

Council Meeting
July 15, 2024

Members Present: Mayor Buddy Duke, members Terry McClain, Greg Paige, Celestine Hayes and Jody Greene. Councilman Walter Cowart was out of town.

Others Present: City Manager Mark Barber, City Clerk Rhonda Rowe, City Attorney Tim Tanner, members of staff and citizens.

Invocation was given by Councilman McClain.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes: Councilman Paige made a motion to approve the minutes of June 17, 2024 as presented. Councilman McClain seconded with all in favor.

Housing Authority Appointment: Due to the passing of Vivian Sharpe, the housing authority is requesting an appointment to fill Ms. Sharpe's unexpired term, which will expire on March 21, 2027. Councilwoman Hayes nominated Louise Allen to fill the position. There were no further nominations presented and Councilman McClain made a motion to close the nominations. Councilman Paige seconded. The decision was unanimous. Due to there being no other nominations, Ms. Allen was appointed by acclamation.

Fire Dept. Bids (Fire Hose): Bids were received for 1200 feet of 5" large diameter fire hose and were as follows:

TEN-8 Fire and Safety	\$10,036.32
FireLine, Inc.	\$14,184.00

It was noted this item is included in the fiscal year 2024 budget. Following a review of bids, the recommendation was to approve the low bid. Mr. Barber further noted that a 1-3/4" fire hose was also needed but that fell under \$2000. FireLine, Inc. did get that quote. Councilman Greene made a motion to approve the low bid. Councilman McClain seconded. All were in favor.

Water Dept. Bids (Lead Service Line Inventory Project): The Environmental Protection Agency, through a new rule, is requiring all public water systems to prepare and maintain an inventory of service line materials. Preparing the inventory is the first phase and must be completed by October 16, 2024. He noted that in the first phase, the main concept is to identify any lead pipes that may be part of our infrastructure. Mr. Barber added that we do not have the staff to do this with our daily operations and still meet the timeline. Many communities are contracting this out. Bids were received and were as follows:

H2O Tech	\$159,250
Southern Enviro Services	\$405,500

Safe Vac Excavations	\$413,700
Gulf Coast Underground	\$402,000

Our engineers have reviewed the bids and have recommended the low bidder. There is a big gap between the pricing difference; however, with H2O, this is what they do and they have several teams. He noted that some of the other contractors have jumped into bidding on these projects but are not quite as experienced as to the requirements as H2O Tech. He noted that H2O has more experience and qualifications. We are also receiving a \$165,000 grant to help offset the cost. He noted that for us, what we are also doing, is we will be getting a good computerized system inventory of everything we have in the ground. To finish that up, and he will be bringing this up at the next meeting, we have a loan we have applied for from GEFA for the remaining part so at the end of the day we can have a full integrated system of our complete infrastructure inventory that's in the ground. We're taking advantage of the funding sources we have to get the mandated lead pipe inventory completed, but also build an infrastructure inventory for us to use in the future. We can then make additions to this system as we go along. Councilman Greene made a motion to accept the low bid of H2O Tech. Councilman Paige seconded. Councilwoman Hayes asked when would this start? Mr. Barber advised they should be getting back to us within the week to let us know. She then asked if this would involve replacing lead pipes? Mr. Barber responded that the first phase is to see if you have lead pipes; then you could begin a replacement program after the inventory takes place. Inventory is phase 1 and replacement is phase 2. Councilman McClain asked if this would be for everything up to the water meters and then that's where it would stop? Mr. Barber concurred that was correct. There were no further questions and all members voted in favor of accepting the low bid.

Public Comments:

Treva Gear – Dr. Gear stated she wanted to congratulate Chief Audie Rowe; however, she wanted to talk a little bit about the nepotism policy. About two years ago in May 2022 you all loosened, I'll say "weakened", the nepotism policy stating that you could not get people hired. You were down to 80 and had the capacity for 100 positions or something, but you were down in employees. She remembered Councilwoman Hayes asking how you were going to go about doing that and it was advertising in the paper, job fairs and other ways we could do this. The council voted 3-2 that you should weaken the policy and allow family members to be hired. Since that time, it wasn't just the lawnmower service that was needed at that time, its been other positions, positions created and family members put in those positions. Now, the big concern is looking at Chief Rowe's hiring, which we know that Chief Rowe is also the husband of the assistant city manager, Mrs. Rhonda Rowe, and that brings some concern because we know the immediate supervisor for Mr. Rowe and she thought she read that in the paper as well, city manager, "it is you, Mr. Barber"; however, my question is, and she would love for the people to know, and for the issue of transparency, "who is his supervisor in the absence of Mr. Barber?" Who is that supervisor, we would like to know that, so that is one question and we will follow up with emails so that we can get an answer and you all ought to publicize that because if it is Mrs. Rowe then that is a problem; cause it should not be Mrs. Rowe in this capacity. I know that was something you all talked about, it shouldn't be anybody that is immediately supervised. In the previous nepotism policy you could not be an immediate family

