

June 10, 2024

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, and Mark Peacock. Others present were City Manager Spencer Barron, City Clerk April Sheffield, City Attorney Rita Llop, City Inspector Jack White, and Administrative Assistant Dayna Winslette. Also in attendance were Fire Chief Scotty Whitten, and Police Chief Billy Cooper. Audience members included Commissioner Sharon Cobb Flanagan, EM Harrington III, John Battle, Marlan Eller, Daimeon Harris, Ronald Bacelo, Brian Dennis, and Charlotte and Susan Coffee.

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Snyder.

Invocation was given by Councilor Peacock.

Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Williams, the agenda was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of the May 30, 2024, regular meeting were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

DODGE AVENUE ANNEXATION:

This is the second and final reading of the ordinance required to annex in the property of Marqual James at 5400 Dodge Avenue.

Councilor Peacock made a motion to approve the annexation was seconded by Councilor Sheffield. The council voted unanimously in favor of the annexation.

DCH ANNEXATION:

This the second and final reading of the ordinance required to annex in the Dodge County Hospital on Griffin Street.

Councilor Sheffield made a motion to approve the DCH annexation and was seconded by Councilor Williams. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

MONTHLY FIRE REPORTS:

Chief Whitten presented the calls for the month of May. A total of 61 calls were ran with 40 inside the city and 21 outside of the city. There were 2 structure fires, 1 brush fire, 1 vehicle fire, 2 natural gas leaks, 18 medical calls, 12 vehicle rescues, 2 electronic alarms, 14 lift assistance for EMS, 2 check smoke, 7 power line/trees down, and 2 machine fire calls.

MONTHLY POLICE REPORTS:

Chief Cooper presented the stats for the month of May. They used 1,130 gallons of gas, answered 779 calls, worked 18 traffic accidents, patrolled 11,308 miles, collected \$20,347.89 in bonds/fines, and made 227 arrests/citations.

APPROVE MONTHLY BILLS:

The monthly bills for May 31 – June 7, 2024, were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.

APPOINT SPECIAL ELECTION SUPERINTENDENT:

James Callier, the county registrar, has offered to help us with our upcoming special election. If it is an uncontested election, he will not charge us. If we have to hold an election, his fee will be \$2,000.

Manager Barron suggests going with Mr. Callier because he is a neutral third party outside of city hall. He will be taking take of all of the notices and state reporting requirements.

Mr. Callier was unanimously appointed election superintendent on a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Sheffield.

PIRKLE SPEED HUMP REQUEST:

Mrs. Pirkle has contacted Chairman Snyder several times and has submitted the required petition for a speed hump on Creighton Street in the area of 13th Avenue. There are 18 names listed and all of whom live on Creighton Street. The city manager has received a phone call from a non-resident of the area contesting the speed hump. Councilor Peacock also commented on a verbal complaint that he received. Peacock asks Chief Cooper to have his officers patrol these areas where the humps are being requested and start issuing citations for speeding, etc. It is the public's belief that this may help slow some people down. Chief Cooper agreed.

Charlotte Coffee commented on this subject. She was curious about the last two speed humps that were placed, Congo Lane Extension and Pine Street behind First Baptist Church. People are not following those rules and driving around them on the grass. Whose responsibility is it to stop them and does the city have a plan for it? Inspector White spoke that if it was on our right-of-way, the city had been purchasing plastic chains and poles to put up to deter the drivers but not damage a vehicle.

The Creighton Street speed hump was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Sheffield and a second from Councilor Williams.

There was a short discussion after the vote about the Hawkinsville Highway and Pearl Bates Avenue. There have been requests to lower the speed limit on Hawkinsville Highway. There have also been some indecision of yield signs and stop signs at the end of Pearl Bates. All of these decisions have to be made by GDOT. Even Chief Cooper has reached out to them, but no one has been able to get something done yet.

