

**CITY OF METTER
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2025
5:30 P.M.**

A regular meeting of the city council was scheduled for Monday, September 8, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held in the council chambers at city hall.

Attending the meeting were the following officials:

Mayor Edwin O. Boyd
Councilwoman Victoria Gaitten
Councilwoman Rashida Taylor
Councilman Gregg Stewart
Councilman James D. McKie
Councilwoman Chyrileen Kilcrease
City Manager Scott Wood
HR/ Purchasing Manager Missy Edenfield
Finance Manager Cindy Collins
Public Works Director Cliff Hendrix
Planning Director Teresa Concannon
Police Chief McKinley Lewis
Director of Economic Development Heidi Jeffers
Fire Chief Jason Douglas
Taylor Crosby – Metter Advertiser

Attending the meeting were the following guests:

Keith Aldrich
Grady Franklin
Gabe Cliett
Susan Crooms
Tara Jeffers

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

City Manager Scott Wood gave the invocation.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the agenda. 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, August 11, 2025, 5:00 p.m.
- b) Regular Meeting, Monday, August 11, 2025, 5:30 p.m.

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

PRESENTATIONS

There were no presentations.

Guest Comments

Mr. Keith Aldrich expressed his concerns about the following:

- 1. Financial state of the city.
- 2. Costs related to architect fees for the new fire station and the cost to tear down the old building.
- 3. Hiring process for the permanent city manager position.

Mr. Aldrich asked council to hold off on the fire station project until the city could get their feet back under them. He also informed city council that he thought it would be fair to hire a new city manager after January when the newly elected officials will be in place since they will have to work with this person for the next four years.

City Manager, Scott Wood, informed the group that the fire department is currently in a temporary facility that ISO will not allow them to remain in the present facility for very long. He said that when he came here a year ago, he was presented with a set of building plans and concept drawings that the city had paid for a new fire station that was dated 2007. It has been 20 years since we have been kicking this can down the road. It is not going to get any easier if we wait. The new fire station is being paid for entirely out of SPLOST funds. The public voted to collect those monies and to dedicate those monies to the construction of the new fire station. He said that he hopes people are not confusing SPLOST funds with general funds. General funds are the primary issue with the increasing of the millage rate not the SPLOST that will fund the construction of the new fire station.

Mr. Gabe Cliett wanted to know the council's rationale of the city being on the verge of being broke.

Councilman McKie stated that there is a cash flow problem not an unbalanced budget problem. There is an established budget that the city will continue to operate under without an issue. The problem is that the income for that budget does not start coming in until the end of the year.

Councilwoman Taylor said that we have seen these challenges before. We have had a couple of hurricanes. We had to wait about two years before we received reimbursement for Hurricane

Debby. This has contributed to the cash flow problem. It is always around this time of year, but this is the lowest it has been.

Councilwoman Gaitten agreed with Councilman McKie and Councilwoman Taylor that it is a cashflow problem.

Councilman Stewart said that in the past four to five years the city has not been able to keep up with inflation. Since Covid everything is so much more expensive than it was before. He said that he would not call this on the verge of being broke but being tight, that is what happens when you have less money coming in and prices are higher. When you sit here and do not raise taxes you are not doing the city a favor.

Councilwoman Kilcrease agreed with the other members of council. Councilwoman Kilcrease said that we have been talking about the fire station for 25 years. In years past we have been able to roll back taxes. Now it is time to increase, and everyone is going to have to feel that bite in order for us to do the things we need to do. We will overcome this. We need people to bear with us and support us and the decisions that we make. We are making them for the benefit of the citizens and not for council. Sometimes it is going to hurt.

Mr. Cliett said that he does not think the citizens would agree with that. He does not think they have faith in this council. Mr. Cliett said that he thinks this council will go down as the worst city council in the history of Metter in his lifetime. He said that a group of citizens came to a public meeting last week on the budget and millage rate and only one council member was here. Four out of five were not here. Mr. Cliett had concerns over all council members not being present for the public meeting.

