



Minutes
City Council Meeting
January 29th, 2024
6:30pm

Baldwin Courtroom, 155 Willingham Avenue, Baldwin, GA 30511

Mayor Stephanie Almagno, Council Member Erik Keith, Council Member Joseph Satterfield, Council Member Kerri Davis, Council Member Maarten Venter, and Council Member Alice Venter were all in attendance.

Call Meeting to Order

Mayor Almagno called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Invocation and Pledge

Reverend Joyce Acree, retired pastor of the former Demorest Federated Church, gave the invocation.

State of the City Address

Mayor Almagno gave the 2024 State of the City Address (see attached address).

Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Minutes: Council Meeting 1/16/24.
- b. Approval of Budget Amendment - Emergency Sewer Expense: \$36,993.66

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the consent agenda with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 5-0.

Citizen Comments

No one came forward.

Public Hearings

Reports

Water and Wastewater Treatment – Fletcher Holliday
City Engineer Fletcher Holliday gave an update on the Baldwin water and wastewater treatment facilities (see attached report).

Holliday expounded further on the City’s withdrawal permit limits and where the City’s system levels lie in relation to permit requirements (see attached report). The Ammonia Nitrogen permit limits at the wastewater treatment facility were exceeded for the month of December. This is likely due to an influx of industrial waste with high levels of ammonia that disrupt the biological processes at the wastewater plant. Wastewater staff have been monitoring the levels on a regular basis and have scheduled some future inspections and walkthroughs of some of the industrial processes in Baldwin to hopefully prevent the incident from happening again in the future.

Old Business

1. Consideration/Approval of Council Meeting Procedures

Council and staff had no additional comments or questions regarding the updated council meeting procedures.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the Council Meeting Procedures as presented with a second by Joseph Satterfield. Motion Carried 5-0.

New Business

2. Consideration/Approval of 1st Reading of Vertical Bridge SUP and Variance #2024-01136Z

CAO Emily Woodmaster introduced the two-fold request from Vertical Bridge, requesting to place a telecommunications tower on Traditions Drive in R-1 zoning, where any telecommunications towers are explicitly prohibited per Baldwin's zoning ordinance. A special use permit granted by the City Council would be the only way to allow such a structure in that zoning. Vertical Bridge's second request is for a variance for both the height of the tower and setback requirements.

Mattaniah Jahn, representing Vertical Bridge, addressed the Council regarding their request for a 250' lattice style tower with no guy wires to allow T-Mobile to provide service to the area. In order to provide clear and reliable service, there are limitations on where the cell towers can be placed, and the parcels listed in the request (093 010C-E) were one of the few remaining areas that could do so. Vertical Bridge will be leasing the property from Rogelio and Soledad Briceno. Jahn stated that towers such as these are assessed as an improvement to the property, resulting in taxes, so Vertical Bridge would pay taxes at the City and County millage rates.

Council Member Kerri Davis stated that she had spoken with families in the area and that they were not in favor of the tower.

Council Member Alice Venter asked if it were possible to "piggyback" the cell tower off one of the City's water tanks. Jahn stated that it would be challenging due to a 100' loss of RF space for the antennae, and that if it were viable, Vertical Bridge would seek an extension from the top of the water tank to minimize the lost space. Jahn stated that, as discussed with Woodmaster, she would like to request a continuance to February 26th to see if utilizing the Baldwin water tank is an option.

Mayor Almagno asked if Jahn would be agreeable to tabling the item in light of her request, also granting Council more time to process the information. Jahn said she was agreeable to tabling. Woodmaster stated that the original public hearing is scheduled at the February 6th work session, and that staff would propose adding an additional public hearing to the February 26th council meeting, prior to the consideration and approval of the second reading.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to table the First Reading of the Vertical Bridge SUP and Variance with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 5-0.

3. Request to Address Council – Douglas McDonald regarding Agenda Item #2

Douglas McDonald of McDonald & Cody had requested to be placed on the agenda to address Council regarding a potential procedural issue for the Vertical Bridge Special Use Permit and Variance. The sign to notify the public about an upcoming hearing for such requests must be posted for a minimum of fifteen days prior to the public hearing. McDonald stated that he noted the sign was missing one day and that he called City Hall. City staff informed him that the sign had been knocked down by inclement weather, and had been found by Baldwin's police captain, but that a member of staff had already taken the sign back to its appropriate location that morning.

