



## **DRAFT MINUTES**

**June 3rd, 2025**

**Cochran City Council**

**Special Called Meeting @ 6:00 PM**

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

### **City Council**

### **City Staff**

Billy Yeomans, Mayor	Richard Newbern, City Manager
Trecia Gardner (District 1, Post 1)	Candace Summerall, City Clerk
Gary Ates, Council Member (District 1, Post 2)	Jim Elliott, City Attorney
Carla Coley, Council Member (District 2 Post 1)	
Lonnie Tedders, Council Member (District 2, Post 2)	
Dianne Lester (District 3, Post 1)	
Shane Savant, Council Member (District 3, Post 2)	

### **I. Call to Order by the Mayor**

Mayor Billy Yeomans called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Invocation was led by Mayor Billy Yeomans followed by pledge of allegiance led by Councilmember Lester.

### **II. Agenda Items**

Motion: Council Member Ates moved to approve agenda as presented

Second: Council Member Tedders

Vote: Unanimous approval

#### **1. Public Hearing for the FY 2025/26 Budget**

Mayor Yeomans called the public hearing to order at 6:04 PM.

Mayor Yeomans explained that this public hearing was advertised as required by law and in accordance with the Official Code of Georgia Annotated 36-81-5. The budget is based on the current millage rate for the City of Cochran at 10.875 mil. The proposed budget has been an ongoing process for the past few months with input from citizens, outside agencies, department heads, council, city manager, and mayor.

The current proposed budget for FY 2025-2026 is \$9,417,874, but this could change either up or down based on the next two work sessions on June 5th and 10th, 2025. Formal adoption for the FY 2025-26 Cochran City Budget is scheduled for Tuesday, June 10th, 2025 at the regular scheduled city council meeting.

Mayor Yeomans established rules for speaking during the public hearing, limiting comments to budget-related items only and providing a maximum of ten minutes per speaker.

## **Public Comments:**

### **A. Melissa Barker (Chamber of Commerce)**

Ms. Barker addressed the council regarding a request for an increase for the Chamber of Commerce that she has been providing since March. She noted that the Chamber continues to grow and expand its activities and increase tourism efforts. She requested that the council consider an increase in the Chamber's budget allocation.

Council Member Savant asked for clarification on when the request was submitted, and Ms. Barker confirmed she had provided the same letter at the retreat and again in previous months.

The public hearing closed at 6:09 PM.

### **2. Consider extending liquor licenses by six (6) months for Bobby Patel to allow more time for liquor store to be completed and opened**

Mayor Yeomans explained this item was moved to tonight's meeting due to his unavailability for Thursday's work session. He noted that Mr. Patel had provided a timeline as requested by council and emphasized Mr. Patel's significant investment of approximately \$1.2 million already spent on what will be a \$6 million total investment.

Bobby Patel and Jay Patel were present to answer questions. Jay Patel explained that their contractor indicated they could potentially open the liquor store portion while continuing work on the gas station and convenience store portions.

Council Member Coley apologized to Mr. Patel, noting that the city had given a 12-month deadline that he wasn't made aware of for about eight months, which was the city's fault, not his.

Council Member Savant provided detailed background on the timeline issue. He noted that in October 2023, the city council voted to put a restriction requiring liquor stores to be open within one year, with that timeline starting in January 2024. However, the notification letter wasn't sent to the Patels until June 6, 2024, which was already six months into the 12-month limitation period. Given this notification delay, Council Member Savant indicated he would support the extension but emphasized this should be the final extension.

Discussion revealed that Georgia DOT approvals took 18 months to obtain, which significantly delayed the project. Bobby Patel explained the challenges with obtaining approvals from Georgia DOT and Georgia Power, emphasizing that these delays were beyond his control.

City Manager Newbern clarified that the current extension expires July 30, 2025, and a six-month extension would extend the deadline to January 30, 2026.

Motion: Council Member Ates moved to give Bobby Patel a six-month extension.

Second: Council Member Tedders

Vote: Unanimous approval

### **3. Review and discussion of proposed budget for affiliated/outside organizations and community partners**

Mayor Yeomans led discussion on various outside agency funding requests:

Airport Authority Grant Match: City Manager Newbern confirmed the Airport Authority's proposal to cover the city's one-third obligation (\$66,667) for the T-hangar project, with the city paying back its portion over three years at approximately \$22,200-\$23,000 per year.

Industrial Development Authority (IDA): City Manager Newbern reported that the city had paid \$8,900 (not to exceed \$10,000) for engineering assistance with a grant application that was unfortunately not funded. Another opportunity to resubmit may be available in 3-4 months.

Recreation Department: Council Member Savant proposed a 5% increase for the recreation department, noting that their funding has remained at \$80,000 since 2020 while costs for goods and services have increased. Council Member Coley supported this, noting the recreation director handles multiple responsibilities without health benefits.

Mayor Yeomans noted that the joint resolution establishing the recreation commission was created in August 1977 and is up for renewal in June 2026. He also pointed out that the city is solely funding new parks (Peyton Williams and Cochran Community Park) without county contribution.

After discussion, there was consensus to increase recreation department funding by 5% (\$4,000 increase).

Library: No specific requests were reported from the Tessie Norris Library. The city contributes approximately \$36,000 to the library and \$6,000 to the regional library system, totaling \$42,650.

Downtown Development Authority (DDA): A letter was received from the DDA indicating they would not need additional funding and are self-sufficient.

Chamber of Commerce: City Manager Newbern explained that the Chamber is funded at \$25,500 annually through Hotel Motel tax revenues. The city receives approximately \$21,200 in Hotel Motel tax but supplements this with \$4,300 from the general fund to reach the \$25,500 total. Council Member Coley noted that RV parks will contribute additional Hotel Motel tax revenue when they become operational.

### **III. Mayor/Council Discussion Items**

Council Member Gardner reminded everyone about the Dre Day Festival beginning this weekend.

Discussion occurred regarding upcoming Juneteenth events on June 19th and 21st, with City Clerk Summerall confirming that notifications to the city had been received for both dates.

### **IV. City Manager Discussion Items**

No additional items were discussed.

### **V. Executive Session**

No executive session needed.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Yeomans adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:33 PM

**Minutes prepared and submitted by:**

**Candace Summerall**  
**City Clerk**

