



MINUTES
Cochran City Council
Tuesday, October 11, 2016
Regular Meeting @ 7:00 PM

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

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

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

City Clerk Lisa Chastain read the minutes of the September 13, 2016 regular session.

Councilmember Ates made a motion and Councilmember Gooch seconded the motion to approve the September 13, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Agenda Items

Item # 1 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern

Public hearing to adopt the Cochran-Bleckley Comprehensive Plan. James Pope came last meeting and discussed the Comprehensive Plan. City Manager Richard Newbern read the resolution to adopt the plan. Hearing no questions or comments, public hearing was closed.

Item # 2 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern

Resolution 20-16; A resolution of the City Council of the City of Cochran, Georgia, approving and adopting Cochran-Bleckley Comprehensive Plan. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Ates seconded the motion to adopt Resolution 20-16. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Item # 3 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern

Ordinance 05-16; Amend Section 60-122 of Chapter 60 of the City of Cochran Code of Ordinances to require residents and businesses within 200 ft. of city water line to tie in to city services for drinking water purposes. City Manager Richard Newbern read the ordinance. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Ates seconded the motion to send back to include provisions for residents who already had wells to be able to continue to use those wells for drinking water purposes. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Item # 4 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern

Public hearing to consider adopting the millage rate at 11.267 mills. City Manager Richard Newbern read the ordinance to adopt the 11.267 millage rate. Hearing no questions or comments, public hearing was closed.

Item # 5 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern

Ordinance 04-16; Ordinance setting millage rate for 2016. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Gary Ates seconded the motion to adopt Ordinance 04-16 to adopt the 11.267 millage rate. Motion passed with all in favor.

Item # 6 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern

Consider authorizing city staff with preparation of annexing 40 parcels that are within county islands. Property owners will be notified of public hearing by letter of intent. Annexation of streets will also be considered. Councilmember Ates made a motion and Councilmember Thrower seconded the motion to consider annexation of streets at the November meeting. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Item # 7 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern

Consideration of adding a part-time clerical position to be shared by the police and fire departments. (Budget impact \$13,000/yr.) Police Chief Coley stated need for the position due to increased workload due to the new TRIP program implementation. Councilmember Ates made a motion and Councilmember Thrower seconded the motion to approve the position for a one-year probationary period. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Item # 8 – Presented by City Manager Richard Newbern

Consider reclassifying a firefighter position to a sergeant position. (Budget impact approximately \$3100/yr.) Fire Chief Noles stated the need for the reclassification. Councilmember Ates made a motion and Councilmember Thrower seconded the motion to approve the reclassification of a firefighter position to a sergeant position. The motion passed with Councilmembers Ates, Thrower, Gooch, Cranford, and Lemmon voting in favor and Councilmember Gilman opposing.

Item # 9 – Presented by Mayor Stoy

IDA appointment. Two nominees were named for the position, Billy Patel and Allen Chastain. Council expressed desire for a minority to fill the vacancy. Councilmember Lemmon made a motion and Councilmember Ates seconded the motion to nominate Billy Patel. 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.) Catherine Guyton asked the council about the new meters and the LED lights projects. She indicated that the area paved at the corner of Peacock and 9th Street last year already had grass growing up through the asphalt. Ms. Guyton also addressed the council about her concerns that the city taxpayers were paying for meals provided for the councilmembers at the council meeting. Steven Ray addressed the council about having an event center in Cochran. He wants to give away Halloween costumes but needs a building to do so. Mr. Ray stated he has been talking with John Crowe and would like to use the Club Flavors building. Code Enforcement Officer, Willie Farrow stated that there were issues with the building. Lisa Blackshear wants council to reconsider clerical help at the Fire Department.

Mayor Updates

Mayor Stoy visited Kuhmo Tire. He stated the plant could produce 4 million tires per year and would be shipping tires to Kia. They are still in the testing phase. Mayor Stoy read his resignation letter which listed acknowledgements. He requested that his letter be added to the minutes and become part of the posted record. Mayor Stoy provided a copy of his resignation letter to each councilmember and left the premises at 9:00 pm. Mayor Pro Tem Ates called the meeting to order. City Manager Richard Newbern advised that protocol be checked in the charter and that the City Attorney Leo Phillips provide legal advice. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gooch seconded the motion to declare the vacancy of the position of Mayor. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

City Manager Discussion/Items/Updates

Mr. Newbern thanked all who participated in the CountryFest. He reminded the council of the \$500,000 CDBG award for the Railroad Avenue sewer rehabilitation. He advised council that Louis Abbott with Cochran Insurance and Realty would be at the November meeting to discuss the City's insurance renewal. Mr. Newbern announced that the new gateway signs are being installed and that he would be out of the office October 25th-October 27th at a conference in Savannah. He gave out financial reports and went over them.

