

COCHRAN CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MINUTES

AUGUST 11, 2026

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MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

August 11, 2026

The Regular Meeting of the Cochran City Council was held on August 11th, 6:00 PM in the City Auditorium, 102 N Second Street, Cochran, Georgia with the following present:

Carla Coley, Mayor

Trecia Gardner, Councilmember

Lonnie Tedders, Councilmember

Angela Redding, Interim City Manager

Jim Elliott, City Attorney

Shane Savant, Mayor Pro Tempore

Gary Ates, Councilmember

Dianne Lester, Councilmember

Bonnie Raffield, Interim City Clerk

Staff present: Willie Farrow, Public Works – Brock Wilcher, Fire Chief – Danny Smith, Code Enforcement – Jeff Trawick, Police Chief

CALL TO ORDER: The Meeting was called to order by Mayor Carla Coley at 6:15 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Prayer was led by Councilwoman Gardner followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: A quorum was established.

Attendee's Name	Title	Present	Absent
Carla Coley	Mayor	√	
Shane Savant	Mayor Pro Tempore, District Three, Post Two	√	
Trecia Gardner	Councilwoman, District One, Post One	√	
Gary Ates	Councilman, District One, Post Two	√	
Rufus Veal	Councilman, District Two, Post One		√
Lonnie Tedders	Councilman, District Two, Post Two	√	
Dianne Lester	Councilwoman, District Three, Post One	√	

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – August 11, 2026:

Mayor Coley called for approval of August 11, 2026, agenda. There being no additions or deletions, a motion was made by Councilmember Tedders and seconded by Councilmember Lester to approve the agenda and the motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – The Consent Agenda included approval of the July 9, 2026, Work Session Minutes and the July 14, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes.

Mayor Coley noted that two corrections were noted to the July 14 minutes: a spelling correction under the Falcon Design presentation and clarification that the action regarding the sign ordinance was a **text amendment to the sign ordinance**, rather than adoption of a sign variance ordinance.

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Savant and seconded by Councilmember Tedders to approve the Consent Agenda with the noted corrections and the motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS –

Ethel King addressed Council during public comment. Council advised that the appropriate staff or council representative would follow up with her regarding her concerns.

Steve Brown, representing True Essential Services, requested information regarding connecting his business to the City's water system. Mr. Brown stated that the business is located at 568 East Highway 26 and is situated between two schools where water service is already available. Council requested that Mr. Brown provide his contact information to the City Clerk so that staff could follow up with him regarding the request.

Brittany Foskey, owner of two businesses in Cochran, addressed Council concerning utility billing, late fees, payment drop-off times, and water disconnection procedures. Ms. Foskey explained that payments for her businesses had been placed in the City's drop box but were apparently received after the stated cutoff time, resulting in late fees and disconnection-related charges. She expressed concern about consistency in the application of fees and emphasized the importance of supporting local businesses.

Council acknowledged her concerns and advised that changes had been made regarding the utility billing process. Mayor Pro Tem Savant agreed to follow up with Ms. Foskey.

PRESENTATIONS AND EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION:

15-Year Employee Recognition – Shaun Bass

Interim City Manager Angela Redding recognized **Shaun Bass**, an employee at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, for 15 years of dedicated service to the citizens of Cochran. Mr. Bass was presented with a Certificate of Public Service in recognition of his years of service. His supervisor, Public Works Director Willie Farrow, was also present.

City Hall Employee Recognition

Ms. Redding recognized City Hall employees for their dedication and teamwork during a period of significant understaffing. Employees were recognized for working additional hours, assisting one another, and continuing to provide services to the citizens of Cochran.

Mayor Coley expressed her appreciation for the City Hall staff and stated that her respect for their work had increased after seeing firsthand the volume of work being handled by the staff.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS -

Finance – Bonnie Raffield

Ms. Raffield presented the monthly financial information and explained that, because the City has not yet adopted a new budget, the prior budget figures remained in the spreadsheet so that the formulas would continue to calculate correctly.

The asterisks appearing on the bank reconciliation cash balance were discussed and identified as items that had inadvertently not been removed.

Council discussed the ARPA allocation related to Ash Street Park/Cochran Community Park and the impact of outstanding reimbursement funds on previously approved allocations. Ms. Raffield explained that reimbursement requests remain active and that the City is still eligible to receive the funds. An extension has been submitted.

Fire Department – Chief Brock Wilcher

Chief Wilcher reported that the Fire Department training facility now has access to its second story after a stairwell was installed by a local welder using funds from the Department's training budget.

The Department responded to **103 calls during July** and conducted **three fire safety events**.

Council requested that Chief Wilcher provide information regarding fire department response times for review.

Police Department – Chief Jeff Trawick

Chief Trawick reported that the Police Department is currently four officers short. Two part-time officers have been hired to assist with staffing needs, and additional applications are being reviewed for interviews. The Department continues to advertise for additional personnel.

