

COCHRAN CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 8, 2026

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MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

September 8, 2026

The Regular Meeting of the Cochran City Council was held on September 8th, 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

Rufus Veal, Councilmember

Jim Elliott, City Attorney

Shane Savant, Mayor Pro Tempore

Gary Ates, Councilmember

Dianne Lester, Councilmember

Angela Redding, Interim City Manager

Bonnie Raffield, Interim City Clerk

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

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 City Attorney Jim Elliot 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 – September 8, 2026:

Mayor Coley noted that the minutes for July 6, 2026, Budget Meeting and the August 11, 2026, Special Called Meeting had not been provided and requested that both items be removed from the Consent Agenda.

A motion was made Mayor Pro Tem Savant and seconded by Councilmember Ates to amend the Consent Agenda by removing the July 6, 2026, Budget Meeting minutes and August 11, 2026, Special Called Meeting minutes and the motion carried unanimously.

Councilmember Lonnie Tedders motioned to approve the amended agenda. Councilmember Rufus Veal seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

Council confirmed receipt of the minutes included on the Consent Agenda, with the exception of the two items previously removed.

Councilmember Dianne Lester motioned to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Lonnie Tedders seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Coley opened the public comment period and advised speakers of the three-minute time limit.

Ms. Mary Pitts addressed the Council regarding trash and bulk waste remaining at curbs and in residents' yards. She questioned whether additional personnel had been assigned to trash collection and expressed concern about the length of time some bulk items had remained. Ms. Mary also questioned the responsibility for debris resulting from landlord evictions and suggested that landlords should obtain dumpsters and be responsible for the removal of such materials.

PRESENTATIONS AND EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION:

Mayor's Reading Club — Bookmark Contest Winners

Mayor Coley reported that, as a member of the statewide Mayor's Reading Club, she hosted a bookmark creation contest during the summer in conjunction with the library's summer reading program.

The winners recognized were:

- Avery Smith — Bleckley County Primary School
- Henley Watford — Elementary School

- Rosalie Peach — Middle School

Maddie Smith was also recognized for submitting an entry.

Each winner will receive fifty copies of their winning bookmark to share with family and friends. Copies will also be delivered to the schools for distribution to students in the winners' grades, with additional copies being displayed at the library.

A group photograph was taken with the winners.

Retirement Recognition — Lieutenant Darrell Miller

Mayor Coley turned the presentation over to City Manager Angela Redding for the retirement recognition of Lieutenant Darrell Miller.

A plaque was presented to Lieutenant Miller in recognition of 17 years of dedicated service to the City of Cochran.

Mayor Coley and the City Council congratulated Lieutenant Miller and thanked him for his years of service.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

Finance – Bonnie Raffield

Council questioned the percentage shown on the General Fund revenue report and whether the gas revenue variance was seasonal. Staff confirmed that the gas revenue figures are seasonal.

Staff also explained that the percentages reflected on the revenue and expenditure reports were not accurate because the figures were not measured against the actual adopted budget. The reports had already been printed prior to the correction. Staff advised that this issue will be corrected in the next report.

Council questioned a \$24 item identified as an Arnold expense. Staff explained that the charge was related to a gate installed at the wastewater treatment plant and that associated transducers were also wastewater expenses.

Fire Department – Chief Brock Wilcher

Chief Brock Wilcher reported that October is Fire Safety Month. The Fire Department will conduct fire safety activities at several events and visit schools, daycares, nursing homes, and hospitals throughout Cochran.

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The Fire Department will also conduct a memorial walk commemorating the 25th anniversary of September 11. Participants will gather at the fire station at 10:00 a.m. for an opening ceremony and will begin the walk at 10:28 a.m. The route will proceed down Beech Street, up Second Street, and down Dykes to the football stadium. The walk will honor the 343 firefighters who lost their lives on September 11, 2001.

The Chief advised that, for the first time, the memorial walk is open to outside fire departments and the general public. The event will be a walking memorial and will not include vehicles.

In response to questions regarding pedestrian safety, Chief Wilcher confirmed that a crowd control plan is in place, with participation from the Cochran Police Department and the Sheriff's Department.

The Chief also reported on a recent dormitory fire. A student had lit a candle and returned to bed before leaving the room. The sprinkler system activated when the fire started and confined the fire to the room where it originated. Fire damage was limited to that room, although approximately six dorm rooms sustained water damage.

Chief Wilcher discussed medical standby at football games. Two of the four firefighters on duty attend the game and remain on location with Heartland EMS while the other two remain at the station to respond to other calls. The athletic training staff now provides the firefighters with a portable radio so that the crew can be contacted when needed.

Council was advised that a previously requested dispatch report showing call receipt and on-scene times for firefighters and EMS has been received and will be forwarded to the Council.

Police Department – Chief Jeff Trawick

Chief Jeff Trawick presented the written monthly report and answered questions from Council.

