



## APPROVED MINUTES

April 8, 2025

Cochran City Council

Regular Session @ 6:00 PM

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

### City Council

### City Staff

Billy Yeomans, Mayor	Richard Newbern, City Manager
VACANT (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 regular meeting to order at 6:02

#### **II. Invocation** led by Ken Land

#### **III. Pledge of Allegiance** led by Council Member Tedders

#### **IV. Attendance**

Mayor Yeomans confirmed that five council members were present, establishing a quorum.

#### **V. Adopt Agenda/Minutes**

1. Approve Minutes from March 11, 2025, Regular Council Meeting

**Motion:** Council Member Ates moved to approve the minutes.

**Second:** Council Member Savant

**Vote:** Unanimous approval

2. Approve Agenda for April 8, 2025, Regular Council Meeting

Council Member Coley requested adding a discussion and possible vote regarding the Roof, Windows, and Doors grant program.

**Motion to Add Item:** Council Member Coley moved to add this discussion to the agenda.

**Second:** Council Member Savant

**Vote:** 3-2 (In favor: Tedders, Coley, Savant; Against: Ates)

Mayor Yeomans requested adding an item regarding the NAACP's request for a parade route and police assistance for a Juneteenth parade.

**Motion to Add Item:** Council Member Savant moved to add this item to the agenda.

**Second:** Council Member Tedders

**Vote:** Unanimous approval

**Motion to Approve Amended Agenda:** Council Member Savant moved to approve the agenda with items 8 and 9 added.

**Second:** Council Member Tedders

**Vote:** Unanimous approval

## **VI. Public Comments**

### **A. Viktor Patel (108th Street Crescent)**

Mr. Patel detailed ongoing issues with his water meter since September. He explained that after replacement, the new meter was counting three gallons when he used one gallon, which he documented on video. Despite sharing the video with multiple city officials, the issue persisted for six months. He expressed frustration with communication difficulties with city officials and the city attorney.

Mayor Yeomans explained that when matters advance to potential litigation through citizen legal representation, city personnel must refrain from direct engagement and defer to appropriate attorney-to-attorney communication channels.

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

Ms. Barker encouraged the council to develop and enforce blight ordinances and prevent downtown buildings from being used for storage. She announced she was working with the Georgia House to develop a town hall in the auditorium next month. Ms. Barker shared numerous upcoming community events including food distributions, business events, an Easter Egg Hunt, Cochran Cleanup Day, and a second Saturday event with the Plum Tucker Band in May.

### **C. Luis Sayers (107 Palm Street)**

Mr. Sayers described how he purchased and improved a property that previously housed homeless individuals. He explained that these individuals moved to a storage building next door and were causing problems, including improper waste disposal on his property and drug use. Mr. Sayers requested city assistance in addressing the situation.

Council Member Savant requested that Mr. Sayers leave his contact information with City Hall for follow-up.

## **VII. Agenda Items**

### **1. Dianne Lester - Swearing-in Ceremony**

City Clerk Summerall administered the oath of office to Dianne Lester as the new Council Member for District 3, Post 1. Council Member Lester's family was present for the ceremony.

### **2. Proclamation for National Public Health Week**

Mayor Yeomans welcomed representatives from the Bleckley County Health Department and read a proclamation declaring April 7-13, 2025, as National Public Health Week in the City of Cochran. The proclamation highlighted the importance of public health infrastructure, mental health resources, and the public health workforce.

Council Member Coley noted that Ethan Norfleet, who works with environmental health, should also be recognized along with the female staff members.

### **3. Proclamation for Georgia Cities Week**

Mayor Yeomans read a proclamation declaring April 20-26, 2025, as Georgia Cities Week in the City of Cochran, emphasizing the importance of municipal government and its contributions to quality of life in communities.

City Clerk Summerall announced several events planned for Georgia Cities Week:

- Coffee with the Chiefs (Fire Chief Brock Wilcher and Police Chief Jeff Traywick) on April 25th, 9-10 AM at the Mule Barn
- Cochran Cleanup Day on April 26th, 9 AM-12 PM, meeting behind the Police Department
- Public works equipment display on April 26th
- Book Swap Picnic on April 27th, 1-3 PM at the City Auditorium front lawn

### **4. Public Hearing on Text Amendment (Postponed)**

Mayor Yeomans announced that the scheduled public hearing on the text amendment to add the zoning district of RV-Recreational Vehicle to the Zoning Ordinance was postponed due to lack of quorum at the Planning Commission meeting. The text amendment will be re-advertised for consideration at the May 5th Planning Commission meeting.

#### **5. Consideration of Award of Bids on Engineering Services for the Airport**

Jim Washburn, Cochran Airport Manager, presented the Airport Authority's recommendation for engineering services. He explained that the city is the sponsor of the airport, and FAA regulations restrict the sponsor from letting these types of contracts. Two firms responded: Holt Consulting (current provider) and Goodwin Mills K-Wood. The submission from Goodwin Mills was incomplete at the April 4th deadline, so they were eliminated. The Airport Authority recommended Holt Consulting.

Council Member Coley questioned the bid process, expressing concern about Holt Engineering's role. Mr. Washburn clarified that Holt did not oversee this particular bid and explained that this services contract prevents them from bidding on other airport work.

**Motion:** Council Member Tedders moved to approve the bid for Holt Engineering's services.

**Second:** Council Member Ates

**Vote:** Unanimous approval

#### **6. Discussion of Appointing Two Members to the Planning Commission**

City Manager Newbern explained that with Russell Odom's resignation and Lane Purser's decision not to seek reappointment, the Planning Commission will have two vacancies. He noted that Pamela Lawson Tolbert had been recommended by a Planning Commission member and was willing to serve.

