**February 26, 2024**

The Eastman City Council met in a regularly scheduled meeting on the above date at 6:00 p.m. The following members were present: Sebrina Williams, Graham Snyder, Debra Sheffield, Mark Peacock, and Jermayne Hamilton. Others present were City Manager Spencer Barron, City Clerk April Sheffield, City Attorney Rita Llop, City Inspector Jack White, Administrative Assistant Dayna Winslette, and Department Head Wynnon Pittman. Also in attendance were Fire Chief Scotty Whitten, Police Chief Billy Cooper, Court Clerk Whitney Rogers, Investigator Josh Roberson, and Officer Nick Hulette. Audience members included Jill and Mark Studstill, County Manager Conner Bearden, Commissioner Sharon Cobb Flanagan, Mitchell and Susan Coffee, EM Harrington III, John Battle, Vicki Cannington, Steve Harrison, and Brian Dennis.

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Snyder.

Invocation was given by Councilor Hamilton.

Pledge of Allegiance.

***APPROVAL OF AGENDA:***

Item #2, DDA Property agreement, was tabled until a joint meeting with the Downtown Development Authority could be held. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock, a second from Councilor Hamilton, and a unanimous vote, the agenda was amended. The newly amended agenda was approved by unanimous vote on a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second from Councilor Hamilton.**

***APPROVAL OF MINUTES:***

**The minutes for the called meetings on February 8 & 22, 2024, and the regular meeting minutes for February 12, 2024, were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second from Councilor Sheffield.**

***NO UNFINISHED BUSINESS:***

***NEW BUSINESS:***

***APPROVE MONTHLY BILLS:***

**The monthly bills for February 13 – 26, 2024, were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second from Councilor Sheffield.**

***POLICE DEPARTMENT FINE INCREASE:***

Police Chief Cooper and Court Clerk Rogers went through the current fine list and compared them to the surrounding agencies of Cochran, Dublin, and McRae-Helena. A lot of the fines were extremely low, and they adjusted them to be more in line with others before any add-ons were done. Add-ons are state mandated for POAB (Police Retirement fund), Peace Officer, Prosecutor and training fund, crime lab fees, crime victim’s emergency fund, drug abuse treatment education fund, LVAP (local victim assistance program), brain and spinal injury trust fund, and a driver education and training fund. We have one local add-on (CSI fee that goes to the PD for records management) that goes to all charges except a few that we can’t put it on like seatbelts and hands-free.

Councilor Peacock states that he went through them and felt that they definitely needed to come up and considers the new fines to be very reasonable and in range with other jurisdictions. Councilor Hamilton is also in agreement.

Attorney Llop stated that any fines that are included in one of our ordinances will need to be amended by ordinance. We would need to look at each one. Chief Cooper has those separated from the other

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fines. He would like for the council to go ahead and pass all fines for any 16 and 40 codes. He also requested all fines be detailed in the ordinances and be easy to find on the website.

**An increase of fines for all 16 & 40 codes were unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second from Councilor Hamilton.** All fine increases for any ordinance violations are postponed until the city attorney can look into the ordinances further to determine which ordinances will need to be amended.

***SECOND READING OF NEW GARBAGE ORDINANCE:***

According to City Manager Barron, this change of ordinance requires all commercial customers to also use only city appointed front-load dumpsters. We currently only require the residential customers to use the city appointed trash company/receptacles. The new garbage ordinance was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Williams and a second by Councilor Hamilton.

***SECOND READING OF NEW SEWER ORDINANCE:***

The most significant change to this ordinance is taking the fees out of the ordinance and adding them to the schedule of fees maintained in the clerk’s office. **The amended sewer ordinance was unanimously approved by the council on a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second by Councilor Sheffield.**

***SECOND READING OF NEW BLIGHT ORDINANCE:***

This ordinance is roughly 19 pages of what constitutes blight and how the city can work with the property owner on how to get it corrected. It also lists a series of penalties if they choose not to.

Attorney Llop also points out that it defines the possibility of increasing taxes if necessary to take care of the issue and then decreasing the taxes upon remedy of the blight situation. Public comments came from Susan Coffee by way of asking if this ordinance included burned out buildings like the one downtown. City Manager Barron said that is the goal and where they plan on starting. **The new blight ordinance was unanimously approved on a motion by Councilor Williams and a second by Councilor Hamilton.**

***DODGE COUNTY RECYCLING PROJECT:***

County Manager Bearden comes forward to discuss the cardboard recycling project that they have been working on for the better part of 2023. The county applied for a recycling grant at the end of 2022. The city put in a letter of support for the project. It is called the Recycle Waste Reduction Grant through the EPD. Dodge County was the largest recipient, just shy of $500,000, for this particular phase. They were 1 of 3 below Macon to receive the grant. The cash match was less than $4,000. Most of the match was fuel, payroll, and education. They have already reached out to businesses and of course the school children about recycling. The landfill has a section now with a baler just for cardboard. They also bought a truck, purchased some blue dumpsters with a slit in it to make everyone break down the cardboard. There was a logo requirement that has been designed and can be found on the flyers, truck, and the bins. A ribbon cutting ceremony has been planned for Tuesday, March 12, 2024, at 2 pm.

