

City of White Georgia
City Council Meeting
February 7, 2024

Present at the meeting were Mayor Curtis Powell, Councilmembers, Stephanie Nichelson, Gary Crisp, Jean Swank, Karissa Noland, City Clerk, Robin Cochran, and City Attorney, Brandon Bowen.

Mayor Powell started with the pledge of allegiance and Councilmember Nichelson followed with a prayer.

Mayor Powell asked to add an item #4 to the agenda, Public Works/On Call Employees cell phone stipend. After some discussion, Councilmember Nichelson made a motion to add the item and Councilmember Noland seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote.

Mayor Powell asked for a motion to approve the minutes from Jan 2, 2024. Councilmember Swank made a motion to approve, and Councilmember Noland seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote.

Mayor Powell opened the floor for public comments. A few citizens had signed up to speak but both were concerned about the public comments section being moved up on the agenda. Williams Watkins and Keisha Fussell were both assured by our city attorney that this was the standard practice for regular meeting business. Mayor Powell assured them both that on zoning/rezoning/ordinance items an extra public comment section would be offered. Watkins was satisfied with the explanation. Fussell spoke on the tree removal line item and her ideas on what the city should do.

City Clerk, Robin Cochran reported for city hall reminding citizens of the upcoming water rate increase effective with February billing. She also asked the council for a motion to change the fees for renting city facilities. Cochran explained that folks were taking advantage of the discounted rate by using addresses inside the city. Councilmember Nichelson stated she has seen this happen firsthand and made the motion to increase the rental fee to \$50 per hour for all citizens inside and outside the city limits. Councilmember Noland seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote. Cochran wrapped up her report by reminding citizens of the events coming up at city hall: Treats for the Sweets on Valentine's Day and free trees for Arbor Day (Feb 16th). She encouraged everyone to stop by for both events.

Mayor Powell continued the meeting with unfinished business starting with second reading of the GMA (Georgia Municipal Association) Retirement Plan Ordinance. Powell asked Cochran to explain the reasons behind the ordinance. She said it had to be readopted due to Federal Law and IRS regulations, but nothing was changed. Mayor Powell opened the floor for public comments. Hearing none, Mayor Powell

closed the public comments section. Powell asked for a motion. Councilmember Crisp made a motion to approve the GMA Retirement Plan Ordinance and Councilmember Swank seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote.

Mayor Powell continued with the request from Foxfield Properties for the sewer availability letter stating that our city Engineer, John Sweitzer, said the city does have sewer availability, but it would put the city's sewer at about 80% capacity. After some discussion, this was tabled by motion with Councilmember Crisp making the motion and Councilmember Swank seconding. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote.

Mayor Powell continues the meeting with the tree removal item on the agenda. After some discussion amongst the council members about new quotes and ideas on what to do and a passionate commentary from Ms. Fussell on her ideas for the tree, the item was tabled by motion. Councilmember Crisp made the motion and Councilmember Nicholson seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote.

Mayor Powell moved on to new business with Chief Smith who asked the council to approve several purchases using Splost 2020 funds. He requested the purchase of five new 9mm handguns to replace the current 40caliber and 4 new holsters. Chief Smith continues to explain the importance of changing from the 40caliber to the 9mm at the request of Mayor Powell. Chief Smith also explained he wanted to offer a buyback program for officers to purchase the 40caliber weapons from the city. The Chief stated the costs of the new guns are \$2,577.00 and that the city would recoup some of those funds due to the buyback offer. Councilmember Nicholson made the motion to make the purchase for the weapons/holsters with 2020 Splost funds and Councilmember Noland seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote. The Chief continued by asking the council to table the next item on the agenda as he was waiting for one last quote for new body cameras for the officers. Councilmember Nicholson made the motion to table and Councilmember Swank seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote. Chief Smith ends with asking the council for the purchase of an LPR (license plate reader) system for 2 patrol units. He explained the system came with an in-car camera system as well as the LPR. The Chief stated that the budgeted item was initially for \$25,000.00, and the quote from AXON to completely outfit two patrol units would cost \$27,662.40. Chief Smith assured the council that this equipment would serve the department for several years and would be interchangeable if new vehicles were purchased. Councilmember Crisp made a motion to approve the purchase of the LPR system for the 2 patrol units and Council Swank seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote.

Mayor Powell continued by asking the council to give him the authority to sign the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) agreement between Bartow County and the Federal and State Municipalities. This would allow us to help one another in case of a disaster, we would be able to receive supplies and resources if needed. Mayor Powell also stated that this was something that had already been signed in the past but that it

was up for renewal. Councilmember Crisp made the motion and Councilmember Noland seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote.

Mayor Powell continued new business with the resolution to approve the revisions to the charter and send it to the legislature for adoption. City Attorney Brandon Bowen reminded the council of the updates that were reviewed at the special work session. He told the council that these changes would enable the mayor to become a voting member of the council. Bowen stated that most local small cities operate under this system. Councilmember Nicholson made the motion to approve the revisions and submit the charter to the legislature. Councilmember Swank seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 3-1 vote with Councilmember Crisp voting against.

Mayor Powell wrapped up the new business portion of the agenda with the Public Works/On Call Employees phone stipend policy. He proposed each on call employee receive \$35 per month for using their personal phones for city business. Powell stated this would be offered to Public Works and Water Department employees and a policy would be written/signed. Councilmember Swank made the motion to approve the cell phone stipend for the on-call city workers. Councilmember Nicholson seconded the motion. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote.

Mayor Powell ended by addressing the subject of the water rate increase and explained how the study was done in 2018. He stated that we needed to implement the 2% increase yearly until the year 2027 to get the city back on track. Powell then answered several citizen's questions and promised to ask City Engineer, John Sweitzer to attend the next meeting to address concerns.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Cochran
City Clerk

Attest:

Curtis Powell, Mayor