

**CITY OF METTER
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2024
5:30 P.M.**

A regular meeting of the city council was held on Monday, April 8, 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
City Manager Carter Crawford
City Clerk Angie Conner
Public Works Director Cliff Hendrix
Police Chief Robert Shore
Planning Director Teresa Concannon
Director of Economic Development Heidi Jeffers
Jerri Goodman – Metter Advertiser

Councilman James D. McKie was not present.

GUESTS

Alex Spivey – City of Metter Planning Commission
Anne Hilderbrant Childs
David and Leslie Waters
Tim Spenser
Brad Jones
Julie Hall
Juan Taylor – Metter Fire Department

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 Carter Crawford gave the invocation.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the following minutes:

- a) Called Meeting, Monday, February 5, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
- b) Public Hearing, Monday, February 12, 2024, 5:15 p.m.
- c) Regular Meeting, Monday, February 12, 2024, 5:30 p.m.

Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

PRESENTATIONS

Mr. Brad Jones, 415 S. Lewis Street addressed the city council with some speculations that he and other residents up and down, Lewis, Leroy and Rountree Streets about a potential business locating into a R-2 District. After speaking with a member of council, this issue is coming up on the agenda tonight for discussion. He said for what it is worth in his opinion and the opinions of other residents in that area that a business in the historic district would not be very favorable to the traffic that comes down Hwy 121 in the City of Metter and to the downtown area. Several of the residents that live in this area could not be here tonight so they asked him to bring this to the council's attention to see if there is anything that can be done about it.

Mr. Jones thanked the mayor and council for the opportunity to speak.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Public Hearing

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to set a public hearing date for Monday, May 13, 2024, at 5:15 p.m. for a zoning amendment to allow no more than three (3) unrelated individuals to be allowed to live in dwelling units zoned R-1 and R-2. Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion. Mayor Boyd called for discussion.

City Manager Carter Crawford informed the city council that our current zoning ordinance spells out single family in R-1 and R-2 as people that share a generic character which means

they are kin to each other. We thought it was a good idea to strengthen this ordinance in the R-1 and R-2 zones. Other cities have had to deal with this, and this is how they accomplished preventing a boarding house or unrelated people living in a single-family home.

Councilwoman Taylor said that she read what City Attorney Brent Carter had sent and in talking with other cities, they talked about the hazards of potential fires and emergencies not knowing how many people are in there and the over crowding of a house that was not made to accommodate ten to twenty people. The revision of the ordinance looks good.

After the discussion, Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

Short-term Rental Ordinance

Next on the agenda was the first reading of an ordinance governing short-term rental properties. Mayor Boyd asked the council to read the ordinance and be prepared to take it up at our next meeting.

Waiving Fees for New Residential, Commercial and Industrial Construction

Mr. Crawford said that staff will review waiving fees for residential, commercial, and industrial and bring back a recommendation to the council. The council agreed. We should have this by the next council meeting. We will compare it to other cities having activity.

Mayor Boyd said that the council had approved waiving certain fees for the Industrial Authority (IDA), which they could use in attracting new industry. That is typically a benefit or an inducement to a new industry to locate in a particular place depending on what the competition is like. In the past the IDA and city has opted to waive certain fees. We will have prepared by Georgia Tech an economic model of how the Hyundai and other plants will affect our community. When this information becomes available it should be clearer to the community as to how we are going to be affected. We will see positive change for our community.

Councilwoman Taylor said that some citizens are concerned about the waiving of the fees and not receiving any revenue for ten years. It is a lot more understanding and conversation we need to have with our citizens so they will fully understand what is going on. Mayor Boyd agreed. He thinks there is a misunderstanding and lack of knowledge of the process by which the IDA operates and the way the entire industrial part of the state government operates. The way this process works has been going on for a long time. There needs to be a little more transparency in how the system works. Hopefully with the model coming from Georgia Tech, it will help explain how this works and where the money comes from and where it is going and how it benefits the community. The mayor said he heard from more than one citizen “Why can’t we get something; it’s all going to Statesboro.” Metter and Candler County are sitting in a prime spot.

Impact Fees for New Construction

Mr. Crawford provided the council with a lot of information pertaining to impact fees. There are a lot of hoops to jump through to get them. You must back impact fees up with data as to why you are charging that fee and there are also limits. One thing you will have to do is put together an advisory team to explore it. You must have at least one developer on that team. It is a process that is worth exploring. It will take some time to go through everything that you must do to satisfy the state law imposing these fees.