Mayor Boyd said that most of the time we have public hearings right before our council meetings and all the council people show up for them because we are getting ready to have a meeting. In this case the Department of Revenue requires that we have a strict schedule if we have a tax increase or not rolling back the millage rate. We have to have a morning session and then we can have one in the afternoon after 6:00 p.m. on the same day. Unfortunately, that meeting got rescheduled. We had two council people that notified us that they could not be here and the other two were at work. Mayor Boyd said that he would take the blame for that. The city clerk usually checks to make sure everyone can be here, and she was not able to do that so he said that he should have been the one picking up her slack on that but did not do it. Morning meetings are rare. We found out that we were going to have to do it over again. We were not familiar with the Department of Revenue rules, and we still cannot find it in writing. We had to restructure the entire schedule. He said that he feels terrible about that and apologized to the community for us not knowing that we had to have a quorum in order to have that meeting. From now on, rest assured, we will have a quorum.

Mrs. Susan Crooms expressed her concerns about the taxes and property values going up, but citizens' incomes are not. She had concerns over a tax increase which includes a three-million-dollar project and money to get rid of the old fire house. Mrs. Crooms said that she agrees with the need for a new fire station but does not agree with starting the project this year. She had concerns with the communication with the public during the budget process.

Mayor Boyd responded by informing everyone that the demolition of the old fire station and the construction of the new fire station is a SPLOST project authorized by the votes. In that account we have an excess of 1.5 million dollars sitting there ready to go. This does not affect your property tax. The cash flow problem is greater at this point and time than we have experienced in past years.

Mr. Aldrich said that putting the right verbiage on the agenda would help people to understand. The motion should have included that the project would be paid for with SPLOST funds.

Mrs. Crooms said that the public is seeing that you are raising the taxes and building a \$3,000,000.00 fire station. It is the perception. People don't understand.

Mr. Franklin asked about the agreement with the county to tear down the old fire station. Chief Douglas said that the old Quonset hut was the only thing addressed. The county has not agreed to tear down the other building. They were worried about the common wall between NAPA and the dry cleaners. Mr. Wood said that in the beginning he was told that the county had agreed to tear those buildings down except the only condition was that they would not go all the way to the NAPA building because they were scared about destabilizing that wall. Since then, I was told that it was not right that the county had not agreed to do that. Mr. Franklin said that he wishes the city, and county could work together on some things.

Mayor Boyd said that there is light at the end of the tunnel. We are so fortunate to have the interstate out there. We are getting the FLOST on the ballot in a few weeks and hope everyone will get on the band wagon because every penny of the FLOST tax has to be used to roll back property taxes. It is estimated that the City of Metter will collect about 1 million in sales tax money, which will just about wipe out all of our property tax that we collect; about 80% of it. Mr. Wood said that the FLOST would take effect in 2027. It will not affect property taxes this year or next. The reason being is the state requires a full calendar base year to determine what the rollback would be. So, if the FLOST is approved in November of this year, the first full base year will be calendar year 2026. So, it will be during 2027 for the property tax year that you will see the affect.

Mayor Boyd said that we also have some new investment in town, the RaceTrac. It will pull people off the interstate. We have one large 99-room hotel committed to getting started this year and other hotels are actively looking for real estate to put up rooms. We have several developers looking at putting up housing units. There are people out there looking to invest in our community and as they do, we are going to bring some new people to town, but it is also going to bring some needed monetary investment to the community that is going to help with the tax problem. The mayor said that he thinks we are going to be looking okay in a few years down the road. Right now, we are having a painful time up here and it is all on us. We know it is painful because we do not like paying taxes either.

Mayor Boyd thanked the citizens for their concerns and engagement. He thanked the candidates for running for office. He is proud of the City of Metter staff and the job that they have done for the last 22 years that he has been here. He has come to appreciate the hard work that they put in.

Ms. Tara Jeffers said she is a long-time resident and is also running for a city council seat. She believes some of her experience may be valuable to the city. We have to make tough decisions. Ms. Jeffers had some follow-up questions:

1. What are the options for revenue generation outside of raising taxes?
Councilman McKie said that we can raise fees and taxes. Mayor Boyd said some of those fees are for the enterprise fund which is totally different from general fund. Mr. Hendrix said that about \$200,000 cost allocation is transferred from the enterprise fund to the general fund annually.
2. Are there any thoughts on revenue generation?