Council requested a year-over-year comparison of department statistics, preferably comparing 2025 and 2026.

Council also requested that future reports include animal control citations related to failure to maintain current rabies vaccinations.

Public Works – Willie Farrow

Mr. Farrow provided an update regarding road repairs, drainage, water lines, and wastewater treatment operations.

Council discussed a city-owned lane extending from Rose Street toward Second Street that is currently overgrown with pine trees. A tree had recently fallen and nearly struck a resident's vehicle. Staff will review the condition of the property and determine what action may be necessary.

Mr. Farrow discussed current road patching efforts and explained that the city has experienced difficulty obtaining adequate quantities of cold patch material. Public Works plans to utilize hot mix asphalt to address multiple road repairs more effectively.

Mr. Farrow also discussed ongoing issues with aging water lines and noted that some areas continue to require repairs due to the age of the City's infrastructure.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

Mr. Farrow reported a significant issue at the wastewater treatment plant involving the main lift station and force main.

Multiple pumps failed within a short period of time, creating the need for an emergency bypass. During the investigation, staff discovered that the existing force main piping appears to be Schedule 40 material rather than the type of piping specified in the original plans for a pressurized force main.

Staff also discovered leakage in the existing piping. An emergency repair and bypass installation were initiated.

Mr. Farrow recommended that the city obtain quotes and investigate the replacement of the remaining approximately 500 feet of force main between the lift station and the treatment plant.

Council also discussed continued inflow and infiltration concerns within the City's sewer system. Mr. Farrow recommended continuing sewer rehabilitation efforts, including slip lining, even if the city is only able to complete approximately one mile per year.

Council discussed working with the City's engineer and grant-writing resources to identify potential funding opportunities for wastewater infrastructure improvements.

Mayor Coley directed staff to obtain quotes for the necessary repair work and return the information to Council.

OUTSIDE AGENCY REPORTS

Industrial Development Authority

Andy Lucas provided the Development Authority report and answered questions from Council. A written report was provided to Council.

Library

Kim Spencer, Director of the regional library system, introduced **Tara Morris**, the new branch manager for the Cochran library.

Ms. Morris discussed new programs being introduced at the library, including activities for various age groups. A September calendar was provided, with programming planned five days per week, excluding Labor Day.

The library reported increased attendance and participation in programs such as Canasta and Mahjong and invited Council and the community to participate.

Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber representative reviewed the written report and announced an additional ribbon-cutting event scheduled for **August 19, 2026, at 9:00 AM** at Carey Convenience Store following its renovation.

The Chamber also discussed replacing the existing temporary banner posts with a more attractive permanent structure similar in appearance to the City Auditorium sign. The Chamber stated that it would cover the cost of the proposed improvement.

Council expressed support for the proposal. The Chamber will coordinate with City staff regarding requirements for temporary signage.

Council also discussed the possibility of using temporary A-frame signs at intersections during special events. The Chamber will consult with appropriate City personnel regarding safety and signage requirements.

Downtown Development Authority

The Downtown Development Authority provided its written report. No additional questions were presented.

Cochran-Bleckley Airport

The Airport Manager Gail Martian provided an update regarding the airport's T-hangar project. GDOT has provided approximately **\$175,000 in grant funding**, and the City is awaiting additional documentation from Holt Engineering to proceed.

The Airport Manager reported that eight of the ten planned T-hangar spaces already have prospective occupants.

The Airport Manager also discussed the FAA agreement concerning the Airport's Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS). The City is required to execute the agreement in order for the FAA to continue its inspection and oversight of the system.

The Airport currently has a three-year maintenance agreement with DBT Transportation Services through August 2027. The existing agreement provides for routine inspections and maintenance of the AWOS system.

Code Enforcement

Council requested that information regarding building permits and building inspections be provided in a future report.

NEW CITY HALL EMPLOYEE

Interim City Manager Angela Redding introduced **Amber Aiden**, the City's new Customer Service Representative at City Hall.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Discussion of Airport Runway, Taxiway and North Apron Project - Council considered approval of the Airport Design Runway 11/29, Taxiway, and North Apron Crack Seal, Rejuvenation, and Remarking Project.

A motion was made by Councilmember Tedders and seconded by Councilmember Lester to approve the project with the required \$1,900 City match and the motion carried unanimously.

The project requires a city match of **\$1,900**.

2. Discussion of FAA/City of Cochran AWOS Agreement - Council considered approval of the agreement between the Federal Aviation Administration and the City of Cochran for maintenance of the Airport's Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS).

The agreement was discussed during the meeting, including the City's existing maintenance contract for the AWOS system.