Bearden has been looking at different places to put the bins that are convenient for everyone and businesses. One will go to each of their manned sites. He would also like to put one downtown for those businesses. Along with Mr. Barron, they have come up with the old Goody’s parking lot as a perfect place to put one.

Chairman Snyder is in support and feels the Goody’s lot is a great place. Commissioner Flanagan thanks the council and reminds them of the community request for a recycling area. She hopes to be able to expand past the cardboard and the tire recycling that they do each year.

All council were in support and no vote was needed to be taken.

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***2024 FIREWORKS BID:***

The 2024 Fireworks bid was advertised, and we received 2 proposals based on the previous years’ shows of 20-25 minutes. One was from Fireworks by Santore for $13,000. That was only a $500 increase over last year’s cost. The other was from Nostan Consulting, LLC, in the amount of $22,000. Santore has done fireworks for the city for approximately the last 30 years. The funds have already been budgeted for this year, but the city will gladly take donations also. **The Santore bid was unanimously approved on a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second from Councilor Hamilton.**

***BIDS FOR WORK ON KING STREET:***

Four bids were received for this project. Johnson Concrete for $26,970. CB Pools for $22,850. Southeast Landscaping for $21,900. And Otis Grading for $36,586. The lowest was Southeast Landscaping. Inspector White has requested reference from each bidder. Attorney Llop requests that each bidder is contacted and asked for the same amount of references. It was decided to table until the next meeting on March 11. **With a motion from Councilor Hamilton and seconded by Councilor Williams, a unanimous vote was taken to postpone the decision.**

***SCHEDULE WORK SESSIONS OR CALLED MEETINGS FOR MARCH:***

**After some discussion and a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second by Councilor Hamilton, it was unanimously approved to schedule a work session on Thursday, March 7, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. to discuss more upcoming projects for 2024.**

***BEER/WINE APPLICATION:***

***MAMU QUICK STOP @ 108 5TH AVENUE; JIGNESHKUMAR CHAUDHARI:***

All necessary paperwork, fees, and background checks have been completed by Mr. Chaudhari. **A vote was called for on a motion from Councilor Sheffield and seconded by Councilor Williams. The application for the sale of beer and wine only at Mamu Quick Stop @ 108 5th Avenue was approved on a vote of 4 – 1, with Councilor Hamilton voting no.**

***CITY MANAGER’S REPORT:***

City Manager Barron suggested that with the adoption of the new blight ordinance, that if anyone has an area in their neighborhood or something, to please reach out to City Hall with a formal complaint so we can go and investigate it. There is a process and procedure where we will evaluate and document it so we may start moving forward on it.

Barron also recognizes that Fire Chief Whitten and Lt. Derl Maxwell were deputized by the State Fire Marshall today in Savannah.

***OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:***

Councilor Hamilton requested to move his speed hump on Sheldon Street to another location. He wants to pull it up right now and evaluate some other spots that he is looking at. He hasn’t made the final decision on placement yet. Chairman Snyder suggests that he get with Inspector White, and they can make the decision together and move forward.

City Manager Barron also lets the council know that several residents in the Wood Valley area are requesting a speed hump also. Inspector White mentions that the good part about these particular type of humps is that they are able to be taken up and moved to wherever needed.

Chairman Snyder congratulates Councilman Hamilton and the Lady Squaws on the fantastic year they are having in making it to the Elite 8, which is being hosted in Dodge County for the first time in history tomorrow night.

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***PUBLIC COMMENTS:***

John Battle requests that they be able to host the Juneteenth celebration on Saturday, June 22, since the holiday falls on a Wednesday this year. He also requests the same services from the city and police department that are usually provided to them. CM Barron sees no problem with the request and agrees that it has been a great event in the past and the city has enjoyed supporting it. Mr. Battle lets Chairman Snyder know that he will be expected to speak and take part in the event. Also, clarification was made that the MOU is confirmed to be signed and in place. It was suggested to go and get updated quotes on getting a stage built as soon as possible.

***VIA FACEBOOK:***

Aspire Jeffrey asks when will the fine increase go into place? Chairman Snyder states that the 16 and 40 code increases will go into effect immediately. Any fines related to ordinances won’t be increased until they are researched. Once passed, then they will immediately go into effect.

***ADJOURNMENT:***

**On a motion from Councilor Peacock, a second from Councilor Hamilton, and a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned.**

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**CHAIRMAN CITY CLERK**