

Council Meeting (Virtual)  
November 15, 2021

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

Others Present: Rhonda Rowe, Tim Tanner, Chad Castleberry, John Flythe (remotely), Randy Lane (remotely), and several members of the public joined remotely. A member of the press was also present.

Invocation was given by Councilman McClain.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes: Councilman Paige made a motion to approve the minutes of November 1, 2021 as presented. Councilwoman Sharpe seconded. All were in favor.

Res. #21-08 (DOT Contract): This resolution, authorizing the mayor and city clerk to execute the agreement relative to utility work, specifically the raising of manhole and water valves, during the Hwy 37 resurfacing project, was presented to the council. Councilman Cowart made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilwoman Sharpe seconded. All were in favor.

Pest Control Bids: Due to the retirement of the current pest control provider, bids were taken for 15 buildings to be serviced monthly and were as follows:

Garrett's Pest Services	\$300 per month
Sorrell Pest Control	\$250 per month
Hewett Pest Control	\$400 per month

Sorrell's bid also included the spraying of Veterans Park and the Firing Range for mosquitoes as needed at no additional fee. Councilman Paige made a motion to accept the low bid. Councilman McClain seconded. The decision was unanimous.

David Johnson - Mr. Johnson addressed the council concerning the use of funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act which is to provide relief for economic suffering from the coronavirus pandemic. It is his understanding it is a direct relief to cities and counties. There are those in our community who have suffered and to some degree, continue to do so. A portion of the funds can be used to promote and increase the vaccination rate, with many cities and counties offering up to \$100 in the form of gift cards for those who choose to be vaccinated. Funds are also being used to subsidize pay for essential workers such as trash and garbage collectors who, without their continued efforts, this city would be crippled. He also understands it provides for use of funds for investments in water, sewer and broadband infrastructure, as well as stabilize government operations. He asked the council why has there not been one vaccination site offered in this city where the proven method of attraction for vaccination using this funding been utilized? Is there currently a plan implemented to compensate the

workers who sacrificed their health to keep this city clean during the pandemic? He added that the president signed into law today a \$1Trillion infrastructure bill. Why not, for the time being, forego use of the ARPA funds for the lift stations and instead repair the sewer system at the Jim Battle Recreation Park. Finally, he's concerned about the utility debacle and the strain imposed upon the less fortunate of our community. Every person present in the council chambers would not be distressed to write a check for the full amount accumulated over the past few months. What about those already stressed from the pandemic and economic inequality. Why not use a portion of the funds to offset the utilities of our elderly and disadvantaged citizens? Mayor Duke thanked Mr. Johnson for his interest and advised we would be in touch with him.

Dr. Treva Gear: Dr. Gear addressed the council concerning a follow-up on the progress of the nuisance complaint filed April 5, 2021 in reference to Advanced Cylinder & Tank. When will the city abide by that and not give lead way to the industry that is poisoning and polluting the community. When will the council adhere to the ordinances to protect the people? What is the hold up? A citizen only gets so many times to let their grass grow very high or to violate a code so she doesn't understand why this business is getting that opportunity. The people need relief and they are tired. (2) Blockstream – Adel made the news, the Wall Street Journal, because of bitcoin mining issues like we're having, we're not the only city. They like to target little towns like ours that are looking for some form of economic development but don't offer a whole lot of jobs and indicated the need for the amount of power that Blockstream uses. She referenced an article she sent to the council earlier today. The engineer said the Tiveron's were too close. It did not meet the guidelines when they set that zone up. When Blockstream tiveron was put there it was already in violation of the memorandum of understanding. Why have the people been overburdened by industry annexed into the city when they're county residents, and now they're at the burden of city council they can't vote for and the council is ignoring the concerns of the people. There was a meeting last week with the Adel Industrial Authority. We can have meetings and a complaint has been filed, but when is something going to happen? What is the council going to do, turn a blind eye, or are you going to do something? The burden is on you. Lastly, she asked about a complaint process several months ago and has not gotten any feedback. When will we have a complaint process implemented that is streamlined, that people know about, that's available on the website for citizens to express their concerns? If you don't have a complaint process you don't want to know, if you don't know you think it didn't happen, because out of all the complaints that were called in there was no documentation with the city. Taxpayers deserve to get what they're paying for. When are you going to establish a complaint process? Are there any plans, have you done anything to do that? She stated we need an answer. She asked that you do your jobs for which you've been elected for.

