

**CITY OF METTER
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2024
5:30 P.M.**

A regular meeting of the city council was held on Monday, October 14, 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 Victoria Gaitten
Councilman James McKie
Councilwoman Rashida Taylor
Councilwoman Chyrileen Kilcrease
Councilman Gregg Stewart
Interim City Manager Scott Wood
City Clerk Angie Conner
Public Works Director Cliff Hendrix
Police Chief Robert Shore
Planning Director Teresa Concannon
Fire Chief Jason Douglas
Director of Economic Development Heidi Jeffers
Jerri Goodman – Metter Advertiser

Attending the meeting were the following guests:

Justin Wells – EMA Director/Candler County Sheriff's Office
Lisa Rigdon – The Bridge dba Community Care Cottage

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Mayor Boyd called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilwoman Gaitten led the Pledge of Allegiance.

INVOCATION

Councilwoman Kilcrease gave the invocation.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the agenda, adding the following:

1. Presentation by Justin Wells
2. Presentation by Lisa Rigdon

3. Item G – Consideration of a motion to approve the quote from Beasley Well Drilling and Pump Service, Inc., in the amount of \$45,421.00 to install a new pump and shaft at water well number one.
4. Item H – Consideration of a motion to approve a Quitclaim Deed Between the City of Metter and the Candler County Industrial Authority for 17.354 acres located in the Industrial Park on the Doowon site.
5. Item I – Consideration of a motion to go into closed session for personnel, pursuant to O.C.G.A. 50-14-2(1).

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the following minutes:

- a) Public Hearing, Monday, September 9, 2024, 5:15 p.m.
- b) Regular Meeting, Monday, September 9, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
- c) Public Hearing, Thursday, September 12, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
- d) Public Hearing, Thursday, September 12, 2024, 6:15 p.m.
- e) Called Meeting, Friday, September 20, 2024, 8:15 a.m.
- f) Public Hearing, Friday, September 20, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
- g) Called Meeting, Friday, September 20, 2024, 9:15 a.m.

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

PRESENTATIONS

Justin Wells – EMA Director/Candler County Sheriff's Office

EMA Director Justin Wells gave a presentation regarding the recent hurricane, Helene. First, he thanked the mayor and council for their support during this disaster. This was the worst hit hurricane in Candler County's history. The EMA team is collaborating with GEMA and FEMA. There will be a Disaster Recovery Center set up to help people report their needs. The EMA team will conduct after action reviews then meet to improve the plans. The biggest thing right now is getting up the debris. We are collaborating now with GEMA, FEMA, and the National Guard. We will need another staging area. By using the National Guard, this will keep contractors honest. We will be updating the EMA plan of action. Mayor Boyd thanked Director Wells personally, along with the EMA team including Fire and Police. He commended Director Wells for his leadership during this biggest challenge. The next big challenge is the community cleanup.

Lisa Rigdon – The Bridge dba Community Care Cottage

Mrs. Rigdon first thanked the mayor and council for their support through the years, and then she gave a presentation which included the background of the Candler County Community Care Cottage/The Bridge. Candler County Community Care Cottage began

in 1988, as concerned citizens and members of DFACS, churches, and businesses saw a need to provide clothing and food for families in need in Candler County. It closed its doors in 2000 as the founding members retired and passed away. The building was donated to Candler County Family Connection and in 2004 the Candler County Family Connection reopened the doors to what we now know as the Bridge (bridging the gap to independence) dba Community Care Cottage. The space above Queensborough National Bank was donated as the old building had mold and roof damage. The Bridge served our community from 2004 until 2023 in this facility providing food, clothing, and financial assistance to our community through donations of churches, annual golf tournament along with additional business and individual donations.

One of the main reasons the resource center was started was the fact that 30.9 percent of our children live in poverty and 39.3 percent of our families have less than 150 percent of the feral poverty threshold.

In 2023 the Candler County Family Resource Center was recognized by Georgia Family Connection Partnership for the efforts in providing resources to our community through the outreach center. We are honored to have received the FRC funding from DHS to make our outreach look more like a true Family Resource Center.

To conclude, Mrs. Rigdon asked the council to consider this need when obligating the city's remaining ARPA funds.

Mayor Boyd thanked Mrs. Rigdon for all she does for our community.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance Amending the City of Metter's Dog Ordinance, Chapter 6.04 Section 6.04.070 Dogs Without Tags

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve an ordinance amending the City of Metter's Dog Ordinance, Chapter 6.04 Section 6.04.070 Dogs Without Tags. If a dog is not claimed within 5 days from the date of impoundment, excluding weekends and legal holidays, the animal may be disposed of in a humane manner. This will change the number of days from seven (7) to five (5) days.

Councilwoman Taylor asked if Paws, Hearts, and Hands was on board with this change. Chief Shore stated that they participated in making this recommendation. Councilwoman Taylor asked that Paws, Hearts, and Hands provide council with a copy of the minutes from their meetings.