McDonald drew Council's attention to Vertical Bridge's application, where they signed a document regarding public notice requirements, and that the applicant "is responsible for ensuring the public notice sign remains on the site during the entire zoning process," and that it is the applicant's responsibility to notify the City if something is wrong with the sign. McDonald stated that the time the sign was knocked down did not meet posting requirements and that Council is obligated to table the item and not consider the request until the posting requirements had been met.

Woodmaster stated that she had spoken to Baldwin's legal counsel, who advised her that the sign being down for only a few hours did not conflict with posting requirements.

Council Member Maarten Venter stated that while he understood McDonald's request, the item had already been tabled in order for Council to have more time to deliberate the information presented, and furthermore while the City follows all legal requirements, a few hours is not enough to justify restarting Vertical Bridge's application process, as advised by legal counsel.

4. Reappointment of Mayor Pro Tempore

Council Member Maarten Venter, who was appointed as Mayor Pro Tem in November upon Mayor Almagno's election, wished to resign from the position.

Council Member Erik Keith nominated Council Member Alice Venter for the position, as she is both the senior member of Council and someone who has held the position before. Venter accepted the nomination.

Action: A motion was made by Erik Keith to appoint Alice Venter as a Mayor Pro Tem with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 5-0.


Executive Session

Announcements

- a. The deadline for city property tax payments has been extended to February 16th. Payments can be made at City Hall or online at www.baldwinpayments.com.

Adjournment


Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to adjourn the meeting with a second by Erik Keith Motion. Carried 5-0 at 7:36 pm.



Stephanie Almagno, Mayor

2/12/2024

Date Approved by Council



Erin Gathercoal, City Clerk



2024 State of the City Address

CITY OF BALDWIN, GA

From Stephanie Almagno, Mayor, City of Baldwin

To the City Council, City Staff, and all Baldwin residents & business owners

January 29th, 2024

I would like to begin by saying the state of our city is strong.

FINANCES: Over the last 12 months, the city and its residents benefited from several agreements negotiated in 2022. These include Banks County LOST, the new wholesale water agreement with the City of Demorest, and the renegotiated sewer agreement with Fieldale.

The work of 2022 culminated in the fulfillment of the promised full tax rollback for Baldwin homeowners while also offering our employees a significant COLA, further making Baldwin a good place to live and work.

COUNTY RELATIONSHIPS: The city maintains strong ties with Habersham County through its intergovernmental agreements, continued participation in Habersham County's disaster response planning meetings, and our presence at the county's quarterly HC3 meetings.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Recognizing that property taxes account for only ¼ of the city's budget, economic development remains the city's future. Investments in infrastructure and ordinances supporting infrastructure will be key to future viability.

2023 Economic Development highlights include:

- New businesses opened: Reve Solutions, 365 Liquor Superstore, D'Mary Growing Together Childcare, and F13 Airsoft.
- New businesses are under construction: Mexican restaurant on Willingham, Baldwin One Stop on 441 Bypass, & the new gas station on Hwy 365.
- Businesses investing in the Airport Business Park: Precision Digital opening in summer of 2024 and expansions of SteelCell.

PERSONNEL AND CITY SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS:

As reported in past addresses, we continue to believe that we have the best municipal staff. They are highly trained and committed to the vision of the city. Each employee continues to present the best face of the city to the city's citizens and beyond.