member; but in this case this is different. I ask and I beg you to look at that because we want to avoid corruption, we want to avoid the look of corruption. We want to be transparent. We want to make sure things happen right, especially when it comes to the Chief of Police in the multiple, in the myriad things that can go wrong and the way it can be looked at in a community like ours and, if the chief is in question, and his wife is his immediate report; or, if in the absence of Mr. Barber or has anything to do with it, then, the public is going to be questioning things and they have the right to do so, so that is something we need to shun the very appearance of “evil”. That makes me wonder how extensive was that process, even though I know Mr. Rowe has been, Chief Rowe has been on the force for a long time. Second thing, so that who is second in line in his absence, who does he report to? “I would like to see that hierarchy. Second, we need some transparency. Who are the family members hired by the City of Adel, who’s working up in here in these directorship positions, who are those family members? Who do they report to? I think it needs to be on paper and tell us because if its not a secret, there’s nothing wrong and everybody’s acting with integrity then we’ll know those things. First and foremost, we want to think that everyone will act with integrity but I’m going to tell you this, it’s something serious when you have a family member, and family member goes wrong, how much you gone really say about what you’re family member did wrong? This is why the nepotism policy is in place; to prevent you from ever being placed in such a position where you have to question your integrity, turn your head, make a mistake and do something wrong and then ask God for forgiveness afterward and move on. Those things have far reaching implications and do lots of things to our community and cause lots of harm. I’ll be reaching out to you so I hope we can get a response about those two things – Who is Chief Rowe’s direct report and in the absence of Mr. Barber, who does he report to? Who is that chain of command for Chief Rowe and who do complaints go to? That’s another thing, who do complaints go to? They don’t need to go to a family member. Have ya’ll thought about that because I hope you were thinking about that when you changed this policy. Secondly, we want to know a list of family members that exists here, that work in the same environment and who their direct reports are. Thank you so much for your time and yall have a nice day.

Other Comments:

Terry McClain – Councilman McClain asked if there was any progress concerning the zoning map? Mr. Barber advised he had spoken with James Horton, the planning director of the SGRC. They have two new planners in training and Mr. Horton is not comfortable with the time line and them being able to get this done. What they talked about was utilizing the Carl Vinson Institute and then give the SGRC time to train the new folks coming on board. In 2025, it will be time for our new comprehensive plan and then we pick that up with SGRC because they are the ones who do that for us. It may be a better process than we thought because of the 2025 comprehensive plan. Work with Carl Vinson Institute to get the zoning however we need to have it, and then pick up with the 2025 comprehensive plan with the SGRC. He was a little hesitant because he’s a little short staffed right now. Councilwoman Hayes asked if there were firms we could pay that could come in and do it? Mr. Barber stated there are probably some out there, but the Carl Vinson Institute (of which Mr. Barber has attended some of their all day zoning classes), does a wonderful job with it. It will be less expensive for us to go that route plus we would have to send it out for bid, which would probably take 6 weeks. We need to go ahead and jump on this so we can meet the moratorium

deadline. He stated he could try to look to see if there were some firms but Carl Vinson Institute and their planners are the experts in that field. They bring the legal side to you; every aspect you can think of, they bring forth for that training. Councilwoman Hayes stated she would like to have some multiple choices as well. He stated he would try to round some up but there's just not a lot of firms that specialize in local government zoning other than places like the SGRC or Carl Vinson Institute. He noted also that they are "Georgia", so they are very familiar with Georgia's zoning code; they won't be out of state, so they're already working with, training and making presentations through out the state, but he would check to see if there are other firms.

There was no further discussion and the meeting was adjourned.

Rhonda P. Rowe, City Clerk

Luther L. Duke III, Mayor