Department updates.

Fire Chief Noles discussed the training tower on county property. He stated it had to be as tall as our current building which is three stories. Councilmember Thrower asked about the Jaws of Life and EMA. Chief Noles stated that per his conversation with EMA director Mike Smith, that EMA would respond with Jaws of Life in the county and that Cochran is in the county. The city does not have the funds to purchase one. Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Lemmon seconded the motion for Chief Noles to file a grant proposal for the purchase of the Jaws of Life equipment for the City of Cochran Emergency Services Department. The motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

City Engineer Skip Layton updated council that the meter replacement project is moving forward. He stated that meters should be read electronically in December. He stated the tank rehabilitation is complete on the Vernon Road well and the Ash Street tank is next. Mr. Layton said the slip-lining of the 6 inch pipes has begun and the pump station project is out for bid.

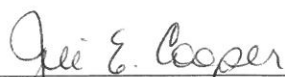
Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gilman made a motion to go into Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gilman seconded the motion to go back into regular session. Motion passed unanimously with all voting in favor.

Councilmember Thrower made a motion and Councilmember Gilman seconded the motion to terminate the employment of City Clerk Lisa Chastain. Motion passed with Councilmembers Thrower, Gilman, Cranford, and Lemmon voting in favor and Councilmember Gooch opposed.

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

Adjourn @ 11: 25



Jill Cooper, Interim City Clerk



City of Cochran

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October 11, 2016

Dear Residents of Cochran,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Mayor during the past couple of years. During this time we have made great progress in advancing the City through the completion of many projects and processes. Some of the major accomplishments include: rehabilitation of the water and sewer systems; upgrading our waste water treatment facility; establishing a City Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan and aligning City activities and funding priorities with the Plan; creating an open employment process that has resulted in hiring qualified personnel with appropriate experience and education; stabilizing the City's financial situation and establishing a balanced budget; establishing a more transparent City government by creating a City Website that provides citizens with up-to-date information; relocating Council Meetings to the Community House to allow all citizens to attend meetings; and adhering to Charter and State Open Meetings Laws to ensure City business is conducted in the open.

Under our current Charter, City Council is composed of six Council members and the Mayor. Upon taking office, the Mayor and each Council member took an oath to "faithfully perform the duties of (Mayor) (Councilmember) of this City and that I will support and defend the Charter thereof as well as the Constitution and laws of the State of Georgia and the United States of America." Within our Charter we define the process for conducting City business and notifying the public so that all business is conducted in an open public forum. This was further reinforced in 2013 by the City Council when it unanimously adopted Ordinance 14-13 to establish Cochran as a Certified City of Ethics. One of the guiding principles for being a City of Ethics is that we have a responsibility to "Create an environment of honesty, openness and integrity." In my opinion the integrity of the Council with regards to conducting open meetings has been jeopardized by the actions of several council members who have decided to operate outside of the parameters of the Charter, our Ethics Ordinance and State Law to promote their own personal agenda. In support of my observations, I am submitting to City Council a video of an alleged illegal meeting that conducted City business on July 26, 2016 from 6:40 to 7:00 p.m. in the Lobby of City Hall. This meeting was attended by Councilman Gary Ates, Fleming Gilman, Andrew Lemmon, and Jon Thrower. Witnesses to this gathering included Councilman Charles Cranford and the City Clerk Ms. Lisa Chastain.

My options for reporting this alleged infraction include: reporting this incident to the Office of the Secretary of State, requesting an investigation by the City's Ethics Committee that would make recommendations back to the City Council, and filing a complaint in Probate Court. Any actions taken by these entities has the potential to shut the City down. Since these individuals were elected by the public and represent the values of Cochran and the District they represent, I have elected to enter the evidence into the public record at a public meeting and let the citizens determine if this is the type of behavior that is consistent with our community values of integrity and promoting openness in dealing with the public.

Some may argue that I am being too sensitive and this is the way politics has always been done in our community. During the past three years as Mayor, I have strived to change that perception and give the public access to City government by adhering to our Charter, our Ethics Ordinance and State Open meeting laws as well as creating and maintaining our website, changing our meeting site to the Community House to allow more of the public to attend meeting, and distributing information of City operations through various public venues. All of these efforts were designed to distribute information to allow our citizens greater access to the operations of the City.

The recent actions of Council run contrary to the values that I believe are important to our community – honesty and integrity in dealing with the public. Since I am not willing to compromise on these values, I am resigning my position as Mayor of Cochran immediately.

Again, I would like to thank the Cochran community for the opportunity to serve the needs of our residents. Even though I am resigning as Mayor, I will continue my efforts to bring economic prosperity back to Cochran and volunteer with various organizations that serve the needs of our community.

Sincerely,

W. Michael Stoy