In response to a request for year-over-year information, Chief Trawick explained that the reporting system could not generate a combined 2025 and 2026 report. The complete 2025 report was therefore printed and included for comparison.

Public Works – Willie Farrow

Public Works Director Willie Farrow provided updates on several matters.

Rose Street to Second Street Lane: Council discussed the condition of the lane where the concrete has failed. Staff advised that the city has not previously performed work in that area and that the first step is to determine whether the right-of-way has been abandoned.

Wastewater Report: The wastewater report was not included in the monthly packet because it was received on the day of the meeting. The report will be emailed to Council.

AMI Metering: Staff reported that bids for the AMI metering project are due September 24, 2026, with compiled information expected to be presented to Council in October.

Staff explained that the work being performed by Consolidated does not change the City's plans for AMI. Consolidated is eliminating long-standing manual meter reads, which should reduce the number of accounts without reads and save staff time. Staff advised that water meters were being read and gas meter reads were nearly complete.

Staff further explained that, even with meter reads restored, meter replacement is still necessary and that AMI would provide a more current, real-time metering system.

Walmart Water Meter: Staff reported that the replacement eight-inch meter has been installed but cannot be placed into service because the gasket was not shipped with the meter. A replacement gasket was expected the following day.

Staff reviewed the history of the meter, explaining that the original meter was installed in 2017 and went blank in approximately 2022. It was replaced under warranty, but the replacement meter went blank approximately one year and three months later. The city waited approximately eight months for the warranty process because purchasing a replacement outright is costly.

Council questioned whether Walmart's readings had been obtained during the period the meter was not functioning. Staff confirmed that readings had been estimated.

Staff will locate the original notification email and serial number documentation and provide the information to Council.

Meter Failures: Staff reported that meter failures have increased from approximately three or four per year in 2018-2019 to approximately 15 per year, with failures becoming more frequent by 2025 across meter sizes ranging from 5/8-inch through eight inches. Battery failure is generally the cause, and meters two inches and larger require complete replacement rather than replacement of only the meter head.

Georgia Department of Transportation Paving: Staff reported that communication regarding the GDOT paving project has been limited. Milling was originally expected to begin in early May from East Dykes on Jessup toward Woody Butts. GDOT crews are currently resurfacing past the school, with milling from Jessup to Highway 126 near Dollar General to follow. No specific date has been provided.

City crews have located and marked valves and manholes and have risers available to bring them to grade. Council requested that the city post the paving schedule on Facebook once GDOT provides the schedule.

Storm Drain in Front of Subway: Staff reported that a small sinkhole continues to recur following rainfall. The issue is believed to be caused by a failed joint in a concrete storm drain

pipe. The storm drain belongs to GDOT. GDOT intends to replace the storm drain before patching and paving. City crews will continue monitoring the area and filling the affected area as needed.

LRA Paving and Striping: Staff reported that the LMIG segment has been completed. The remaining LRA segment is on hold because the bid was approximately \$28,000 over budget. Staff is working with Jerry at Scruggs to bring the project within budget and will return the revised scope to Council.

Planned LRA paving includes the remainder of Thompson Street to Johnson Street Lane, Mac Thompson Road from East Peter to Dykes Street in District Two, and Sixth Street to Lewis Lane in District Three.

The contractor will handle striping on Thompson Street. Staff will request a schedule and determine whether the striping can proceed without waiting for the LRA award.

Staff also discussed additional paving needs, including approximately 20 feet on Porter Road at the railroad crossing, a section of Mall Drive, and a section of 10th Street over a large cross pipe.

Willie Basby Park Driveway: Council questioned whether the boat operation had paid for paving the driveway to the warehouse. Staff advised that the city was not involved and that the Willie Basby Park project used concrete rather than asphalt. Staff noted that private contractors sometimes pave private driveways as part of arrangements for staging areas, but such arrangements are between private parties.

Ditch Maintenance: Staff reported that crews are working on larger ditches along Third Street Lane in District Three by hand because the city does not currently have a slope mower. A slope mower is expected within approximately two weeks. The County's slope mower had been requested but was currently in use.

Once the mower is available, a crew member will be assigned to operate it. The mower will cut the top and bank while the detail crew works in the bottom of the ditch. Staff noted that Third Street Lane is deep enough to require a backhoe for work in the bottom of the ditch.

Berkeley Overgrowth and Asphalt Damage: Staff reported that overgrowth previously reported by email had been cleared by a three-person crew using chainsaws. Council also reported damage to a sizeable section of asphalt in the area. Staff acknowledged that a backhoe had been working nearby and may have caused the damage. Staff will inspect the area and make repairs if the damage was caused by City equipment.

Staffing: Staff reported that two positions remain vacant: one full-time Street Department position and the Water Supervisor position.

