

COCHRAN CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES

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MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

AUGUST 6, 2026

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

Carla Coley, Mayor

Rufus Veal, Councilmember

Lonnie Tedders, Councilmember

Angele Redding, Interim City Manager

Jim Elliott, City Attorney

Gary Ates, Councilmember

Trecia Gardner, Councilmember

Dianne Lester, Councilmember

Bonnie Raffield, Interim City Clerk

Staff present: Willie Farrow, Public Works Director – Brock Wilcher, Fire Chief

CALL TO ORDER: The Meeting was called to order by Mayor Carla Coley at 6:00 PM.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Prayer was led by Councilwomen 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 WORK SESSION AGENDA – August 6, 2026:

Mayor Coley requested that Item #4, concerning the Community Theater, be tabled until September 3rd work session.

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Councilmember Ates made a motion to table Item #4 until September 2026 and seconded by Councilmember Tedders and carried unanimously.

A motion was then made by Councilmember Dianne Lester and seconded by Councilmember Lonnie Tedders to adopt the agenda as amended and carried unanimously.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Discussion of Airport Project / Georgia Department of Transportation Grant

Council discussed a project at the Cochran Municipal Airport for which the Georgia Department of Transportation has tentatively awarded funding. The project is included in the airport's capital improvement program and involves maintaining the runway, including required striping.

The grant requires a city match of \$1,900. Council discussed the need for additional information regarding the grant award and project requirements. Staff will obtain answers to any remaining questions prior to the next Council meeting. It was also noted that the appropriate representative would be available for further discussion.

2. Discussion of 2026 CHIP Award:

Council discussed the City's conditional award of \$500,000 for the 2026 CHIP program. The City must satisfy all conditions contained within the grant agreement.

Staff announced that a CHIP workshop will be held on August 18, 2026, at the City Auditorium for individuals who have expressed interest in participating in the program. Two workshop sessions will be offered, one at 11:00 AM and another at 5:30 PM, to accommodate participants' schedules.

The purpose of the workshops is to explain program requirements to prospective participants prior to awards being made and to help prevent delays or issues with grant compliance.

3. Discussion of Gas Rebate Program:

Council discussed the possibility of establishing a gas appliance rebate program for City customers.

Staff explained that the City receives funds through the Municipal Gas Authority and may use a portion of those funds for customer rebates. Information regarding rebate programs offered by other municipalities was provided for Council's review.

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Council also discussed the possibility of offering financing for gas appliances through the customer's City utility bill. Staff explained that the on bill financing program may provide financing of up to \$10,000 for 60 months at 0% interest, subject to the customer's payment history. Under the program, the Gas Authority assumes the risk if a customer defaults.

Staff advised that Kevin Mixon with the Gas Authority is available to present additional information regarding the on bill financing program at a future meeting, potentially on September 3, 2026.

Council also discussed the possibility of conducting a "Gas 101" educational session for Councilmembers, developers, and contractors to provide additional information regarding the City's gas system, available incentives, and opportunities to increase gas usage.

4. Discussion of M.E. Sack Environmental Services Contract:

Council discussed the City's environmental services contract.

Public Works Director Willie Farrow explained that the contractor provides daily monitoring and services related to the City's water wells, including readings of chlorine and phosphate levels, chemical ordering, backwash readings, repairs to chemical pumps, and special water sampling.

The contractor also assists with PFAS sampling and provides information that is included in the City's monthly reports.

Council discussed the services provided and expressed that the current services are being performed satisfactorily.

5. Discussion of Municipal Advisory Services:

Council discussed the City's municipal advisory services agreement with Cruz & Associates.

Interim City Manager Angela Redding explained that the current agreement was implemented in 2021 and provides for a three-year term with automatic renewal. The agreement will be subject to renewal in 2027, with a 90-day notification period.

Due to changes within the company and the restructuring of services, a new agreement has been presented.

Council discussed several options, including renewing the agreement, entering into a shorter one-year agreement, negotiating an agreement that may be reviewed or terminated annually, or issuing a Request for Qualifications for municipal advisory services.

