Farrow, addressed the Council, providing two lists of proposed annexation of properties. He pointed out all these properties have access to City services and showed exactly what City services they already have. Councilmember Gilman asked why the City would want to annex the College property into the City limits. He also stated that he believed the City limit signs were not correctly located. City Manager, Richard Newbern, explained the lists could be voted on with one motion. Mr. Farrow explained that no private properties will be annexed and could not be annexed by law. Councilmember Cranford questioned how the IDA was able to afford the purchase of one of the properties on the annexation list. Mr. Farrow stated that he did not have that information. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gooch seconded the motion to approve the annexation of properties on both lists into the City limits. The motion failed with Councilmembers Thrower, Gooch, and Mayor Pro Tem voting in favor and Councilmembers Cranford and Gilman opposed. Mayor Ates addressed the Council asking the Council to remember the duty of the Council to do what is best for the City and to help it grow; not to do what is best for themselves or an individual.

Item # 8 – Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Consider authorizing monthly SPLOST payments to the 2006 SPLOST account. Mr. Newbern stated that the City has paid \$150,000 toward the \$448,000 debt owed to the 2006 SPLOST account. He would like to continue the annual \$70,000 budgeted payment for reimbursement and in addition, a monthly payment, not to exceed \$10,000. He will also continue to find every source of revenue available to pay the debt off as soon as possible. Councilmember Thrower stated that this is a very slow way to reduce this debt, adding only \$40,000 to the budgeted \$70,000 for this fiscal year. He stated this would not pay off the debt by the time of the next referendum. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Cranford seconded the motion to authorize monthly SPLOST payments to the 2006 SPLOST account. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Item # 9 – Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Consider authorizing rental of ECO Skid Steer mulching head for underbrush clearing on right-of-ways which would be eligible to be paid from TIA funds. Public Works Director, Jacob Daniels explained that this equipment rental would cost \$5,500 per month and he would like to rent for two months. Mr. Daniels said he could eliminate three years of right-of-way work in two months with this machine. Councilmember Gilman asked what it would cost to purchase this piece of equipment. Mr. Daniels said about \$100,000. Councilmember Cranford asked when Public Works can get to the Wynn bottom area. Mr. Daniels said they could not at this time because the excessive rain we have had recently has the ground too wet to support the equipment. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gooch seconded the motion to authorize two months' rental of ECO Skid Steer mulching head for underbrush clearing on right-of-ways. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Item # 10 – Presented by City Manager, Richard Newbern

Consider extending 1.5 million loan contract with GEFA a period of 90 days from March 3rd to June 3rd, 2017. City Engineer, Skip Layton, explained to the Council that the extension is needed due to delays in completing the project. GEFA will grant the extension with the approval of Council. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Mayor Pro Tem Lemmon seconded the motion to approve the extension of the 1.5 million loan contract with GEFA a period of 90 days from March 3rd to June 3rd, 2017. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Public Comments (Please note that every individual who signs up to speak prior to the meeting will be given a total of five minutes to address the Mayor and Council.) Lisa Blackshear addressed the Council concerning her request for gravel for her driveway. She said she was told that someone on her street was brought gravel by the City but did not understand why she could not get some for her driveway. Councilmember Thrower stated that Public Works Director, Jacob Daniels, would look at it. She said she has spoken with Mr. Daniels but he would not do it. Ms. Blackshear also wanted reimbursement for what she paid for private garbage service since she cancelled her City service. She stated that the Council had agreed to this. Councilmember Thrower stated that Council did not agree to reimburse her for private garbage collection, they only agreed to allow her to cancel her garbage with the City.

Mayor Updates

City Manager Discussion/Items/Updates

- Chamber meeting tomorrow, at Sugarberry's at 12:00 pm.
- IDA meeting Tuesday, February 20th at Chamber of Commerce at 8:00 am.
- GMA Conference in Savannah, GA June 23rd-27th. Deadline to submit class selections-March 7th. Mayor Ates said all Councilmembers should be able to go. Mr. Newbern said he would have to check the budget.
- The position of City Clerk has been advertised and the deadline for applications is February 28th.
- The position of Maintenance Tech I has been advertised and the deadline for applications is February 24th.

Department updates.

City Clerk, Jill Cooper, updated Council on plans to remodel the front lobby at City Hall to make security improvements as well as electrical/data improvements. City Engineer, Skip Layton, has done some preliminary drawings. Mr. Layton outlined suggested plans which would include two service windows and one ADA service window. Mrs. Cooper asked Council to consider moving forward with this when cost estimates are completed.

Code Enforcement Officer, Willie Farrow, advised that the asbestos tests for 110 Wynn Circle were negative so the demolition can now be scheduled. He is currently working with the families of deceased owners of three dilapidated houses. There are also two houses in Wynn bottom that they are ready to move forward on.

City Engineer, Skip Layton, updated Council of ongoing project progress. There are four different crews working in the area. American Infrastructure, the contractor for GEFA Phase I Sewer Rehab, should be finished within 30 days. He and Consolidated Pipe met with the hospital and the schools to coordinate changing out the large commercial meters. The meter project should be completed in about eight weeks. The Ash Street water tank is complete and work has begun on the Dykes Street well. The HAM radio antennae on the Ann Street well will come down permanently as they have found another location. The Lake Linda lift station should be complete by the end of April. He is currently working with EPD on requirements to proceed. Any remaining funds will be used on find and fix projects. Mr. Layton is also working with the contractor to get a price to complete the 2015 CDBG project. The 2016 CDBG project is still in the design stage. He is also helping with the drainage issue at the Recreation Department. It will be a three or four-month project and could interfere with some recreation activities.

Council Discussion Items

Councilmember Gooch proposed having another cleanup day like the City did in 2015 in celebration of Earth Day. Public Works Director, Jacob Daniels, said it would be easy to do again because providing roll-off containers was already part of the City's contract with Advanced Disposal. City Manager, Richard Newbern, said we can certainly look into planning. Council would need to make a motion to proceed and could have in

conjunction with Earth Day again this year, which is April 22, 2017. Councilmember Gooch made a motion and Councilmember Thrower seconded the motion to approve an Earth Day Cleanup event on April 22, 2017. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gooch seconded the motion to go into Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gooch seconded the motion to come out of Executive Session and enter into Regular Session. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Gooch made a motion and Mayor Pro Tem Lemmon seconded the motion to terminate the services of Attorney Mr. Chidester and seek a new attorney to represent the City of Cochran in the Wayne Sapp case.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gooch seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Adjourn @ 11:30 pm

(Seal)

Jill Cooper, Interim City Clerk