Staff intend to fill the Street Department position by promoting an employee from the part-time ranks upon the recommendation of the Street Supervisor.

The Water Supervisor position remains vacant because the City requires a Class Three water license and no current employee holds the required license. Council discussed the possibility of hiring an individual who already holds a Class Three license, depending upon experience.

Code Enforcement

McVeigh Heights Apartments: Code Enforcement reported that contact has been made with the on-site manager and that conditions have improved. No large debris piles had been observed recently.

Dollar General Marketplace Vegetation: Code Enforcement confirmed that the City remains in contact with the property regarding vegetation but did not provide additional details.

Sign Ordinance Enforcement: Council questioned the status of enforcement regarding window signage. Code Enforcement advised that enforcement had not yet proceeded because confirmation was needed regarding the effective date of the ordinance amendment.

City Attorney Jim Elliott advised that a text amendment to the sign ordinance becomes effective immediately upon adoption and that a separate public hearing is not required for the sign ordinance.

Eviction Debris and Trash Piles: Council discussed debris piles located behind the railroad and shirt factory areas, including Dohl Street and Mac Thompson Road. Approximately seven addresses were identified as having debris piles that had remained for an extended period.

The City's policy was restated for the record. Following an eviction, items placed in the right-of-way may remain for 24 hours to allow the resident an opportunity to retrieve them. After 24 hours, removal becomes the responsibility of the landlord. The landlord may haul the material to the landfill or schedule a paid pickup with Ryland. The city is not responsible for paying the hauler for the removal.

Code Enforcement will inspect the identified locations, determine whether citations are warranted, and follow up regarding removal. Council will provide the addresses to Code Enforcement.

Fourth Street Property: Code Enforcement advised that additional information regarding a property on Fourth Street would be provided to Council.

Council requested that Code Enforcement be formally included in the Department Head Reports section of future agendas.

OUTSIDE AGENCY REPORTS

Industrial Development Authority (IDA):

The IDA reported that work is continuing on a grant, with the technical aspects proceeding smoothly. The IDA is also working with the Airport Authority on additional paperwork related to a prospect considering future drone flights into IDA property. Council confirmed that Mr. Evans has filled the seat previously held by Mr. Jack.

Downtown Development Authority (DDA):

A written report was presented. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the financial information presented does not include investments, which are maintained in a separate account for the designated fund.

Chamber of Commerce:

The Chamber's report was presented and described by Council as thorough. The Chamber confirmed that the Great Pumpkin Festival will retain its original name and will coincide with the 50th anniversary of the festival.

Cochran Municipal Airport:

The Airport reported a negative net revenue balance. It was explained that fuel scheduled for delivery to the Eastman airport was diverted to Cochran while the Eastman facility was out of service. The balance is expected to correct as a result.

Public Library:

Ms. Tara reported significant growth in library programming and attendance. Following an August soft launch that included 14 programs and 232 attendees, the library recorded approximately 1,800 visitors in August and 2,601 physical items checked out, an increase of 596 items compared to the previous year.

The September schedule includes 23 programs, including the first Homeschool Hangout and Sensory Play for Toddlers. October programming will expand further and will include guest speakers and a booth at the Great Pumpkin Festival.

Ms. Tara explained that library foot traffic is measured using one-way counters at the entrances. The counters were relocated from an interior doorway to the front and back exterior doors so that restroom traffic would not be included. Readings are recorded each evening.

The library currently has two part-time employees, with the region providing an additional part-time position due to staffing needs. Ms. Tara explained that the library is not funded specifically for programming and is seeking donations and other resources for staffing assistance and materials.

Council encouraged the library to post specific material needs on its Facebook page and offered to explore additional assistance if needed.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. CONNECT COCHRAN WI-FI IN DOWNTOWN COCHRAN

Mayor Coley introduced consideration of the Connect Cochran plan for Wi-Fi in downtown Cochran. The project had previously been discussed at a work session, and Council was asked to consider approval.

The City's proposed contribution is \$7,171.50. The amount assumes participation by all five partners and equal division of startup and subscription costs.

The total project cost is estimated at approximately \$35,000-\$36,000, including system startup and the first year of service.

Council discussed the payment mechanism. One partner organization would receive the funds and pay the vendor, although the specific organization had not yet been determined.

The Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Development Authority are jointly applying for a grant that would cover startup costs and absorb connectivity costs currently being paid separately by the IDA, DDA, and Chamber. If the grant is awarded, the partner contributions would be freed for other uses, and the system could be enhanced.

Council discussed discontinuing the partners' existing connectivity subscriptions and transitioning to the new system. A copy of the full proposal was located and provided to Council during the meeting.

