

MINUTES
City Council Meeting
Monday, April 7, 2014 – 7:00 p.m.

Call to Order: Mayor Holder welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Opening: Councilmember Bethune offered the opening prayer and Mayor Holder led City Council in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Roll Call:

Members: Mayor Holder presided. **Council Members:** Don Bethune, Bruce Campbell, Rosetta Cody, Marcia Daniel, Scott George and Kim Tice.

Staff: Ron Feldner, Acting City Manager; Rhonda Ferrell-Bowles, Clerk of Council; James P. Gerard, City Attorney; David Lyons, Chief of Police; Ben Brengman, IT Director; Pam Franklin, HR Director; Jimmy Crosby, Fire Chief; Cliff Ducey, Recreation Director; Charles Draeger, Water Operations Director; Tonya Roper, Interim Zoning Administrator; and Sara Berry, Public Works Administrative Assistant. **Absent:** *Benny Googe, Public Works Director*

Informal Public Comment: Mayor Holder opened the floor to receive public comment from the audience.

There being no questions or comments from the audience, Mayor Holder closed the informal public comment portion of the meeting.

City Council Minutes: Upon motion by Councilmember Campbell, seconded by Councilmember Bethune, City Council voted unanimously to approve the city council minutes dated 3/17/14 and the workshop synopsis dated 3/24/14.

Staff Reports:

Interim Zoning Administrator presented the Planning & Zoning Department's Report.

IT Director presented the Information Technology Department's Report.

HR Director presented the Human Resources Department's Report.

Councilmember Bethune inquired if the position we have open for a police officer had been filled. He said I understand we lost an officer to the private sector.

Chief Lyons said we had an officer in the academy that we were looking to hire, but the background check didn't check out, so we had to start over.

Councilmember Bethune asked the HR Director if the City's hiring process for firefighters included them having a physical exam.

HR Director responded, yes.

Councilmember Bethune asked if the City requires firefighters to have annual physical exams.

HR Director said the firefighters just completed their annual physical exams last week.

Councilmember George asked the HR Director to expand on the meeting City Council had with the employees.

HR Director said I have received positive comments from employees regarding the meeting with City Council. She said City Council agreed to cover at least most of the increase in the employee's health care plan and implement a retention plan in 2014.

Councilmember Daniel asked if we had received any suggestions from employees via the suggestion boxes.

HR Director said none to date.

Public Works Administrative Assistant presented the Public Works Department's Report in the absence of the Public Works Director.

Councilmember George said the Public Works Crews did a good job getting the parade route ready for the opening parade.

Parks & Recreation Director presented the Parks & Recreation Department's Report.

Parks & Recreation Director thanked the Mayor and Council Members for their participation in the opening day parade. He said the Easter Eggstravaganza will be held this Saturday at Sharon Park.

Mayor Holder said we had a good turnout for opening day.

Councilmember George said Cliff and his staff did a good job on the opening day parade.

City Manager Updates: City Manager said I have no updates.

Items for Consideration:

PC1403 – Zoning Map Amendment Request (1323 Heidt Avenue): Consideration of a request by Mr. Tim Aiken to rezone 1323 Heidt Avenue from an R-1 zoning classification to a C-1 zoning classification for future use as office space.

Mayor Holder called for a motion to table the rezoning request for 1323 Heidt Avenue.

City Attorney said there appears to be an issue concerning the public's notification regarding the rezoning request. He said I would suggest that we advertise for another public hearing to be held at the May 5, 2014, council meeting. He said we have to publish the advertisement 15 days prior to the public hearing. He said we will need to notify the adjacent property owners, post the signage on the property and publish the advertisement for the public hearing. He said council can hold the public hearing and the first reading of the ordinance on May 5th.

Upon motion by Councilmember Bethune, seconded by Councilmember Cody, City Council voted unanimously to table consideration of the rezoning request until the May 5, 2014 council meeting.

Resolution, Ad Valorem Tax Rate: Mayor Holder read a resolution of the Mayor and Council of Garden City, Georgia to set the ad valorem tax rate of Garden City for fiscal year 2014; and for other purposes.

Mayor Holder said this is not voting on property taxes. He said we have to adopt this resolution early in the process so we can hold the public hearings.

City Attorney said this is merely to put the issue on the table before council for discussion. He said council will need to pass the resolution before the public hearings can be held. He said those that are voting for the resolution are not necessarily voting for property taxes.

Councilmember Campbell said I am totally against property taxes. He said I have listened to the scare tactics and now this year we are going to have money left over to take care of the increased cost in employee's benefits and pay them something at the end of the year. He said we have property we could sell, but don't. He said we have contracted with Southside Fire for years to provide fire service to the Salt Creek area and now you all want to build a fire station. He said no, I can't go along with property taxes.

Councilmember George said we have done well over \$600,000 in projects. He said in 2013 we bought six new police vehicles. He said we are going into our third year of discussing property taxes. He said you need to question any politician that says 4 mills, because it is going to open Pandora's box. He said I believe that we can manage our way out of this debt. He said think about how it will impact the business owners in Garden City. He said we need to manage our way back out of this situation. He said I will be having more meetings with residents on where we are with the budget.

Councilmember Bethune said this resolution is just allowing us to hold the public hearings to receive public comment. He said as far as fire protection service, the Salt Creek residents deserve the same level of fire protection service as the rest of Garden City receives. He said where in the budget is the money available for us to update our fire department vehicles and equipment. He said the average age of our fire vehicles is 15 years. He said firefighters and volunteer firefighters are risking their lives when responding to fire calls and we need to provide them with safe and reliable equipment. He said if a firefighter gets in the fire truck and it doesn't crank, then what. He said we have a ladder truck and if it is out of service then we aren't going to be able to respond a fire at the hotel on Highway 21. He said it is the same with police vehicles. He said we have some police vehicles that have 150,000 miles on them. Councilmember Bethune said I have talked with several business owners. He said one of the business owners I spoke with has 184 apartments and their tax bill will run approximately \$4,000 per year and they felt that wasn't too much. He said the other thing we have helping us is the Stephens Day Bill adopted in 2001.

Councilmember Bethune said we have cut our general fund budget and have been cutting away at it over the last several years. He asked the Interim Finance Director if she foreseen the City having any extra money at the end of this year.

Interim Finance Director said no, I don't foresee any at this time.

Councilmember Bethune said there is no money to be had. He said you tell me there are more cuts that can be made, then tell me where. He said the majority of you said not to cut from the police department, but then you say you don't believe in a millage rate. He said if you have a plan then help us.

Mayor Holder called for a motion and second on the ad valorem tax resolution.

Councilmember Bethune made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Daniel to adopt the resolution to tentatively set the ad valorem tax rate at 4 mills for fiscal year 2014.

Mayor Holder asked the Clerk of Council to take a roll call vote of council.

Mayor Pro-tem George – Opposed
Councilmember Bethune - For
Councilmember Campbell – Opposed
Councilmember Cody – Opposed
Councilmember Daniel – For
Councilmember Tice – For
Mayor Holder – For

Mayor Holder said the motion carries with four in favor and three opposed.

Adjournment: Upon motion by Councilmember Bethune, seconded by Councilmember Campbell, City Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 p.m.

Transcribed by: Clerk of Council
Approved by City Council: 4/21/14