2024 State of the City Address

CITY OF BALDWIN, GA

2023 Personnel and City Service highlights include:

- Police Department: Formed a new K9 unit, updated the City's wrecker service policy, and hired 2 new officers. The entire Police Department is POST-certified.
- Fire Department: Hired 3 new firefighters, purchased a firetruck, and approved the new City of Alto Fire Service IGA.
- Public Works: At the end of the year, Public Works celebrated the long-awaited groundbreaking for the new public works building, a project over 10 years in the making.
- Water/Wastewater: Accomplished FY2023 goal of all six operators becoming State Certified.
- Courts: Moved payment process to JusticeOne and created a full-time clerk assistant role.
- City Hall/Administration: Promoted Erin Gathercoal to City Clerk, hired John Dills as the new social media coordinator and administrative assistant, and Patricia Queriapa as an accounts receivable clerk. CAO Emily Woodmaster earned CVIOP's Public Manager certification after completing over 300 hours of curriculum.
- Council: The council saw significant turnover this year. In November, Councilwoman Stephanie Almagno was elected Mayor to complete Joe Elam's unexpired term. Mr. Theron Ayers, after 12 years on council, decided not to seek re-election. Upon the resignation of Councilman Larry Lewallen and after running unopposed for Post 1, Mr. Erik Keith was sworn in to complete Mr. Lewallen's term and to begin his own term in January. In November, Ms. Kerri Davis and Mr. Joseph Satterfield were elected to serve on Council and their terms began in January 2024.

EVENTS: The Events Committee, which is comprised of employees and community members, undertook the heroic task of offering monthly events for Baldwin and surrounding community residents. The central goal was to offer regular activities, free of charge, in the residents' own community.

2023 Events Highlights include:

- The Events Committee raised in excess of \$25,000 in cash and in-kind contributions from our community partners.

2024 State of the City Address

CITY OF BALDWIN, GA

- Hosted the annual Baldwin Elementary School art contest for the city's Clean-Up Day T-shirt for Earth Day.
- The Water Wars, The Pit-Nic, The Back to School Bash, and monthly Movies in the Market were added to Baldwin's successful annual events lineup, including Public Safety Day, Fall Festival, and Christmas Tree Lighting. During these free-to-the-community events, the City fed hundreds of people, offered school supplies and haircuts to over 300 students, and introduced young people to their first responders in educational and entertaining ways.
- The city continued to host Shop With a Hero. Through this community-sponsored initiative, 12 children shopped for toys and clothes with Baldwin Police Officers and Firefighters at a local store, and a group of caroling employees brought joy to our residential senior citizens with a Christmas stocking distribution.

OTHER 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Initiated a General Fund wage study to be completed by EMI.
- Added over \$8.5 million to our Net Tax Digest.
- Issued 76 building permits with 26 homes newly constructed.
- Issued over 128 Occupational Licenses.
- Completed 2 working Council Retreats dedicated to vision casting, capital improvements, employee retention, and economic development.
- Instituted an annual employee awards program for the first time. We recognized our city hall, firefighter, police officer, and public works employees of the year: City Hall: Cindy Hernandez; Fire Dept: Shaun Benfield; Police: Justin Ferguson and Patsy Alexander; Public Works: Jonathan Pierce.
- Added 4 vehicles/heavy equipment to the fleet.
- Authorized the use of Public Safety Funds for a Forcible Entry Door for training purposes for both the Fire and Police Departments.

I'd like to conclude this address with a note of gratitude to all Baldwin citizens, business owners, and community partners for your continued belief in the direction of the city. I always have a heart full of gratitude for Baldwin's outstanding employees; thank you for all you do daily to make Baldwin a special place.

2024 State of the City Address

CITY OF BALDWIN, GA

As always, we welcome residents' and business owners' feedback and participation in our decision making on your behalf. Please join us at meetings and reach out with comments and questions.



City of Baldwin

Water and Wastewater Treatment

December 2023 Monthly Report

FY2023 Top Priorities

To have all operators certified; all six operators are now currently State Certified Operators.
For each operator to be cross trained between both treatment facilities.

Operations:

Water Treatment Facility

Treated 74.66 million gallons of water for the month with a daily average flow of 2.41 million gallons. The Water Treatment Facility met and or exceeded all drinking water standards for the month.

Wastewater Treatment Facility

Treated 12.229 million gallons of wastewater for the month with a daily average flow of .394 million gallons. The Wastewater Treatment Facility exceeded the Ammonia Nitrogen limit for the month.