After no further comments, Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous. (second and final reading)

2025 LMIG Program Submission

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the 2025 LMIG Program submission as follows:

1. Richard Street from South Leroy Street to South Rountree Street resurface twenty-four feet width roadway, adding centerline and edge line stripping, roll over curbing, crosswalk and stop bars at an estimated cost of \$36,859.40.
2. South Rountree Street from East Lytell Street to Ruby Street resurface twenty-four feet width roadway, adding centerline and edge line stripping, roll over curbing, and stop bar at an estimated cost of \$49,575.60.

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

The City will receive \$78,570.98 in GDOT funds and with the city's 10% match we will have around \$86,428.08 for LMIG funding. We can use additional funds from our monthly TIA amount.

Appointment to the Metter-Candler County Airport Authority

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to table the motion to approve a resolution reappointing Mr. Ty Tyson to the Metter-Candler County Airport Authority for a three-year term expiring on December 31, 2027. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Councilwoman Taylor expressed her concerns regarding diversity on city appointed boards. She asked that we advertise this position to see if anyone else may be interested in serving on this board and to bring this issue back to the next regular meeting. She also wanted to know where the board meetings were posted since she had never seen it in the newspaper. Mr. Hendrix said that it is posted at the airport. He said that it would not be a problem to notify the newspaper. Councilwoman Gaitten asked for the council to be notified of Airport Authority board meetings.

Street Closure Request by First Baptist Church of Metter

Councilman McKie made a motion to approve a request from the First Baptist Church of Metter to close a block of South Rountree Street in front of the church and the city hall during the fall festival on October 31, 2024. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

This is part of their continuing efforts to build up and strengthen our community. This will afford them the opportunity to love on the children and families in our area with games and activities in a safe area free from any traffic.

Mayor Boyd mentioned piggy backing with the church for trick or treating to create a safe zone due to all the debris from hurricane Helene. Councilwoman Taylor said that she agreed. Chief Shore also agreed that it would be unsafe especially for children running out from behind debris in the path of cars. It would be hard to see them. Mayor Boyd suggested producing a safe zone. Chief Shore suggested starting at College Street blocking off and coming back on Vertia Street, block off Kennedy Street and just use Vertia Street all the way to the Fire Department. He suggested getting with other churches and civic organizations to come and set up booths. Councilman McKie said that the city cannot stop people from going door to door trick or treating but we can say that the city is requesting that you do not go door to door due to the safety hazard of the debris. Councilwoman Gaitten suggested saying no to ATV's and trailers this year. Councilman McKie said that they are already illegal. Chief Shore asked how would council like for him to enforce that? Councilwoman Taylor said at the GMA Board of Directors meeting they discussed a 35-million-dollar lawsuit with the City of Milton for just stuff like this. She said that she is airing on the side of caution. She said that you do not want the kids trick or treating around all that hazardous stuff. Mayor Boyd said that he liked Chief Shore's suggestions on the area streets, and we need to work with the Chamber and Downtown Development Authority and other entities to bring and set up a table. Councilwoman Gaitten said that she did not think it is fair to ask the businesses to participate when they already participate with the school. Councilman McKie agreed. He said that we should ask residents to bring candy and a table to the designated area.

Mrs. Goodman informed the mayor and council of a Halloween event she attended in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. They created a flow downtown. People parked and then walked through.

Mayor Boyd said that we will work on a plan and get something drawn up in the next day or two. The strategy is to have a limited area for trick or treat due to safety issues caused by the debris.

Bid Approval – EMC Engineering – TIA2 Band 1 Projects

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the bid from EMC Engineering Services in the amount of \$63,350.00 to engineer the TIA2 Band 1 Projects. This will consist of 10 city streets (Preston Street, Moffitt/Edwards streets, Hickory Street, Doctors Street, Holly Drive/Hope Street, Bragdon Street, Brannen Street, North Kennedy Street, and East Turner Street). Councilman McKie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

The city received two bids: EMC Engineering Services and Parker Engineering. We have used both engineers on previous projects. Due to the size of this project, Public Works Director Cliff Hendrix is recommending going with EMC Engineering Services since they have three dedicated field inspectors on staff, which two of them will always be assigned to this project. These projects will be funded with State TIA funds, Water/Sewer R&R funds, SPLOST funds, and TIA Discretion funds.

Public Hearing Set for Tuesday, November 12, 2024

Councilman McKie made a motion to set a public hearing on Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at 5:15 p.m. for an amendment to the zoning ordinance regarding PUD/Townhome Development. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Approval of Quote from Beasley Well Drilling and Pump Services, Inc.

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to approve a quote from Beasley Well Drilling and Pump Services, Inc. in the amount of \$45,421.00 to install a new pump and shaft at water well number one. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Hendrix stated that water well number one, which is our backup well for drinking water, is down. This occurred sometime on Saturday night when it was turned on during the fire. Our electricians determined and it has been verified by Georgia Power that when Georgia Power connected the power back to the well that it was hooked up incorrectly. Our well company that has done a lot of work for the city over the years, pulled the pump and shafts to find out that they were not repairable. We received a quote from them on October 10, 2024, to install a completely new pump and shafts. Once they receive the order, they can have the new one installed by the end of the week. Mr. Hendrix recommended approving the quote of \$45,421.00. It can be paid out of a Water Renewal and Replacement account or ARPA. We will be billing Georgia Power for their error to try and recovery some of this money.

