

Council Meeting
August 21, 2023

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

Others Present: Mark Barber, Rhonda Rowe, Tim Tanner, Chad Castleberry, members of staff and the public.

Invocation was given by Councilman McClain.

Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting Date Change: Due to Labor Day Holiday, it was the consensus of the council to move the next meeting to Tuesday, September 5, 2023.

Approval of 8-7-2023 Minutes: Councilman McClain made a motion to approve the minutes of August 7, 2023 as presented. Councilman Greene seconded. All were in favor.

Approval of 8-15-2023 Minutes: Councilman Paige made a motion to approve the minutes of August 15, 2023 as presented. Councilman McClain provided the second. There were no opposing votes.

Res. #23-11: This resolution, adopting the neighborhood redevelopment program housing rehabilitation/reconstruction policies and procedures for the 2021 Community Development Block Grant was presented to the council. City Manager Mark Barber explained this resolution pertains to the 2021 CDBG Grant in the amount of \$710,713 to revitalize a target area concentrated on the northwest side of the City. Councilman Cowart made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilman Greene seconded with all in favor. Councilwoman Hayes asked what streets were included in the target area? Mr. Barber presented her with the addresses of the 7 residents that have already been pre-qualified to participate.

SGRC Administration Contract (2023 CHIP Grant): Earlier this year, the City was awarded a CHIP grant in the amount of \$400,000 for housing rehabilitation. The contract includes all administrative and technical services beginning September 1, 2023 and ending August 31, 2026. The compensation will be a maximum of \$4000 per unit for non-lead costs stick built rehabilitation or modular housing projects. Additional amounts may be charged upon completion of the project. Councilman Greene made a motion to authorize the Mayor to execute the contract. Councilwoman Hayes seconded. The decision was unanimous.

Res. #23-08: This resolution, adopting the policies and procedures and program design for the 2023 Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) Grant, was presented to the council. Councilman Greene made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilman Cowart seconded. All were in favor.

Res. #23-09: This resolution, adopting the CHIP Grant Homeowners Eligibility Requirements for Community Home Investment Program Grant, was presented to the council. Councilman Greene made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilman Paige seconded. There were no opposing votes.

Res. #23-10: This resolution, adopting the Georgia statutes policies by local governmental entities as part of the 2023 CHIP Grant, was presented to the council. This resolution provides for adherence by the City and contractors of various state codes including, Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act, Georgia Drug-Free Workplace Act and Prohibition on Immigration Sanctuary Policies by local governments. Councilman Greene made a motion to approve the ordinance. Councilman Paige seconded. All were in favor.

MBE/WBE Outreach Plan: As part of the 2023 CHIP Grant, the council was presented with a Minority and Women’s Business Enterprise outreach plan. The goal of the plan is to ensure the inclusion, to the maximum extent possible, of entities owned by minorities and women in DCA’s HOME program to provide affordable housing authorized under the HOME program. Councilman Cowart made a motion to approve the plan. Councilman McClain seconded. The decision was unanimous.

Electric Dept. Bids (Utility Poles): Bids were received on fifteen (15) 45 ft. treated wood poles and eight (8) 40 ft. treated wood poles. Bids were as follows:

Irby	\$ 9,154
Ace Pole Acquisition, LLC	\$10,566

Councilman McClain made a motion to accept the low bid. Councilman Paige seconded. Councilwoman Hayes asked where the poles would be located? She was advised they would be for normal inventory replacement across the city, to replace old poles. Some of the poles will also be used for the joint city/county tornado siren project.

City Manager Purchasing Power: Mayor Duke noted that \$5000 is the current purchasing power amount for the city manager and advised the council they may want to consider raising that amount. A vehicle repair can exceed \$5000 and then the council doesn’t meet for 2 weeks to approve. He stated this was just for informational purposes and something to think about for later.

Budget Work Session: The council was asked to look at their calendars for tentatively scheduling a budget work session between August 28-30. City Manager Mark Barber noted the millage is tentatively set at 6.00 mills.

Transportation Investment Act (TIA) Projects: The council was advised that the DOT has asked us to start looking at projects for our area to be used for TIA II. Mr. Barber explained that we can use larger donor cities to help the smaller cities. Several of the projects have been previously discussed and the engineer has prepared a power point that depicts how these projects address safety, economic development and safely moving traffic through our community. The power point was presented during the meeting with projects including:

- (1) Coxstill Road Realignment – Numerous accidents involving high school students
- (2) Mitchell Street Realignment - To correct offset of Mitchell Street
- (3) Elm St/4th Street Intersection Round-A-Bout – To prevent traffic back-up
- (4) Old Quitman Road/S. Hutchinson Avenue Round-A-Bout – Accident prevention
- (5) Old Quitman Road Railroad Overpass – 20 trains come through community each day with no way for first responders to cross tracks within the city. He noted this was the only area that had enough room to decel. This project was put on the list mainly to be put out there and introduced to the DOT.

Councilwoman Hayes asked if the Coxstill project included anything at Stone Ridge apartments. She was advised, no, this is a separate project. She stated we need a traffic light or something there. Mr. Barber further stated that the total allocation for TPLOST II is \$6.2M. The current TSPLOST does not end until 2028, unless we meet revenue collections, then it will sunset. Mr. Barber explained this is being presented to the executive committee with the DOT in a couple of weeks. There were no further comments or questions.

MEAG City Litigation: City attorney Tim Tanner stated that he had been contacted by MEAG general counsel concerning a lawsuit that is pending against the City of LaGrange. MEAG is submitting a brief on behalf of the City of LaGrange and there are 23 other cities that are signing off on the brief. They have asked us to join. The subject of the lawsuit is the ability of a city to charge a margin on services they provide. For example, if a city provides water, you cannot make a profit off of providing that service. In this case it's electricity. It was noted this would have far-reaching consequences across every city and every county. If you eliminate this ability, then obviously, taxes would go through the roof. Councilman McClain made a motion to join in with other MEAG cities in filing the brief in support of the City of LaGrange.. Councilman Greene seconded. There were no opposing votes.

Council Comments:

Councilwoman Hayes – Asked for an update on the environmental plan for Bill Street, Ayers Street and Lavind Way. She was advised the engineers on this project are out of the office until Wednesday and we are hoping to get an update on the status after Wednesday.

Asked for an update on the utility billing credit. She was advised this is the month for budget billing true-up and we did not want to create any issues there. We expect the next billing to have the \$400 credit.

Executive Session: Councilman McClain made a motion to enter into executive session to discuss real estate. Councilman Paige seconded. The decision was unanimous.

Following the executive session, there was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

Rhonda P. Rowe, City Clerk

Luther L. Duke III, Mayor