Councilman Stewart said yes, one of my main concerns is when I see engineering fees while sitting up here, they seem high. The reason I am not running this year is because I can be out there and save the city money and bring other options that could save money, and it won't be a conflict of interest. Right now, my hands are tied because it might be a conflict of interest. There are opportunities to reduce costs.

Councilwoman Gaitten said also tourism could be another way to increase revenue if we had more things going on downtown and invited people here. If we could just capture people coming into Metter for a day visit, that would be fantastic. You come, shop, eat, and leave.

Mr. Cliett said that is how most people envision Metter, kind of like the old Mayberry feel. The problem is the main street into town used to be the pride and joy. People talk about riding those historic streets and looking at our azalea bushes. Now they look like crap. Councilwoman Gaitten said that she believes it is because they are being cut too often. They are not blooming like they are supposed to because they are cut more than once a year.

Mr. Cliett said that it's not just the azalea bushes. It is the grass growing over the curbs. It is a total disaster. You all want to focus on the park and not the azaleas and potholes. People are not going to get to the downtown area when they see what it looks like from the medians out to the interstate. Mayor Boyd said that we understand that there is a lot of work to be done. Mr. Cliett asked if private citizens could do that work or is it a liability to the city. Mr. Wood said that he doesn't think it would be a liability, but he thinks you would want some structure to it.

3. Is it a danger to public safety to hold off on the fire station project?
Councilwoman Gaitten said that she would consider it a danger to the fire fighters that have to stay in that building.
4. What finances the other 1.5 million that you don't have for the fire station?
Mayor Boyd said that the city is still collecting money from SPLOST. Ms. Jeffers asked if the city has the cash money now. Do you know the best way to beat inflation? Can you invest that money? What is your return on it? Mr. Wood said that those are questions that we will be glad to answer later.
5. Are there any opportunities to reallocate funds for the fire department?
Councilman McKie said no that SPLOST is locked down by referendum.

Mr. Wood said that what is on the agenda tonight is a recommendation or an opportunity for council to vote to award an architectural contract which is a significant amount of money still to be paid for from SPLOST to reduce the amount of the proposed fire station from 6.2 million to about 4.2 million total costs meaning 3 million for building construction and the other 1.2 would go into the soft cost. That would be associated with that project. We don't have 4.2 million. The balance will have to come from either long-term bonding or from a future SPLOST.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Regular Meeting, September 8, 2025

Consideration of a motion to approve an ordinance amending the City of Metter, Georgia Short-Term Rentals. This is the second reading.

Councilman McKie made a motion to approve an amendment to the City of Metter's Municipal Code Title 3. Revenue and Finance, 3.18.010(b) Short-Term Rental Ordinance. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Consideration of a motion to approve an ordinance amending the City of Metter's Municipal Code Title 12 Streets, Sidewalks and Public Places to include Chapter 12.18 Urban Camping and Improper Use of Public Spaces. This is the second reading.

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve an amendment to the City of Metter's Municipal Code Title 12 Streets, Sidewalks and Public Places to include Chapter 12.18 Urban Camping and Improper Use of Public Spaces. Councilman McKie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Consideration of a motion to approve an ordinance amending the City of Metter's Refuse Collection and Disposal.

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve an amendment to the City of Metter Municipal Code Refuse Collection and Disposal Ordinance Chapter 13.16. Councilwoman Gaitten seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Consideration of a motion to approve a resolution by the City Council of the City of Metter that the terms of the Second Modification of GEFA Loan CW2021033 (increase of \$34,296 for a total loan amount of \$1,164,296) are in the best interest of the City of Metter, and designates and authorizes the following person to execute and deliver, and to attest, respectively, the Second Modification, and any related documents necessary to the consummation of the transactions contemplated by the Second Modification.

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve a resolution by the City Council of the City of Metter that the terms of the Second Modification of GEFA Loan CW2021033 are in the best interest of the City of Metter, and designates and authorizes the following person to execute and deliver, and to attest, respectively, the Second Modification, and any related documents necessary to the consummation of the transactions contemplated by the Second Modification. Councilman McKie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Consideration of motion to approve appointing John Tapley or Amy Harrison to the Planning Commission for a 5-year term expiring on September 11, 2030. This will be replacing Ms. Martha Cannady whose term expires September 11, 2025.