A motion was made by Councilmember Tedders and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Savant to approve the agreement between the FAA and the City of Cochran for maintenance of the AWOS system and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Discussion of the M.E. Sack Environmental Agreement

Council considered renewal of the agreement with M. E. Sack Environmental for operation and management services at the Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant.

It was noted that the city has been satisfied with the company's services and that there would be no change in cost.

A motion was made by Councilmember Tedders and seconded by Councilmember Ates to approve the agreement with M.E. Sack Environmental for operation and management services at the Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant and the motion carried unanimously.

4. Discussion of Crews and Associates Municipal Advisory Services Agreement

Council considered approval of the agreement with Crews and Associates for municipal advisory services.

The company has provided services to the city since 2021 and has reorganized, requiring a new agreement. The scope of services and compensation remain unchanged.

The agreement was amended to provide for a **one-year renewal term with 90 days' notice of termination by either party**, rather than the previous three-year renewal arrangement.

A motion was made by Councilmember Tedders and seconded by councilmember Ates to approve the agreement with Crews and Associates as amended and the motion carried unanimously.

Interim City Manager Angela Redding requested that the agenda be amended to add approval of required documents for the City's 2026 Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP) grant.

The City was awarded **\$500,000 in CHIP funds**.

A motion was made by Councilmember Ates and seconded by Councilmember Tedders to amend the agenda to add approval of the required CHIP documents. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was then made by Councilmember Ates and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Savant to approve the required documents for acceptance and implementation of the 2026 CHIP grant. The motion passed unanimously.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

The Interim City Manager reported on:

2026 CHIP Grant Workshops - Two public workshops were scheduled for **August 18, 2026, at 11:00 AM and 5:30 PM** to provide information regarding the \$500,000 CHIP grant, eligibility requirements, and required documentation.

PFAS Settlement - The City has submitted the required documentation concerning the PFAS Public Water System Settlement and is awaiting further information regarding the City's claim.

Council discussed previous PFAS testing and clarified that previous positive test results were determined not to be related to the City's water source. Possible equipment or parts issues were addressed, and subsequent testing has not produced additional positive results.

Railroad Crossing Project - A virtual pre-construction meeting is scheduled for **August 19, 2026, at 9:00 AM** regarding a railroad crossing signing and marking project involving improvements at railroad crossings within the City and County.

Willie Basby Park - The playground equipment for Willie Basby Park has been delivered.

Utility Billing - Mrs. Redding reported that utility payments are due on the 10th of each month. To address customer concerns, the city will check the utility payment drop box at **8:15 AM on the next business day following the 10th** before applying late fees.

Regarding the City's notification system, Edmunds is working on a new outbound notification feature. Until the feature is available, City staff will begin making calls to customers regarding late fees and upcoming disconnections.

The standard utility service disconnection date will be the **20th of each month**, subject to weekends and holidays.

Council discussed the importance of maintaining current customer contact information so that customers can be notified prior to disconnection.

GMA Retirement Presentation - A representative from GMA is scheduled to provide a presentation to Council during the September Work Session regarding the City's retirement benefits.

Emergency Response Liaison Meeting - An Emergency Response Liaison meeting will be held on **August 20, 2026, at 11:00 AM** at the North Houston Sports Complex. The meeting will address natural gas safety awareness among first responders and public safety officials.

Middle Georgia State University Aviation Event - An Aviation Legislative Appreciation and Open House is scheduled for **September 17, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM** at the Eastman campus of Middle Georgia State University.

City Holiday - City offices will be closed on **Monday, September 7, 2026**, in observance of Labor Day.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT - City Attorney Jim Elliott was given an opportunity to provide a report. No additional matters were presented.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Coley and members of Council expressed appreciation to City staff for their continued work, particularly during the period of understaffing.

Councilmember Gardner thanked City employees for their continued efforts.

Mayor Pro Tem Savant expressed appreciation to City staff and Interim City Manager Angela Redding for establishing policies and procedures and addressing utility billing concerns. He also encouraged residents to support local youth participating in football and softball activities.

Council encouraged residents to support local athletic programs and attend athletic events at Middle Georgia State University.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: (For Personnel, Litigation):

Mayor Coley requested a motion to enter Executive Session for discussion of potential litigation and personnel matters. Councilmember Ates made a motion to enter Executive Session at 7:40 p.m. for potential litigation and personnel matters; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Savant and the motion carried unanimously.

RECONVENED REGULAR MEETING: Councilmember Ates moved to reconvene the regular meeting seconded by Councilmember Tedders and the motion carried unanimously.

Interim City Manager stated she will advertise the FYI 26-27 budget on August 20, 2026, and they will schedule dates for the public hearing being Thursday August 27th at 5:00 PM and Thursday September 3rd at 6:00 PM.

Mayor Coley stated she would not be available for the August 27th meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Councilman Ates to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 PM; seconded by Councilman Tedders and the motion passed unanimously.