Executive Session: At 5:49, Councilman Greene made a motion to enter into executive session to discuss two items concerning litigation. Councilman Paige seconded with all in favor.

Opioid Settlement: Following executive session, Councilman Cowart made a motion to approve execution of the Memorandum of Understanding regarding the combined Subdivision Distributor Settlement Participation Form and the Janssen Settlement Participation Form and to authorize the Mayor to enter into the acknowledgement agreement to be bound by the MOU and to authorize the Clerk to provide the necessary information for the participation forms. Councilman McClain seconded. The decision was unanimous.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds: City Clerk Rhonda Rowe explained that a portion of the ARPA funds can be used for premium pay for employees and noted there are specific eligible uses of these funds. Several of our surrounding communities have already approved premium pay for their employees. Mayor Duke stated that the city manager has made suggestions for use of these funds which includes vitally needed lift station improvements as well as compensation for our employees for their service. Mayor Duke suggested paying \$1000 per person and try to disperse this with the first payroll in December. Councilman Paige made a motion to approve the \$1000. Councilman Greene seconded. During discussion, Mayor Duke noted that he was advised earlier today that withholdings for medicare and retirement will automatically be taken out so he questioned if the council wanted to bump the amount up to \$1082.84 so that when this 7.65% is automatically deducted, it will leave \$1000. City Clerk Rhonda Rowe noted this pay will be considered taxable wages as well. It was the consensus of the council to increase the gross premium pay to \$1082.84. Councilman McClain questioned if we had any part time employees. He was advised that we do have temporary employees, hired through a staffing agency. Several of those were sent to begin the process of moving to full-time last week. A discussion was held concerning temporary employees and whether we have employees still in their probationary period. Mayor Duke asked if we would be discriminating if we paid some based on their percentage of completion of their probationary period. City attorney Tim Tanner stated that would not be discriminating as the interim rule mentions those employees who have worked with you during the pandemic; therefore, you could justify percentages of pay. He knew Valdosta did have a sliding scale. The City Manager noted we need direction concerning the volunteer firefighters since they are not full time, but are part time. The council was advised that some of the other communities had paid their volunteers the same amount as other employees. Councilman Cowart suggested they be paid the same amount as other employees. Mayor Duke questioned the number of volunteers to which he was advised the volunteer roster is 20. City Manager John Flythe noted we have also applied for the funding from the State of Georgia that is specific to public safety and first responders only. The amount for that is \$1000 for full time and \$300 for volunteer firefighters. He noted that may be our answer if we wanted to follow what the state has done. Mayor Duke stated he wanted to do more than the state. We could do \$500 but he didn't know if he wanted to cut it. Councilman McClain asked if police and fire would be getting another \$1000. Mayor Duke stated yes, but the ARPA funds is something separate from those state funds. That is something the governor did as he did with the teachers at the beginning of the school year, so we're not held to that with the ARPA funds. He added everybody needs that \$1000 with gas \$1.50 higher than it was this same time last year, the cost of living is higher, the price of eggs is high. We're bettering them, but not a whole lot. The council was advised for informational purposes that it was our understanding the county paid their volunteers the same amount as the other employees. Members of the council agreed that was good enough for them. Councilman Paige made a motion to rescind his original motion and Councilman Greene rescinded his second. All were in favor. Councilman Paige then made a motion to pay \$1082.84 to every employee on the payroll, including volunteer firefighters. Councilman Greene seconded. During discussion, attorney Tim Tanner stated he would have to check and see if any temporary employees are eligible, since they are technically someone else's employee. The decision was unanimous.

Utility Billing Update: The council was advised that edits of meter readings were being reviewed today and the accounts receivable report was also being worked on. This is the first time we have seen that report so this indicates we are hopefully getting closer to bill preparation.

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

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Rhonda P. Rowe, City Clerk

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Luther L. Duke III, Mayor

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