Councilwoman Taylor said that at one of her training sessions they identified three areas the impact fee money would go like you can mark it for schools, economic development, or different areas. Mr. Crawford said that there are seven areas that it can be used for. Councilwoman Gaitten said that public safety sparked her attention. She agreed that there are hoops to jump through.

Councilwoman Taylor wanted to know the game plan to move forward with this. Mr. Crawford said that the next step would be for everybody to review this information and come together to see where we want to go with it. We can put together an outline by the next council meeting on how to start the process. Councilwoman Gaitten said that she would like to see that happen.

There was no vote taken on this item.

Resolution Appointing Rashida Taylor to the Downtown Development Authority

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve a resolution appointing Rashida Taylor to the Downtown Development Authority to fulfill Luke Lanier's unexpired term as recommended by the Downtown Development Authority and the Main Street Board. Councilwoman Gaitten seconded the motion, and the vote was three in favor and one abstention. Councilwoman Taylor abstained from voting. The motion carried. This term will expire December 31, 2028.

Alcohol Beverage Application – Moshami Govind Patel, Jai Hanumanji, Inc.

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to approve an application from Moshami Govind Patel, Jai Hanumanji, Inc. located at 506 SE Broad St. for retail alcoholic beverage license for package sales for off premise consumption of distilled spirits. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion. Mr. Hendrix stated that this location is at the old car wash that is being torn up. The guy's plan is if he can get approval of a license, then he will build a new building. He did not want to spend the money if he could not get a license. This application meets all zoning and ordinance requirements for an alcohol license. Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The motion was unanimously approved.

2024 LRA Funds

Councilwoman Kilcrease made a motion to approve the 2024 LRA Funds (LMIG additional funding) list as follows:

1. W/E Lillian St. – from N. Kennedy St. to N. Lewis Street 0.16 miles of resurfacing, centerline striping, edge striping, thermoplastic cross walks and stop bars. Estimated cost \$59,185.00.
2. Bay Street – from E. Lillian St. to E. Lee Street 0.79 miles of resurfacing, curbing improvement, centerline striping, edge striping, thermoplastic stop bars and cross walks. The estimated cost is \$34,360.00.

Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion. Mr. Hendrix said that the governor approved additional LMIG monies this year and we will get \$95,155.16 in additional funding. We do not have to match this like most other LMIG monies. If any costs run over \$95,155.16 then we can use TIA money that we get every month to help offset costs of things like this.

Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The motion was unanimously approved.

Low Bid – Reeves Construction Company

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to approve the low bid from Reeves Construction Co. in the amount of \$118,000.00 for the 2024 LMIG Project that consists of resurfacing N. Leroy Street from East Lillian Street to the terminus. Funding for this project was budgeted from LMIG funds. Councilwoman Gaitten seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous. Mr. Hendrix said that the city will issue a notice to proceed tomorrow, and the project will probably start somewhere around the first of May.

Low Bid – Pump and Process Equipment

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to approve the low bid from Pump and Process Equipment in the amount of \$20,609.00 with an annual service fee of \$2,275.00 for SCADA type system for the water/sewer department. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion. We can set up the main well and four pump stations at this cost. We have \$40,000.00 budgeted this year in the capital expenditures for this equipment). Mr. Hendrix said that the pumps will be for the main well and four other main pump stations which include the bar screen pump station, Lytell Street pump station, the aeration pond pump station, and probably the one on Aline Avenue. With this system we can monitor the stations at the office. If a problem happens an alarm goes off and notifies the on-call employee.

Councilwoman Taylor said so the one over by where I live is not hooked up to all this fancy stuff. Mr. Hendrix said that they picked the four pump stations that have the highest volume right now and are used the most. Everything from the city goes to the bar screen, so that is

definitely a priority pump station. Lytell Steet pump station handles everything on this side of town. We picked the stations that have the most usage and pumps the most volume. Councilwoman Taylor asked what about the ones that are not working the best? Mr. Hendrix said that they are putting two in the budget for next year. Councilwoman Taylor said that she hopes that the one in her area is one of them because it is not working since they blew into the drainage system. Mr. Hendrix said that the pumping station over by Chaney Branch was redone about 4 years ago. We spent \$85,000.00 in total redoing that pumping station. Councilwoman Taylor said that she has had calls about areas that have never flooded but now are since they did all that work. So, something is definitely different. Mr. Hendrix said that the flooding does not have anything to do with the sewer. The sewer is wastewater. The flooding part is just gravity flow. Storm drainage does not have anything to do with wastewater. Councilwoman Taylor said she would talk with Mr. Hendrix later because it does have a smell.