During discussion, concerns were raised about a potential conflict of interest if Ms. Tolbert was related to a current Planning Commission member and City Council Member. Council Member Coley suggested consulting with the city attorney on this matter.

**Motion:** Council Member Coley moved to table the appointment until the April 28th meeting to verify there was no conflict of interest.

**Second:** Council Member Tedders

**Vote:** Unanimous approval

#### **7. Distribution of the Draft FY 2025/26 City Budget**

City Manager Newbern distributed the draft budget for the fiscal year starting July 1st. Key highlights included:

- General Fund: \$4,865,000
- Water and Sewer Fund: \$2,415,300 (similar to last year)
- Gas Fund: Increased from \$773,900 to \$964,000
- Solid Waste/Garbage Fund: \$1,030,000 (5.7% increase)

No tax increase is proposed; the millage rate remains at 10.875 mills. Fee adjustments include 2.5% increase in water/sewer fees, 5% adjustment in solid waste fees, and adjustments to fire and storm water fees. Personnel changes include moving the cemetery technician to the city clerk's office and funding for a deputy city clerk position.

The council will discuss the budget at the April 28th work session, with adoption targeted for June 10th.

#### **8. Discussion and Possible Vote Regarding Roof, Window, and Doors Grant Program**

Council Member Coley proposed reallocating the \$324,000 designated for the roof, windows, and doors program to renovations for the east wing of the municipal building. She suggested combining these funds with approximately \$90,000 remaining in the code enforcement line item and SPLOST 24 funds to create a substantial fund for municipal building renovations. She emphasized the importance of maintaining city buildings and creating community spaces, including renovating the auditorium for events.

Council Member Ates opposed the change, stating that the council had already voted for the program and should not backtrack. He emphasized that all three districts would benefit from the program.

Council Member Lester stated she was not familiar enough with the program to vote on the matter.

Council Member Savant supported Council Member Coley's proposal, noting that while housing rehabilitation was important, city buildings also needed attention. He argued that renovating the auditorium could benefit the community, school system, and city revenue.

Council Member Tedders opposed changing the plan, stating it would be moving backward. Mayor Yeomans outlined the program's history, noting it had been approved with specific criteria in March 2024.

**Motion:** Council Member Coley moved to use the \$324,000 of ARPA funds allocated for the roof, windows, and doors program for renovation of the east wing of the municipal building.

**Second:** Council Member Savant

**Vote:** 2-2 with Council Member Lester abstaining (In favor: Coley, Savant; Against: Ates, Tedders)

Mayor Yeomans broke the tie with a vote against the motion. The motion failed.

#### **9. NAACP Juneteenth Parade Route Request**

Mayor Yeomans explained that the NAACP had requested a parade route and police assistance for a Juneteenth parade on June 19th at 11 AM from Ash Street down 2nd Street to the courthouse.

City Clerk Summerall noted that the required form for using space behind the police department had not yet been submitted. The item was deferred until the application could be completed.

### **VIII. City Manager Discussion/Items/Updates**

City Manager Newbern provided several updates:

- Danny Smith, the new code enforcement officer, would begin work on April 14th
- City staff would meet with ICB Incorporated on April 14th at the city park site, with construction expected to begin April 21st
- Cleanup Day scheduled for April 26th in coordination with Downtown Day and Georgia Cities Week
- Plans for the engineer from Falcon to meet with the DDA regarding T-SPLOST intersection improvements
- GMA invitation to council members to attend a listening session in Reidsville on April 22nd
- Plans for lottery drawings for both the roof, windows, and doors program and the 2024 CHIP program

Council Member Coley requested information about the roof, windows, and doors program that council members could distribute to residents. Council Member Savant requested an opportunity for council members to tour homes rehabilitated through city programs.

### **IX. Council Discussion/Items**

#### **A. Council Member Ates:**

- Encouraged everyone to vote in the upcoming District 1 election
- Mentioned a recent meeting with the Mayor, City Manager, and Police Chief regarding public safety concerns
- Emphasized the need for increased police patrols and enforcement
- Welcomed Dianne Lester to the council
- Wished everyone a Happy Easter

#### **B. Council Member Coley:**

- Distributed information about National Public Health Week
- Provided details about upcoming Georgia Cities Week events
- Read a passage from "Revitalize or Die" about creating cities that make residents feel proud and connected

#### **C. Council Member Tedders:**

- Welcomed Dianne Lester to the council
- Wished everyone a Happy Easter

#### **D. Council Member Lester:**

- Thanked District 3 voters for their support
- Pledged to get up to speed on city issues quickly
- Emphasized her commitment to helping make the community better
- Thanked her family for their support during her campaign

**E. Council Member Savant:**

- Welcomed Ms. Lester to the council
- Discussed public safety concerns across all districts
- Emphasized respecting others' passions and priorities even when opinions differ
- Noted the council's job is to progress the city as a whole
- Wished everyone a Happy Easter

**F. Mayor Yeomans:**

- Welcomed Council Member Lester
- Wished everyone a Happy Easter
- Reminded everyone to vote, be safe, and look out for each other

**X. Announcement of Upcoming Meetings and Events**

- Runoff Election District 1: April 15th, 7 AM-7 PM
- Budget Work Session: Monday, April 28th at 6 PM
- Next Work Session: Thursday, May 8th at 6 PM
- Next Regular Council Meeting: Tuesday, May 13th at 6 PM
- Planning Commission Meeting: Monday, May 5th at 6:30 PM
- Three-Day Fun Day: Friday, April 11th at 1 PM at 106 Diamond Street

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Yeomans adjourned the meeting at 8:10 PM

Minutes prepared and submitted by:



Candace Summerall  
City Clerk