RONNIE BACELO:

Ronnie Bacelo is the owner of the soon-to-be Hot Diggity Dogs in downtown Eastman. He is looking forward to contributing to a unique dining experience to local residents and downtown visitors. However, he presents his concerns regarding certain local ordinances. One is the distance requirements between a bar and a residential area. The other is for the council to reconsider the food to alcohol ratio. Surrounding areas do have a different requirement.

Mr. Bacelo also brought up the idea of having cups made with different business on them and maybe the city logo. These cups would be sold by the city to the local business owners, and they would only use those cups.

Off the record from his hot dog business, Mr. Bacelo voiced his concerns about a member of the local Downtown Development Authority. Bacelo feels that this particular member's conduct is unprofessional towards himself and other business owners. Bacelo then submits a list of 3 names, Kimberly and Company, Peach Boutique, and Eastman Bake Shop. These businesses along with two

others has supposedly had issues with the same gentleman. Bacelo feels that this man, Roy Grenade, does not want to welcome anyone else to the downtown area.

Councilor Snyder states that Mr. Bacelo has requested the change of distance requirements because of there being lofts upstairs above his upcoming business. Other areas, like Dublin, have a clearly marked area in their ordinances that is considered a downtown entertainment area or restaurant district that has different rules than the rest of the town. Attorney Llop suggested to revamp our current restaurant district to mirror surrounding cities and encompass our downtown area. She will also look into the food-to-alcohol ratio. Councilor Snyder says there is a discrepancy within our ordinance. A brewpub is said to be one percentage and restaurants are another. Clerk Sheffield said that the percentage before the newly adopted ordinance was 50%. Manager Barron feels that we need to get away from all of these specific definitions and classifications and make one rule across the board that everyone can follow. Attorney Llop reminds them that the ordinance passed in 2023 was for a broader scope, where now there needs to be some separation. Barron agrees that it is time to tweak the ordinance some. There are things happening downtown that are firsts, and the city needs to find a way to adjust. Llop says she will present the council with some specific areas in the ordinance that may need to be changed. Manager Barron suggests having a work session and Councilor Peacock agrees. **A date and time of Monday, July 17, at 5 PM was chosen for the work session. There was a unanimous vote on a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilor Williams.**

Brian Dennis spoke up about his property by the school that he was looking at putting a restaurant in that could serve alcohol. He wanted to know if that property could also be reconsidered. He was informed that that property fell under the state laws of distance requirements to a school. There are state distance requirements for restaurants and liquor stores and schools. What Mr. Bacelo is asking for is a change of a local ordinance only, not a state law.

PLANNING & ZONING RECOMMENDATION:

HAL M SMITH JR/BRIAN DENNIS, SPECIAL USE PERMIT @ 205 FOSTER:

Mr. Dennis presented that he was looking to convert this former office space into a 7-unit apartment complex. There will be some studio apartments and some 2-bedroom apartments. He will end up gutting the entire building. The rehab budget is twice of what they had anticipated. The original intent was to provide affordable housing, but it appears it will be more in line with standard housing prices. Inspector White verifies that Planning & Zoning has passed the permit. All plans and permits are in order. **On a motion from Councilor Williams and seconded by Councilor Peacock, the special use permit was passed unanimously.**

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:

Barron wanted to remind everyone about the upcoming Juneteenth celebration, Saturday, June 22. And also there will be a July 4th celebration.

OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:

Councilor Snyder sends birthday wishes early and late to his sisters.

Also, on Pine Street, there will be some work getting started. The I&I project is about to begin.

Manager Barron agrees that it will begin on Pine Street but will eventually work its way into Jessup Heights. He forewarns that they will be digging up roads, yards, and pipes. He does promise that they will get it as close back to normal as possible. Department head Pittman has been going through the neighborhood trying to let everyone know ahead of time.

John Battle approaches and asks Councilor Williams to do the honors at the Juneteenth celebration. She agrees. Unfortunately, the rest of the council will be out of town for training.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

CHAIRMAN

CITY CLERK