

**CITY OF METTER
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024
5:30 P.M.**

A regular meeting of the city council was held on Monday, February 12, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. in the council chambers at City Hall.

Attending the meeting were the following officials:

Mayor Edwin O. Boyd
Councilwoman Rashida Taylor
Councilwoman Chyrileen Kilcrease
Councilwoman Victoria Gaitten
Councilman Gregg Stewart
Councilman James McKie
City Manager Carter Crawford
City Clerk Angie Conner
Public Works Director Cliff Hendrix
Police Chief Robert Shore
Fire Chief Jason Douglas
Planning Director Teresa Concannon
Director of Economic Development Heidi Jeffers
Jerri Goodman – Metter Advertiser

GUESTS

Juan Taylor – Metter Fire Department
Brad Jones – Candler County Commissioner
Jessica Szilagyi – The Georgia Virtue
Representative from GMC Architects

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Mayor Boyd called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilwoman Taylor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

INVOCATION

Councilwoman Taylor gave the invocation.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the agenda deleting Item 6 (c) – Called Meeting, Monday, February 5, 2024, 5:30 p.m. These minutes will be presented at the next meeting. Councilman McKie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the following minutes:

- a) Regular Meeting, Monday, January 8, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
- b) Called Meeting, Friday, January 12, 2024, 11:00 a.m.

Councilman McKie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

PRESENTATIONS

Mr. Takia Tinsley, representing the New Georgia Project regarding decriminalizing marijuana was listed on the agenda but was not present at the meeting due to weather conditions.

City Manager Carter Crawford gave a presentation regarding the Canoochee River Industrial Park Conceptual Master Plan. He presented the council with documents showing a conceptual plan for putting warehousing on their property. The proposed plan by the developer is to build 1.5 million square feet of warehouse space over the next 10 years at an approximate investment of \$125 million. He said that the pros for the city and county are as follows:

Pros:

- 1. An increase to the city/county tax base.
- 2. Warehouses are not eligible for tax abatement due to the fact that tax abatement is based primarily on job creation. Warehousing has few employees.
- 3. The city and the county can collect both property and inventory taxes.
- 4. Low utility requirements.

Con:

- 1. Lack of job creation.

Development Process:

- 1. Approval of a joint MOU between the city and the developer.
- 2. Annexation of the property into the city.
- 3. Obtain funding for water/sewer and road infrastructure improvements to the developer's property.

The Airport Authority needs some of that property. The authority is to contact an appraiser to determine the fair market value of the property it needs to purchase from the Canoochee River Park developer.

The cost for water and sewer is approximately \$700,000.00 and the cost for revamping and rebuilding Airport Road is approximately \$944,000.00. We will be looking at grants for both of these projects.

Canoochee River had a very high appraiser come in here. The Airport Authority is going to have an appraiser to determine the real fair market value of that property.

This is what was presented to us. We have been dealing with these folks for a couple of years. They first started off with an RV park and now they are looking at warehousing because they have had several contacts from people that are interested in warehouse space.

There are a lot of wetlands on the property. This is a ten-year project. Mr. Crawford asked the council if they had any questions, he could carry back to them. Councilwoman Taylor asked how many people will this employee. Mr. Crawford said not many. It depends on what is in the warehouse.

Councilwoman Taylor asked who are they wanting to pay for the road? Mr. Crawford said the city would need to get a grant after it is annexed into the city. It is in the county now. The city would also be responsible for getting water and sewer to their property line.

Councilman McKie said so in synopsis they want to build this stuff and the city to pay for all of our resources to them (water, sewer and for us to fix the road). Mr. Crawford said that originally, they had offered to pay for it and then we would reimburse them over time but that is not a good option. We told them we would be looking at grants in which we are doing. The key is they must be annexed in the city first.

Councilwoman Taylor said that last time they came they were going to contact the Airport Authority and figure out all of that before they came back to us. So, they have still not figured out the amount with the Airport Authority and this is a new plan that they have presented? Mr. Crawford said this is what the Airport Authority needs. This is the base minimum they need. Councilwoman Taylor asked when they were here before we asked them to work out the details. Mr. Crawford said they gave them an offer which was outrageous. Airport Authority member Cliff Hendrix stated that when the airport gets a grant from FAA, we must have an appraisal done by a certified GDOT appraiser. We had that done and made them an offer and they did not respond for over a year. That offer was somewhere in the neighborhood of around \$600,00.00. They came back with a counteroffer of somewhere around \$6 million.