After the discussion was complete, Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

Bid from Industrial Technical Coatings

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to approve a bid from Industrial Technical Coatings in the amount of \$19,565.00 to paint the caboose at the depot. Councilwoman Taylor seconded the motion. Councilwoman Gaitten wanted to know where the funding was coming from for this project. Mr. Hendrix said that the depot committee obtained a grant last year to pay for this project. It was a \$29,000.00 grant and this will pay for the painting and a couple more things. We will be replacing the flooring in the kitchen area and buying two new stoves.

Mr. Hendrix said that he did not recommend the low bidder. We checked around on the ones that did submit bids. The company that we are recommending painted the caboose in Pooler and Guyton. Tippins Pope have never painted a caboose. They could probably handle the job, but Industrial Technical Coatings has expertise in painting cabooses. The low bidder might not be able to handle this type of project.

Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The motion was approved by unanimous vote of the council.

Public Hearing April 22, 2024

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to set a public hearing date for April 22, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. and a called meeting at 5:15 p.m. to hear a variance request from Joey Burke and the Candler County Industrial Authority. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion. The purpose of this meeting is to hear public comments for and/or against the request to allow a variance to reduce the lot area requirement from 5,000 SF plus 5,000 SF per unit to 5,000 SF plus 4,300 SF per unit and to increase the lot coverage from 15 percent to 18.3 percent. Mr. Hendrix said that staff will put together a report on this for the council to review.

Mayor Boyd called for the vote. The motion was approved by unanimous vote of the council.

Homeowners Tax Exemption

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to offer city homeowners a homestead exemption for city ad valorem taxes with the exemption amounts as follows, basic homestead exemption of \$2,000.00 and homeowners aged sixty-five and over, \$4,000.00. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion. Homeowners who currently have a Candler County homestead exemption will be eligible for the City's homestead exemption this current tax year. Those homeowners who do not currently have a county exemption will have until April 1, 2025, to file for an exemption on their 2025 city taxes.

Mr. Crawford said that looking at the actual cost for this is about \$15,000.00 to \$16,000.00 less in taxes. This is just for single owner-occupied housing. We followed the suggestions of the tax assessor. According to the state there is a \$2,000.00 exemption for everyone and then for those that are sixty-five and over and have an annual income of \$10,000.00 or less, they can get a \$4,000.00 exemption. Councilwoman Taylor asked if this means that most everyone are renters it is only going to affect us \$15,000.00 to \$16,000.00? Mr. Crawford said that there are six hundred and something housing units. It is not \$2,000.00 off your taxes. It is \$2,000.00 off your forty percent value. So, it is just a fraction of money taking off the taxes. Every little bit helps. Councilwoman Gaitten said that it also depends on how many people are educated and informed about it. Councilwoman Taylor wanted to know how we would get the word out. Mr. Crawford said that we would publish it in the newspaper. Councilwoman Gaitten said that we can also put it on Facebook. Councilwoman Taylor suggested to add it on the water bill. Mr. Crawford said that most people in town probably already have the county tax exemption, so they are already eligible for this year's reduction. The Tax Assessor said as long as we pass this and get the information to her before they calculate taxes for this year then they would add that to the people who already had tax exemptions. For the ones that do not already have it they have until April 1, 2025, to apply.

After the discussion was completed, Mayor Boyd called for a vote. The motion was approved by unanimous vote of the council.

Noise Ordinance Amendment

The council was presented with the first reading of an ordinance amending the City of Metter, Georgia's Noise Ordinance. Mayor Boyd asked the council to read it and be prepared to vote at the next regular meeting.

Vehicle and Traffic Ordinance Amendment

The council was presented with the first reading of an ordinance amending the City of Metter, Georgia's Vehicle and Traffic Ordinance. Mayor Boyd asked the council to read it and be prepared to vote at the next regular meeting.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

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

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Crawford provided the council with an update of the city's year-to-date financials. The city is in pretty good shape. We have received most of the property taxes that we are going to receive for the year. About ninety percent has already come in, which is very good. Most revenues for FY 24 in the general fund have already come in. We do have some more property taxes that are due. The franchise fee from Georgia Power has been received. This will be reflected in the next financials in March. We are in pretty good shape in all funds.

The water/sewer budget is \$4,723,231.00. This includes \$1,000,000.00 of GEFA funds to be drawn down. Since it has not been drawn down, it has not been added to the revenues.

Mr. Crawford gave an update on the FY 25 proposed budget. Right now, the expenses in general fund are \$8,048,750.00 and revenues are right now at \$7,762,038.00. We have a shortfall of \$286,712.00. We must narrow it down.

The FY 25 water/sewer budget, sanitation budget, and hotel/motel budgets are balanced.