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to appoint Amy Harrison to the Planning Commission for a 5-year term expiring on September 11, 2030. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

After the vote Randy Cannady expressed interest in replacing his mother, Martha Cannady, on the Planning Commission. With that seat already been filled by Mrs. Harrison, he was instructed to contact the City Clerk and express interest so that when another seat becomes available he can be considered.

Consideration of a motion to approve an Architect for the re-design of the new fire station with a construction budget of \$3,000,000.00 with an 8-week or 16-week schedule for pre-design, design and construction specifications.

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to allow staff to negotiate with the Statesboro firm, DPR to get the 8-week cost lower. Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion, the vote was four to one with Councilwoman Gaitten opposed.

Consideration of a motion to approve a bid from Anderson Environmental, Inc./Adam Olliff for a bid price of \$67,567.50 for the demolition of the old fire station and Quonset hut.

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to approve a bid from Anderson Environmental, Inc./Adam Olliff for a bid price of \$67,567.50 for the demolition of the old fire station and Quonset hut. Councilman Kilcrease seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

This does not include the cost for abatement should it be necessary. Testing is being performed. If abatement is needed, this will come back before council.

Consideration of a motion to approve a bid from Georgia Equipment Company in the amount of \$15,299 for the purchase of a 2025 Series 11, 61" 38HP Kohler SCAG lawnmower.

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve a bid from Georgia Equipment Company in the amount of \$15,299 for the purchase of a 2025 Series 11, 61" 38HP Kohler SCAG lawnmower. Councilman McKie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

This lawnmower is to be paid for using 2024 SPLOST funds.

Consideration of a motion to approve or deny a Special Event Alcohol Permit Application submitted by Debra Prince on behalf of Canoochee Creek Market on Broad, Inc. located at 30 S.E. Broad Street. This will be a Book Signing Event scheduled for October 7, 2025.

Councilman McKie made a motion to approve a Special Event Alcohol Permit Application submitted by Debra Prince on behalf of Canoochee Creek Market on Broad, Inc. located at 30 S. E. Broad Street for a Book Signing Event on October 7, 2025. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Consideration of a motion to approve or deny a Special Event Alcohol Permit Application submitted by Debra Prince on behalf of Canoochee Creek Market on Broad, Inc. located at 30 S.E. Broad Street. This will be a Open House Event scheduled for November 7-9, 2025.

Councilman McKie made a motion to approve a Special Event Alcohol Permit Application submitted by Debra Prince on behalf of Canoochee Creek Market on Broad, Inc. located at 30 S. E. Broad Street for a Open House Event on November 7-9, 2025. Councilwoman Gaitten seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Discussion and motion to approve a date and time for Trick-or-Treat.

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to set Trick-or-Treat for Thursday, October 30, 2025, from 5-7 p.m. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion. After some discussion, Councilwoman amended the motion to set Trick-or-Treat for Thursday, October 30, 2025, from 6-8 p.m. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

OTHER BUSINESS FROM CITY COUNCIL

There were no comments from City Council.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Wood reported on the following:

1. Police swore in one new officer, currently have two additional openings.
2. Fire has one opening.
3. Asked Cliff to give an update on street resurfacing that should begin in the next thirty days. Projects are funded with TIA funds, Water/Sewer funds, and SPLOST funds. No General funds to be used. Upcoming LMIG project in the design stage.
4. The city was awarded a \$1,000,000 CDBG Grant. The city will have to come up with a \$75,000 match.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

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

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Boyd reported on the following:

1. Thanked visitors for their comments.
2. Public Hearings for Millage scheduled for September 17, 2025, a.m. and p.m. as well as September 24, 2025 a.m.
3. We just had a very successful Farmers Market. It was a great event for the first one. The Farmers Market will be the first Saturday of each month for the next two months from 8 a.m. to noon.
4. He commented on the nice luncheon that staff put together for the public works employees.

ADJOURNMENT

After no further discussion, Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:08 p.m. Councilwoman Gaitten seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Angie Conner, City Clerk