Councilman McKie asked what is the total acreage we are talking about? Mr. Hendrix stated 7.45 acres. That is all we need to do parallel taxiing at that end. So, since they have now changed, we are gone go in and have another appraisal done since they are changing

the use of the property. We must have that in order to obtain the grant from FAA. Once we have that done, we will make them a counteroffer for that land.

Mr. Hendrix said in regard to the water, the Airport Authority has in their CIP for next year to apply for a grant to run water to the airport, we have been approved for that. So, we should get that grant to help offset the cost of the water to the city for running water out there to the airport. It will terminate right there at the airport. Councilwoman Taylor said that in theory, if the airport is connected to water and sewer then connecting them to that what would be the cost? Mr. Hendrix said that the city would run water to their property line and put a meter on it. That is in the design. They would go from there to their property. Councilwoman Taylor asked if that would be city money? Mr. Hendrix said no, that would be their money.

Mr. Hendrix said that we have this project out for bids now because of the potential business that is coming at the end of Airport Road at the end of the airport. We will have to run water to that new business. We do not have sewer in there, but the airport will help with the funding of the water.

Councilwoman Taylor said so this is \$700,000.00 maybe from city to fund a small group of employers? Mr. Hendrix said that counting the water aspect of that we will not have anything to do with the road. Councilwoman Taylor said that is seems like a lot is on our end. Mr. Crawford said to remember what Terrell was saying about freeing up a lot of LMIG money. That is one of the things we are looking at doing with that.

Councilman Stewart said that these budget numbers are from 2022, so it will probably be a lot higher. Mr. Hendrix said that it will be a little bit higher, but those numbers will still be pretty good. The true numbers will show when we get the bid results back. Councilwoman Taylor asked when do you estimate the appraisal to come back? Mr. Hendrix said that it will probably take four to five months. Councilman Stewart said when you get bids back how are those prices good through? Mr. Hendrix said that we ask them to hold the prices but at least for 90 days. We will bring this to the city council to award the job.

Mr. Crawford said that we are looking at a One Georgia grant for the sewer portion of it. Councilwoman Taylor said so the other benefit besides this company's property what is the other benefits for the city as a whole? Mr. Crawford said those are the major benefits. So, the other benefits since they will not have that many employees there will not be a need for much housing. Another key is that most of the traffic will be going to the interstate. There will still be truck traffic coming through town but most of it will be going east or west on Interstate 16. That is the reason the road is going to have to be widened and improved for heavier traffic. The road down there now is not built for truck traffic. Councilman McKie asked if we have talked with GDOT about a traffic study? Oak Tree Road is in between this and the interstate. Twice a day there is nothing but school kids in and out there. Mr. Crawford said that is one of the concerns we had since we will have more development on that side of the road and the street where the school system comes

out on. We have asked the DOT to look at that. Councilwoman Taylor asked if the study is costing the city money? Mr. Crawford said no.

Mayor Boyd said that in his mind a major benefit is the capital investment that goes into the actual property and inventory of those buildings. Councilman Stewart said it is more for accommodations of future growth. Mayor Boyd said you are benefiting the county and city taxpayers and the school board taxpayers without really impacting your school population or your water and sewer. Other places with warehouses along the interstate are doing very well with their tax benefits. Councilwoman Taylor asked if they owned all the property around them and if it is in the county? Mr. Crawford said they do own all of it and the only way to get utilities and the road improvement is that they annex all of that property into the city. Councilwoman Taylor asked how many acres is that total? Mr. Crawford said four hundred acres. They will have to annex all four hundred acres, not just the parcels in question. Councilman McKie said so that means if we annex all of it and they build something else we will have to run water/sewer to it? Mayor Boyd said that the majority of that property is wetlands. Mr. Crawford said that is why we are just going to their property line. Anything inside their property, they will have to run the water and sewer, but it must be up to our specs for us to let them hook onto our system. They will also have to build a lift station on their side.

