

January 27, 2025

The Eastman City Council met in a regularly scheduled meeting on the above date at 6:00 p.m. The following members were present: Sebrina Williams, Graham Snyder, Debra Sheffield, Dwayne Burney, and Mark Peacock. Others present were City Attorney Rita Llop, City Manager Spencer Barron, Police Chief Billy Cooper, Fire Chief Derl Maxwell, City Clerk April Sheffield, Assistant City Manager Dayna Winslette, City Inspector Jack White, and Department Head Wynnon Pittman. Other city employees present were Quantavious Rozier, Jacoree Wilcox, and Gerald Fordham. Present from the community were Sharon Cobb Flanagan, EM Harrington III, Susan and Mitchell Coffee, Ellery and Loraine Aguayo, Allen Long, John Battle, and Charlotte Hopkins.

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Snyder.

Invocation was given by Councilor Burney.

Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

On a motion from Councilor Burney and seconded by Councilor Peacock, the agenda was unanimously amended to add #10: Establish a committee to create a helicopter ordinance. The amended agenda was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Burney.

APPROVE MINUTES:

A motion was made by Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2025, regular meeting. Motion was approved unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

APPOINT DDA BOARD MEMBER:

Only one application was received for the vacant position on the Downtown Development Authority Board. **With no objections, Mark Studstill was appointed to fill the vacancy on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Burney.**

APPROVE 2025 GRASS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT:

R & G Landscaping, Gabby Martinez, was the only bidder on the 2025 contract. They are the same company that had the 2024 contract and Manager Barron reiterated that they are doing an excellent job. They did not propose a price increase for 2025. The contract would be the same cost as the year before. **With no other discussion, R & G was unanimously approved for another year on a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

NEW BUSINESS:

APPROVE BILLS:

On a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Peacock, the bills for January 14 -27, 2025, were unanimously approved.

APPROVE DRUG TASK FORCE CONTRACT PAYMENT:

Chief Cooper presented the request for the **Oconee Drug Task Force payment of \$8801**. He asks that we continue to renew this agreement until his department can get funding and enough personnel to hire their own drug agent. The Oconee Task Force has probably helped with about a dozen cases over the last year. And yes, they are spread out across several agencies. Manager Barron and Councilor Peacock agree with continuing with Oconee. Attorney Llop has approved the contract. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Burney, the payment was unanimously approved.**

HEALTH INSURANCE SURPLUS:

The city has the option of using some of their surplus to reduce the cost of the health insurance premiums or to hold onto and let it build up for the next year. The current available surplus is \$125,840.99. The bill is \$1,064,219 for this year. Manager Barron suggests holding on to the surplus because of the good financial shape the city is in currently and that they have already budgeted for the whole amount. \$150,000 was used last year and smaller amounts in the years passed according to Clerk Sheffield. Councilor Peacock suggests holding off on using the surplus this year. Councilor Williams agrees. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield, the decision was unanimously approved to not use any surplus this year.**

APPROVE HB581 WORK SESSION WITH THE COUNTY:

Dodge County has requested a joint work session for Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 6 PM at the Pearl Bates Annex. Councilor Snyder suggests making it a meeting in case a decision needs to be made, and a vote needs to be taken. Attorney Llop agrees. A meeting is officially scheduled for Tuesday night at 6 on a motion from Councilor Burney and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.

SCHEDULE WORK SESSION:

The Council discussed several dates and options and decided on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 6 PM at the Council Chambers. **A work session to discuss some more current projects was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Burney.**

FIRST READING OF ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT CONCERNING USES IN INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS:

This amendment has come before Planning & Zoning for a public hearing and approval. They have approved and sent it before the council. The purpose of the change is to get all nonconforming properties into conformity. The existing residences in Industrial zones will be conforming but there can be no expansion of the current use. No more residences will be allowed to be built in Industrial zones. If there is a catastrophic event, a rebuild is allowed but only to the previous footprint. **The first reading was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Burney and seconded by Councilor Peacock.**

FIRST READING OF ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT FOR ADDITION OF R-3 ZONE:

This addition has been proposed to satisfy the request of several in our community. It will allow a single-family home, multi-family dwelling, and town homes in the same zone. However, it will not allow mobile homes or tiny homes. This will create more use for the properties in a confined space. Councilor Snyder pointed out that other jurisdictions already have a zone like this in place. There is a lot size minimum and as you add a unit you add about 2500 sq foot to the lot size. This addition was also sent to P&Z for a hearing and approval. They have now sent it to the council along with their recommendation. **This first reading is unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Burney.**

120 WATER CONTRACT RENEWAL:

Wynnon came forward to explain the contract. 120Water helps with the lead and copper revisions and takes the weight off of the city by dealing with the federal government in concerns with this new law. They act as an advisor and maintain the portal. This is basically just renewing the contract that was put into effect last year. The price of the renewal is \$13,400. Attorney Llop will be editing the agreement to mirror the same language as the previous year. **A motion was made by Councilor Williams to approve the agreement pending Ms. Llop's changes. The motion was seconded by Councilor Peacock and approved by all.**

FIRE DEPARTMENT EQUIPMENT:

Chief Maxwell came forward to request some needed equipment. They have received some grant money to upgrade a lot of equipment, but there are still some that need replacing. Fire helmets expire after 10 years, and all of their helmets are 10+ years old. Most of the gloves are worn out. The extra bunker gear would be for the additional people that he would like to bring into his department. It would be purchased as needed. The older gear can be used for training purposes but is not enough to safely fight a fire with. The Nomex hoods are older or budget style. The newer hoods would be the newly suggested ones that help keep all cancer-causing particles away from the face and hair. Helmet flashlights are a needed upgrade. Extrication gloves are needed because those and firefighting gloves are not interchangeable. Some of the helmets will also be extrication helmets. These purchases should be SPLOST eligible, and the funds are there to be used. **Manager Barron asks for approval of the amount of \$47,622.79 with a 10% contingency reserve in case of a price increase. This request was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Burney.** Dayna has found a grant that may cover some of this but since it isn't reimbursable, it can also be used to purchase other equipment for the new truck instead.

ESTABLISH COMMITTEE FOR CREATING HELICOPTER ORDINANCE:

Due to some complaints, it has become necessary to find a new Life-flight helipad area. It has been suggested to form a committee due to the many differing opinions on how to offer the best service possible. **The committee shall consist of Councilor Peacock, Councilor Snyder, Manager Barron, Police Chief Cooper, Fire Chief Maxwell, Dr. Chip Stringer with EMS, and Miranda Bush from the hospital.** Susan Coffee asks who is representing the hospital and if EMS director Michael Johnson will be included. Manager Barron says Dr. Stringer will be representing EMS. **This committee was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.**

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:

Barron is thankful for their training in Atlanta this past weekend. Several members attended and learned quite a bit, including some helpful planning and zoning training. He feels the city is moving in the right direction with the introduction of the 2 new ordinance amendments tonight. The blight project is still moving forward. He encourages all property owners to be diligent in the care of their properties. A complaint was received concerning single-family homes in an R-1 district being used as apartment complexes. They are looking into this issue and trying to come up with a solution.

NO OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:

On a motion from Councilor Peacock, a second from Councilor Burney, and a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned.

 CHAIRMAN

 CITY CLERK