MOTION: Mayor Pro Tem Savant motioned to approve the Connect Cochran plan for Wi-Fi in downtown Cochran, contingent upon all five parties splitting the startup and subscription costs equally and contingent upon whether the grant is awarded, in the amount of \$7,171.50 on behalf of the City of Cochran. Councilmember Tedders seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the motion carried unanimously.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Angela Redding reported that City updates had been emailed to Council earlier in the day, with hard copies available upon request.

The following items were discussed:

- **GMA District Nine Meeting:** The meeting will be held Tuesday, October 20, from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM in Dublin. GMA is offering two certification-credit classes prior to the district meeting. The City Manager will forward the information to Councilmembers who did not receive it.

- **DDA Stakeholders Event:** The event is scheduled for Tuesday, September 29th, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM. The City Manager will RSVP on behalf of Councilmembers upon request.
- **MGA Legislative Appreciation and Open House:** The event is scheduled for Thursday, September 17th, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM at the Eastman campus. Council members were encouraged to RSVP.
- **Basby Park:** A recent walkthrough was completed, and the park is progressing well. Some items remain to be addressed. Information regarding an opening event will be provided at a later date.
- **Planning Commission:** Danny Smith and members of the Planning Commission attended a conference in Savannah and will report to Council regarding what they learned.
- **Recreation Department Water Line:** Public Works will assist with installation of a new water line from the meter to the Recreation Department building. Work includes trenching across the field and cutting the asphalt parking lot. Locates were requested and work was scheduled to begin Thursday. Council clarified that the work is an improvement rather than a repair and that the Recreation Department purchased the materials.
- **Underground Storage Tank:** The property discussed is located across from the Fire Department, immediately to the right of the shelter near the training area, where a gas pump is located. A diagram from the May 12th meeting was circulated identifying the location.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Coley announced that the Zoning Commission meeting will be held Monday, September 14, at 6:00 PM. The meeting will relate to the September 17th meeting at 5:30 PM, when Council is expected to vote on zoning recommendations.

Councilmembers were asked to continue holding October 16th for Cochran Municipal Gas 101, which is not yet confirmed.

Mayor Coley also noted that the upcoming Saturday would be the final Second Saturday event of the season and would feature a local band.

Fall Retreat: Mayor Coley advised that planning has begun for the Council's fall retreat and asked whether Council preferred to meet in the Council Chambers or in a smaller venue where members could sit around a table. The general preference was for a smaller venue.

District One

Councilmember Gardner thanked City staff for their work and encouraged residents to stay hydrated and check on their neighbors.

The District One meeting will be held on Thursday at 6:00 PM at the Peyton Williams Building. The Fire Chief, Police Chief, and other officials were invited to attend and speak with residents.

District Three

Councilmember Lester discussed communication of the recent sign ordinance changes. The Chamber of Commerce has emailed its members and approximately 2,000 additional community contacts. Staff will also ensure the information is posted on the city website.

Because businesses receive a copy of the sign ordinance when applying for a business permit, the updated ordinance information will need to be included with application materials.

Council requested that the city reinforce the Chamber's communication by providing its own notice of the updated sign standards.

Mayor Pro Tem Savant also noted that the next regular meeting will be after September 25th which is the date of the first region football game against Dublin Irish at the stadium. Residents were encouraged to attend.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Mayor Coley announced a brief recess, after which Council would convene in Executive Session for the purposes of personnel and litigation.

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Savant and seconded by Councilmember Tedders for a brief recess at 7:19 PM before entering Executive Session for the purposes of personnel and litigation. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Ates moved to enter Executive Session at 7:26 PM; seconded by Councilman Tedders. The City Council approved unanimously to enter Executive Session.

Councilman Ates moved to exit Executive Session; seconded by Councilman Tedders. The City Council approved unanimously to exit Executive Session.

RECONVENE REGULAR MEETING: Mayor Pro Tem Savant moved to reconvene the Regular Meeting at 8:59 PM; seconded by Councilman Tedders. The City Council approved unanimously to reconvene the Regular Meeting.

Mayor Coley asked if there were any thing that needed to be voted on from Executive Session.

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Mayor Pro Tem motioned to hire Andrea Floyd as City Clerk. The motion died for lack of a second.

Councilman Ates motioned to hire Hannah Kennedy as City Clerk; seconded by Councilman Veal. Councilwoman Gardner, Councilman Ates, Councilman Veal, Councilman Tedders, and Councilwoman Lester voted aye. Mayor Pro Tem Savant voted nay.

The City Council approved to appoint Hannah Kennedy as City Clerk with a 5/1 vote.

Councilman Ates voted to not hire Mercer Group Associates; seconded by Councilman Veal. Councilwoman Gardner, Councilman Ates, Councilman Veal, Councilman Tedders, and Councilwoman Lester voted aye. Mayor Pro Tem Savant voted nay.

The City Council approved not to hire Mercer Group Associates with a 5/1 vote.

ADJOURNMENT: Councilman Veal moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Councilwoman Gardner. The motion passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.