After no further comments, Mayor Boyd moved to the next agenda item.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement. Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Resolution – GMA Direct Leasing Program

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to approve a Resolution authorizing Mayor Edwin O. Boyd to execute a three-year lease supplement for a lease under the GMA Direct Leasing Program, for a 2023 Dodge Durango, issued to the Metter Police Department, in the amount of \$56,390.22 at an interest rate of 5.54%. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion. Mayor Boyd called for discussion. Councilman McKie asked are we not in a position we can just buy these out right without having to lease them? Mr. Crawford said the only way to do that is to raise taxes. Councilman McKie said he is concerned about the interest rates. Councilman Stewart asked if it is a cash on hand type of situation? Mr. Crawford said we must keep a reserve on hand. After no further comments, Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

Resolution – GMA Direct Leasing Program

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve a resolution authorizing Mayor Edwin O. Boyd to execute a three-year lease supplement for a lease under the GMA Direct Leasing Program, for a 2023 Dodge 1500, 2023 Dodge Charger, and equipment, issued to the Metter Police Department, in the amount of \$99,727.82 at an interest rate of 8.85%. Councilman McKie seconded the motion. Mayor Boyd called for discussion. Mr. Crawford explained that what happened here, why the interest rate is higher than the first loan is we were able to get the loan within 60 days so, we got a tax-exempt loan for 5.54%. What happened in this second one is it took more than 60 days to deliver the vehicles and to sign a lease, so under the IRS code you are allowed 60 days for a tax-exempt lease. Due to the delivery of vehicles taking so long we could not meet those IRS requirements therefore; we got an 8.85% interest rate on a taxable lease. This is a problem that we are going to have to deal with due to the IRS code. You cannot get police vehicles within 60 days. We were lucky with the Dodge Durango because it was on the lot. Councilwoman Taylor asked was it the dealer that was taking so long or what? Mr. Crawford said they could not get the vehicles. You order the vehicles then it takes several months to get it. You cannot sign the lease until the vehicles come in. Councilwoman Taylor said she thought we already had those vehicles for a while. Mr. Crawford said that is what he is saying these two vehicles took a long time to get. That is why we got hung in this taxable interest rate. The dealer said he would try to work with us in the future. Councilman McKie asked when does the 60 days start? Mr. Crawford said the 60 days start when you order the vehicle. Councilman McKie asked when were these vehicles ordered? Mr. Crawford said six to seven months ago. Councilwoman Taylor asked so as we move forward, have we thought about or figured out somewhere they have vehicles on the lot? Mr. Crawford said that is something we must look at. Councilman McKie asked if there is another way to finance it? Mr. Crawford said anywhere else is going to be just as much, especially if you go through a bank. Under state law if the city borrows from a bank, they must pay back the loan on December 31st. You cannot borrow for multi years. This GMA lease purchase plan is a special provision in the law that allows us to do that. A bank cannot do it for you. It goes back to the law that one elected body cannot carry over to another elected body. After no further comments, Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

Special Event Alcohol Permit

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve a Special Event Alcohol Permit for 303 SE Broad St. (Metter Depot) submitted by Debra Prince, Canoochee Creek Market on Broad, Inc. Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Special Event Alcohol Permit

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve a Special Even Alcohol Permit for 10 N. Lewis St. submitted by Timothy R. Coleman, Burlap & Lace Market & Coffee Bar. Councilman McKie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

City of Metter Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan

Councilman McKie made a motion to approve the City of Metter Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan as required by the Georgia department of Transportation. Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion. Mr. Hendrix explained that if the city has fifty or less employees then you are not required to have this plan but since we now have over fifty employees, we are required by GDOT to do this ADA Plan. Mr. Hendrix put the plan together. It must be approved by the council. Then it must be submitted to GDOT as soon as possible. All our public buildings meet ADA compliance except the fire station. We indicated in the plan that will be resolved when the new fire station is built. After no questions, Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

Robert's Civil Engineering – Grant Writing Proposal

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve a Municipal Grant Writing Proposal from Robertt's Civil Engineering for grant writing services for an Assistance to Firefighter's Grant through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Councilman McKie seconded the motion. Mr. Crawford said that the fire department is applying for a FEMA grant to buy a fire truck. The cost submitted by Robert's Civil Engineering to write the grant is \$9,250.00. These fees will fold into the grant if we get the grant. Councilman McKie said also they will charge 3% to administer the grant. Are we going to spend \$10,000.00 on something that we do not know if we will get? Mr. Crawford said that he got an email from both of our senators encouraging us to apply. After no further discussion, Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

Lease Agreement Franklin Foods LLC.