The proposed FY 25 budget highlights are as follows:

1. Proposed one mill increase in city property taxes. We need this to replace a portion of the water/sewer funds that would normally be paid to the general fund for indirect costs because of the water/sewer extension in the industrial park and to fund added personnel costs. Also, inflation factors in too since things have gone up.
2. Slight increase in water/sewer rates due to increased costs due to community growth.
3. Employees' salaries need to be increased for the city to keep its current employees and attract future employees. We are proposing increases including a minimum starting salary of \$14.00 per hour. Ten current employees will be affected. All other employees would receive a 2.5 percent increase. Police and fire starting salaries based on a 40-hour week would be \$17.86 per hour.
4. Health insurance costs will increase by eight percent.
5. Disability, workers comp, vehicle, property, and casualty insurance are subject to be increased.

Councilwoman Taylor said that the employees at McDonalds make more than \$14.00 per hour. Mr. Crawford said the only difference is McDonalds does not have the benefits that we do. Councilwoman Taylor said that we will also have to compete with DAS. Mr. Crawford said that he realizes that, but we are dealing with a \$286,712.00 deficit. Councilwoman Taylor said that we must figure out how to pay our people. Mr. Crawford said that we need to get it up to \$15.00 per hour at least. Councilwoman Taylor said that the people cannot pay rent, utilities, etc. on \$14.00 per hour.

Councilman Stewart wanted to know if when you have water and sewer revenue coming in can you use that money for other departments. Mr. Crawford said that sanitation and water/sewer funds stand alone. They pay for themselves in fees. The water/sewer and sanitation funds pay the general fund about twenty-five percent of the costs for administration and elected officials because twenty-five percent of their time is spent dealing with water/sewer and sanitation. Councilwoman Taylor asked Mr. Crawford where he thought the shortfall came from. Mr. Crawford said that we have more expenses. Health insurance went up eight percent. Other insurances are going to increase. Salaries went up. We are adding three fire fighter positions for half the year. The county pays half the cost of that. The county needs to have fire stations out at Aline. The first one is the fire station in Pulaski needs to be manned. Councilwoman Gaitten asked have we talked with the county about them paying half of this cost? Mr. Crawford said that we had a meeting with the county early in the budget process. Councilman Stewart wanted to know if we have a lot of fire calls in Aline. Mr. Crawford said that we had a study done a couple of years ago. In that study, they identified where we needed to locate fire stations throughout the county. The Aline community was the number one priority due to the fires in that area.

Mr. Brad Jones said that when the county decides to build two remote fire stations, the first will be in Aline and the second will be in Excelsior for the simple fact that they do not have coverage on the interstate. The third will probably be in the Ollifftown area. The county does pay fifty percent of the fire budget and it was brought to the county's attention last Tuesday about the three additional firefighters. Those three additional firefighters will be used to man the Pulaski fire station. Two will stay in Metter. The Pulaski station will be manned 24 hours. Councilwoman Gaitten said so they are needed now even though the Aline station has not been built? Do we need extra personnel before we build that station? Mr. Crawford said that yes, we do because we will need time to get them trained. Another thing to anticipate is when things start developing in the city and county we are going to have more calls for service. Councilwoman Gaitten said so because of growth too, we will need the extra personnel.

Mr. Crawford said that the county has needed manned stations long before now. Just wanted to give the council an update of where we are with the FY 25 proposed budget. Since it is a long night on April 22nd what we will do is go over the utilities and sanitation budgets. They are not as long as the general fund.

Mayor Boyd said that government will spend more money on personnel and building stations and putting a fire truck in there but all the people that own property in a five-mile area around that fire department will have a significant savings on their fire insurance and

then the safety factor also. The response time to an event will be reduced dramatically. That could save lives. You really cannot put a price on it. There is a payback to providing this kind of service to the community. Some counties have a separate fire tax for the people that live within that tax district that has the better fire coverage.

Councilwoman Taylor wanted to know if the city applied for any of the funding offered by Senator Ossoff's office? Mr. Crawford said that we did not apply for the ones from USDA, but we did file for the FEMA grant for a fire truck.

Councilwoman Taylor wanted to know where we are on the new fire station. Mr. Crawford said that we are trying to get the funding put together for that. GMA is working with the attorneys to get the paperwork. One of the attorneys working on it called our attorney today and said there may be a better way of funding besides going through GMA. He is going to send us all the information. Hopefully around June we should have the paperwork for the council to approve. We are going to get a construction manager. We will be putting out a request for proposal for a construction manager.

Mr. Crawford talked with Hardin Watkins about assistance from the Institute of Government to help with the managed growth plan. He does not handle this but will contact the people that do.