City Attorney Jim Elliott explained that local governments may enter into multi-year agreements of this type for reasonable periods of time and discussed various options available to the City.

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No final decision was made during the work session. Council will consider the available options and determine how to proceed with the municipal advisory services agreement.

6. Discussion of Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program:

Interim City Manager Angela Redding explained that the current work program contains projects that were established in 2022 and that several projects may have been completed or may need to be carried forward into the new work program.

Council members were asked to review the existing list and identify:

- Projects that have been completed.
- Projects that should remain on the work program.
- Projects that should be removed.
- New projects that should be added.

The updated work program is due to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in October. Council members were asked to review the document and be prepared to discuss proposed changes at the work session on September 3, 2026.

7. Discussion of City of Cochran Sign Ordinance:

The discussion included the recent amendment concerning window coverage for advertising signs, which increased the allowable coverage from 10% to 25%.

Council also discussed enforcement of the existing sign ordinance and the need for businesses to remain in compliance with City requirements.

It was noted that Code Enforcement is working to improve enforcement and that additional attention should be given to ensuring that new businesses and developments are aware of the City's sign requirements.

8. Discussion of 2027 Budget

Interim City Manager Angela Redding presented updates to the proposed 2027 budget based on previous Council discussions.

Changes were made to the budget worksheets and distributed to Councilmembers. Discussion included the legislative department, education and training allocations, travel, public relations, regional commission dues, and other departmental adjustments.

The budget includes funding for a 2.5% cost-of-living adjustment for employees and additional funding associated with new positions.

Council also discussed the capital improvement projects included in the budget, including gas pipeline replacement and gas meter upgrades.

9. Discussion of Water and Gas Meter Replacement / AMI Project:

Council discussed the need to move forward with replacement of outdated water and gas meters and the potential implementation of an automated meter infrastructure system.

Public Works Director Willie Farrow explained that the City's current system has experienced an increasing number of "no reads," requiring substantial staff time to manually obtain meter readings and make corrections before utility bills can be issued.

The proposed system would allow meter readings to be collected electronically and would reduce the amount of manual work required by Public Works and City Hall. The system could also identify potential leaks and notify the City before an excessive utility bill is generated.

Council discussed older meters that were not replaced during the City's previous meter replacement project because they were inactive at the time.

Staff will work to determine the number of meters requiring replacement and obtain quotes for the proposed project. Once costs are known, the City can determine the appropriate financing method.

Council also discussed potential financing options, including financing through the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority and other available financing methods.

- **Discussion of Budget Revenues, Property Taxes and Mileage Rate:**

Interim City Manager Angela Redding explained that property tax revenue projections were adjusted because collections continue to trend higher than the amount originally budgeted.

The proposed 2027 budget currently reflects the existing millage rate. Staff has not yet completed the millage rate analysis due to questions regarding the implementation of House Bill 581 and its impact on the City's property tax process.

Ms. Redding advised that she would meet with the appropriate County representative to determine how House Bill 581 will affect the City's tax base and tax collection process.

Council discussed the timing of the budget advertisement and public hearings. Staff explained that once the budget is finalized, the required advertisement will be published in the legal organ, with public hearings to follow in accordance with the required schedule.

Council will continue discussions regarding the millage rate and final budget before adoption.

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EXECUTIVE SESSION: (For Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate):

Mayor Coley stated that an executive session was needed to discuss personnel, litigation, and real estate matters.

A motion was made by Councilman Ates to recess the regular meeting and reconvene in executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel, litigation, and real estate matters at 6:57 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Lester and carried unanimously.

The regular meeting was recessed, and Council reconvened in executive session.

A motion was made by Councilman Ates to recess the executive session meeting and reconvene in regular meeting session for the purpose of discussion. at 7:53 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilman Tedders and carried unanimously.

Mayor Coley mentioned GMA selfie day at City Hall that will take place on Tuesday August 11, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. Employees will meet out front for this.

She mentioned the new Librarian, Tara Morris and all the activities going on at the local library. She suggested checking out the website for the calendar of activities.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Councilman Ates to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM; seconded by Councilman Tedders and carried unanimously.