Approval of Quitclaim Deed – Candler County Industrial Authority

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve a Quitclaim Deed between the City of Metter and Candler County Industrial Authority for 17.354 acres located in the Industrial Park on the Doowon site. Councilman McKie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Mayor Boyd said that evidentially there was a plat drawn up with an extension of the Bowen Heights Subdivision proposed at some point and time and it went into this property that subsequently became the Industrial Park. To clear up any legal claims that somebody might make in the future, they are asking for this.

Closed Session – Personnel

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to go into closed session for personnel, pursuant to O.C.G.A. 50-14-2(1) at 6:38 p.m. Councilman McKie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Open Session

After the discussion was complete in closed session, Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to go back into open session at 7:10 p.m. Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

No vote was taken regarding the closed session.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

The departmental reports were included in the agenda packet for the council's review.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Wood commented that it is still early on and he still has a lot to learn in terms of the uniqueness and particulars of Metter; from the budget challenges of the general fund issues, three different SPLOST programs, ARPA deadlines and qualifications, water and sewer funds, vendor contracts to more infrastructure needs and projects that we have identified funding to meet, new fire station bonding schedules and construction contracts, new park construction, personnel policies, issues relative to industrial and residential development projects, rezoning issues and all other issues and routine issues. Then on top of that we had a massive hurricane, then a major downtown fire. Everybody was very patient and supportive. He said he appreciates that as he tries to get out from behind the learning curve.

Mr. Wood said that part of his responsibility is to not only work within the administration of the city government but to also work cooperatively on behalf of the council, with other government entities as well. We are not an island to ourselves so obviously we need to continually engage ourselves with the county, with various state agencies and with the federal government. He stated that he met with the county administrator and is looking forward to working with him. The important thing is that the city and county continue to work together in every possible way for the betterment of the entire community.

Mr. Wood said that last week he had a discussion with one of the key staff members from Senator Warnock's office regarding several ways that the federal government might be of assistance to the city in the future. We will be developing some of those ideas and possibilities. Mr. Wood said that he hopes to meet in Savannah soon with those key staff members.

One of the things discussed was the generator problem. They were made aware that we did not have any power in the key areas of local government. They might not be able to help us as quickly as we need.

Mr. Wood said that he has enjoyed the experience even though the first few weeks have been unusual.

Mr. Wood said that he had never worked anywhere that the budget is as razor thin as it is here. The city really does not have much in the way of financial latitude, but we are blessed with so many people that have passion and commitment to their fellow citizens. That has been exemplified lately. We had a warehouse owner who shared that expensive facility for the logistics and storage and organization and coordination of all that during the aftermath of the hurricane.

Mr. Wood reported that the debris is being stored at the Police Department at this time. We have a bunch piled up and only scratched the surface. Mr. Wood said that he talked with the County Administrator about sharing a common facility somewhere. We must be careful of commingling because of FEMA.

Mr. Wood informed the city council that a contractor from Statesboro has invested a lot of his money, excavators, backhoes, and personnel to come over here and clean up debris. He is not charging the city for his services. Mr. Wood said he wanted the council to know that the contractor is his brother. He is not getting a dime from the City of Metter. The City Council was incredibly grateful for his service and asked Mr. Wood to pass the word on to his brother. Mr. Wood said he did not tell the council all of this for recognition but just in case somebody says something about it, they would be aware of it.

Mr. Wood said that one thing he has learned is that we are a small city with a giant heart. He said that he appreciates the opportunity to be involved.

Councilwoman Gaitten expressed her appreciation to Mr. Wood for reaching out to the council right after the storm to give them a heads up of what was going on, even though the service was spotty. She said that the council has not had that kind of communication in the past. Mr. Wood said he would do his best to keep the council informed of things.

Mr. Wood said that one thing that is concerning that needs to be addressed is the operational silos here with departments. The city department heads are not an island to themselves. Every single department is in some way to some degree dependent upon every other department. Mr. Wood said that he will do everything he can to make this better even if it means personnel changes. What we must keep uppermost in our minds is whether that individual is going to be what this city needs to maintain the standards that we need to maintain. An issue does not have to define a relationship.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Boyd thanked everyone for pitching in with the hurricane disaster and with the downtown structure fire, especially Councilwoman Gaitten's husband who is a firefighter and Councilman Stewart's wife who is also a trained firefighter. It was amazing how everybody pitched in every time there was a need.

Mayor Boyd thanked Mr. Wood for coming onboard with the city.

Regular Meeting, October 14, 2024

Councilwoman Gaitten said that she wanted to brag on Heidi Jeffers for taking supplies from the warehouse to the hospital so that those employees had things they needed. She got food from the hospital and brought it to the city departments. She also made goody bags for the National Guard. She was all over the place when she did not have to be.

ADJOURNMENT

After no further discussion, Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 p.m. Councilman McKie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Angie Conner, City Clerk