Mr. Crawford gave a handout on the local multiplier effect on how locally owned independent businesses help your community thrive. With an increase in businesses and more people coming here the local businesses will be making more money. That will put more money in circulation in the city. What is good about local businesses is that most of their money stays locally. You must have out-of-town businesses too here locally. The biggest thing we get out of them is employees' salaries, some property taxes on the building, and local option sales tax. Their corporate money goes to corporate. It does not stay here in the community.

Councilwoman Taylor had a question about our zoning. Can the guy that is working on it send us some of the completed information? It is going to take time to go through and read all of it at once. Mr. Crawford said that he has already sent some stuff. Mrs. Concannon said that what we have right now, that we are reviewing, is the subdivision ordinance and regulations. The proposal is to expand what we currently have and get a lot more detailed so that we can have more answers for our potential developers' questions upfront. He is updating the future land use map and character map. The zoning is the next step, and he is starting to work on it. He has sent a list of proposed zoning district changes. He is going to come back to us with a draft based on the feedback that we have given him. Mrs. Concannon said that she can forward this to the council. A draft does not exist yet. He is compiling it now. Councilwoman Taylor said so when is the final thing supposed to be done? Mrs. Concannon said that is a moving target. So, the development regulations are under review. We have taken input from the engineers. We got some expert feedback from local engineers for what works in the local area. Mrs. Concannon is going through it word for word making sure that we understand what's in it and that it is appropriate for this area. It is just a natural extension of what we have. We will send this back to him and he can

finalize a draft. Then we can do a workshop on that at any time. Councilwoman Taylor said so how long has he had it and when did he start working on it? Mr. Crawford said that he set a date for May to be completed. Councilwoman Taylor said so from July to May he has only been working on the subdivision part. Mrs. Concannon said that he met with them in November. At that meeting they decided that he would work on the development regulations first. We had questions that we really needed to move on based on we just had a developer that is working on construction right now. At that point we did not think zoning was going to be that big of an issue. Then immediately it became a big issue. He is working on the zoning portion now. This does not happen overnight. He is also collaborating with other communities too. Councilwoman Taylor said so we are looking at ten months of him reviewing the subdivision ordinance. Mr. Hendrix said that we only started working on it in December. Councilwoman Taylor asked does he have any section completed at all? Mrs. Concannon said that he will send us the draft zoning ordinance when he has completed it. Councilwoman Taylor said that she gets that. We paid for it, and does he not have any section of it done? Councilwoman Gaitten said that this sounds like it is a slow process. Mr. Hendrix said that the zoning laws in the state are very complex.

Mrs. Concannon said that you also must consider that the legislature was looking to make some changes and that has not passed through this session but could come back next session. There was an act called the choice act that was concerning. This would have taken the city's eligibility for grants and turned it into more of a compliance that we would have to change our ordinances to comply with state standards to be eligible for grants for which we are currently already eligible. So, this could have been a very serious thing for the city. He was keeping a slow track just to see how that progressed. We will keep this in mind since it will probably come back. There seems to be an interest at the state level in promoting higher densities for residential development. You cannot do that, but it just means that we might lose eligibility or at least that is how that legislation was written. He was keeping that in mind too. Councilwoman Taylor asked does he have the county zoning so that we can make sure we are not in conflict? Mrs. Concannon said that she has sent him the county zoning. Councilman Stewart said there will always be amendments.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Boyd congratulated Jerri Goodman on her purchase of the Metter Advertiser.

Mayor Boyd congratulated the police department on capturing a thief out at the interstate which must have eluded the Dublin authorities.

Mayor Boyd congratulated the Chamber of Commerce, City, and everyone else in the city on the hard work put forth with the festival. It was a great festival.

Mayor Boyd noticed that the knuckle boom grabber truck was not operational. The part has not come in yet. We might need to buy one and keep it on the shelf. It seems like that truck has been out of service more than in. Mr. Hendrix said that the cost of the part is \$3,000.00. Mayor Boyd said that a workers compensation claim could be more than that.

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Mr. Hendrix said that the problem is that nobody stocks any material anymore. They have to order everything.

Mayor Boyd said that we have one more meeting before the GMA Convention in June. Hope everyone got the classes that they wanted. He thanked the administrative staff for the quick registration process.

Mayor Boyd reported that the DAS plant looks like it is on target.

Mayor Boyd thanked everyone for what they do. He also thanked Mr. Brad Jones as incoming Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Candler County and for what he does for the community.

ADJOURNMENT

After no further discussion, Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:47 p.m. Councilwoman Kilcrease seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Angie Conner, City Clerk