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to approve a lease agreement between the City of Metter and Franklin Foods, LLC d/b/a H. L. Franklin Healthy Honey by and through its president, Laura Tiffany Franklin for property located at 803 ½ Lillian Street, Metter, Georgia. Councilwoman Gaitten seconded the motion. Mr. Crawford said that she will be using our kitchen area in the old school building. She brings honey in and bottles it for retail. She is moving her operation over here from Statesboro. She is a member of our incubator. She will be paying \$1,683 in rent fees to the city. She wants to move in by February 15th. Councilman McKie asked who will be responsible for the maintenance of the building? Mr. Crawford said that the city has made a lot of improvements over there already. Mr. Hendrix said that the mold was removed six to seven years ago. Councilman McKie asked who is ultimately responsible for the care and upkeep of the building? Mr. Crawford said that since she is leasing, it will be up to the landlord for the main upkeep. Councilwoman Gaitten asked if the trash fee will be on their water bill? Mr. Crawford said it will be on their regular bill. Mayor Boyd asked how many employees will she have. Economic Development Director Heidi Jeffers said that she has two right now. After no further questions, Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

Lease Agreement Right Turn Distributors

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve a lease agreement between the City of Metter and Southern Automation, Logistics and Technology, LLC d/b/a Right Turn Distributors by and through its president, Stacey Roach for property located at 25 S. Terrell Street. Councilwoman Gaitten seconded the motion. Mr. Crawford said that they are members of our incubator. They will be leasing a portion of the building that Better Fresh Farms is not using for \$770.00 per month. They will be distributing for Better Fresh Farms and Georgia Grown products to small businesses. They will probably need a larger space than that in the future. After no further comments, Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

The agenda packets contained written reports provided by each department head for the mayor and council to review.

Chief Shore announced that he is short a police officer. He said that they would sign the paperwork with the new animal caretaker on Wednesday for the animal shelter. She will be starting in two weeks. The part-time position person will start on Friday.

Councilwoman Taylor asked if we are doing exit interviews for the officers that are leaving? Chief Shore said yes and no. He knows the reasons why they are leaving. Councilwoman Taylor asked Chief Shore if Missy was also talking with them. He said no that he sits down and talks with them.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Crawford reported that Tim Coleman, the owner of Bevericks gave notice to public works employees that he is giving them a free lunch tomorrow and he put their picture on Facebook of them working in the rain. That is very nice of him to do that.

Mr. Crawford reminded the council that the city applied for a FEMA grant for two generators in 2018. The grant has now been approved. The problem is we met with the Emergency Management people today and the pricing has changed since then. So, what FEMA is going to do is honor the new pricing when we bid it out. It will take a while to put a new packet together. It will come back to the council for approval before we buy anything. The grant is an 85/15 grant so the city will have to pay 15% of the cost. One generator will be backup to the well in the alley and the other will be portable to pull for all the lift stations.

Mr. Crawford said that they also told us today that they have \$2 million for drainage. The key is you must have a preapplication in by April 1st. The Chief and Public Works Director are working on identifying drainage areas. We have several areas that need some drainage improvements.

Mr. Crawford announced the first budget workshop will be held on Monday, February 26th at 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Crawford said he thought we had a good session on Saturday. We got a lot of things to hop on. The council loaded us up with work to do. A lot of good things came out of that meeting. We will be moving forward trying to accomplish those goals.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Boyd commented that we had a good retreat facilitated by Terrell Jacobs with GMA. He appreciated everyone being there on Saturday.

Mayor Boyd reminded the council that we have another event tomorrow. The Tree Board is hosting an Arbor Day Event at 10:00 a.m. at the History Museum.

Mayor Boyd informed the council that we have notice of a joint meeting with the county and the Industrial Authority on February 20th at 5:30 p.m. at the county office.

Mayor Boyd said that he is looking forward to finally getting some activity on the fire station to see what we are facing with the money part.

Mayor Boyd said that he is excited about what is going on at the GGIC that continues to expand.

ADJOURNMENT

After no further discussion, Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:24 p.m. Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Angie Conner, City Clerk