Maintenance:

Ongoing daily/weekly/monthly maintenance of multiple pumps and motors at both Water and Wastewater Treatment Facilities.

Capital Projects/Needs:

Water Treatment Facility

Filter rehabilitation, painting of ceiling and support columns in water treatment plant building.

Wastewater Treatment Facility

Storage/work building, tertiary filter rehabilitation, gravel road improvements.

Active Project Status:

Water Treatment Facility

The SCADA system continues to need improvements to allow operators to visualize and receive real time data with alarms from all components of the distribution and treatment



City of Baldwin Water and Wastewater Treatment December 2023 Monthly Report

system. The City has authorized Process Worx to move forward with necessary improvements. Work has begun on the SCADA retrofit with the raw water control panel completed and PLC modifications, as well as the SCADA panel. Additional work at water plant is ongoing, overall project is approximately 75% complete.

Funding is secured for the pretreatment unit at the water plant; design plans have been approved by EPD, construction is slated to begin later this year.

Wastewater Treatment Facility

Optimization of PAC feed system to enhance phosphorus reduction and decrease chemical usage and cost.

The City has authorized EMI to proceed with design of the proposed solids handling building to include a screw press. Design plans have been approved by EPD, construction is slated to begin later this month.

Future Project/Needs:

Water Treatment Facility

With the continued increase of water production, the City will eventually need to look into an offsite reservoir. Additionally, the City will need to evaluate the increasing water loss value within the distribution system. EMI can assist the City with these needs.

Wastewater Treatment Facility

The Wastewater Treatment Facility continues to receive a tremendous amount of inflow and infiltration at the wastewater plant during rain events. Need to address inflow and infiltration issues as well as need additional clarifiers and influent structure at treatment facility. EMI can assist in further completion of an SSES of the collection system as well as assist in seeking funding options for the needed WWTF improvements.

December 2023

Surface Water Withdrawal (Permit #068-1201-04; Expires 14 March 2025)				
	Permit Limits	Monthly Average	Daily Maximum	Total Withdrawal
SW Withdrawal (MG)	3.0M/4.0D	2.07	3.05	64.20

M = Monthly; A = Annually

Drinking Water (System Permit #1370001; Expires 5 April 2027)					
	Permit Limits	Daily Average	Daily Maximum	Daily Minimum	Monthly Total
Processed through Plant	4.0 MGD	2.41	2.92	2.14	74.66
Turbidity (NTU)	1.0	0.03	0.24	0.02	
Chlorine Residual (ppm)	n/a	1.80	2.22	1.30	
Hours of plant operation per day	n/a	17.31	23.81	14.92	536.64
Water Supplied		2.32	2.59	2.14	72.00
Baldwin System (MG)		0.728			22.571
Demorest System (MG)		1.551			48.095
Distribution System	Permit Limits	Monthly Average	Monthly Maximum	Monthly Minimum	# of Measurements
Chlorine Residual (ppm)	0.20	1.37	2.14	0.54	5
Microbiological Samples	5 samples/ negative	In compliance			

Wastewater (Permit #GA0033243; Expires 31 January 2024)				
	Permit Limits	Monthly Average	Weekly Maximum	In Compliance
Flow (MGD) Effluent	0.80M/1.00W	0.394	0.499	YES
Total Effluent Flow (MG) =	12.229			

	Permit Limits	Monthly Average	Weekly Maximum	In Compliance
Total Residual Chlorine (ppm)	0.016	B	B	YES
pH (standard units) (min/max)	6.0-8.5	6.0	6.5	YES
Effluent BOD (ppm)	20M/30W	2	3	YES
Effluent TSS (ppm)	20M/30W	6	11	YES
Fecal Coliform (cfu/100mL)	200M/400W	1	1	YES
Ammonia (ppm)	4.1M/6.2W	5.51	8.84	NO
Total Phosphorus (ppm)	1.0M/1.5W	0.08	0.16	YES

W=Weekly Average; M=Monthly Average

Fecal Coliform is reported a Geometric Mean

Minimum Dissolved Oxygen (ppm) =	6.49
Dry Solids Removed from Plant (dry tons) =	5.70