



**Minutes**  
City Council Meeting  
February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
6:30 pm

*Baldwin Courtroom, 155 Willingham Avenue, Baldwin, GA 30511*

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Acting Mayor Alice Venter, Council Member Larry Lewallen, Council Member Stephanie Almagno, and Council Member Maarten Venter (via phone) were in attendance.

***Call Meeting to Order***

*Acting Mayor Alice Venter called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm.*

***Invocation and Pledge***

***Consent Agenda***

- a. Approval of Minutes: Council Meetings 1/9/23 and 1/23/23, and Work Session 2/7/2023.
- b. Approval of Budgeted FD Hose Expense - \$14,080.00

**Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to approve the consent agenda as presented with a second by Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 3-0.**

***Citizen Comment***

Joseph Satterfield of 205 Crooked Pine Drive announced his candidacy/desire to run for City Council in the November election.

*Council Member Theron Ayers joined the meeting at 6:41 pm.*

***Public Hearings***

***Reports***

***Old Business***

1. Consideration/Approval of GEFA 5<sup>th</sup> Modification Resolution #2023-02119R

CAO Emily Woodmaster addressed Council, requesting a modification to the GEFA loan for the Light Street Water Tank Project, which is nearing completion. This will be the fifth loan modification for this project. The additional six months will ensure completion of the project, which is estimated at the latest July 2023.

City Engineer Fletcher Holliday stated that he had no concerns regarding the modification.

**Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to approve Resolution #2023-02119R for the 5<sup>th</sup> GEFA Loan Modification on project DWSRF 13-016 as presented with a second from Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0.**

2. Consideration/Approval of GMA Master Lease Agreement Resolution #2023-02121R

Woodmaster stated that there are two resolutions needing approval by the Council, but they are both for the same project. In November 2022, Council authorized the purchase of a firetruck through a lease program with Georgia Municipal Association. In order to enter into the lease agreement, Baldwin must sign a Master Lease Agreement, creating the account, and the Supplement Lease for the purchase of the firetruck, including the \$60,000 warranty that was also approved by Council.

*Important Note:* Every year upon completion of the budget, Baldwin will have to submit an appropriation certificate to GMA. Payments will be made annually, and the first payment will be due one year from the execution of the lease. City Attorney Bubba Samuels has reviewed the lease agreements and had no concerns.

**Action: A motion was made by Theron Ayers to approve the GMA Master Lease Resolution #2023-02121R and Lease Supplement Resolution #2023-02122R and authorize CAO Woodmaster to execute associated lease documentation as presented with a second by Stephanie Almagno. Motion Carried 4-0.**

3. Consideration/Approval of Forced Entry Door Expense - \$8,500.00

Woodmaster addressed Council with a request for the purchase of a forced entry door which both the fire department and the police department can utilize for training. Currently, Baldwin PD and FD have been using an entry door borrowed from the City of Cornelia. Woodmaster recommended paying for the door out of public safety funds and provided Council with a breakdown of public safety projects and collections. The completed project funds can be reallocated towards the forced entry door expense, and each department will share the expense of \$4,250.00 each. This reallocation to the forced entry door would not affect other projects with allocated public safety funds.

Police Captain Justin Ferguson stated that typically only SWAT teams practice door breach exercises, and the door would be beneficial for active shooter exercises. Police Chief Chris Jones added that Baldwin could also sponsor door breach training for other municipalities.

After speaking with a Habersham Metal representative, Chief Roy determined it's possible that they could build the forced entry door if Roy were to provide them specifications.

**Council was in consensus to table this item until the next council meeting.**

4. Consideration/Approval of Cash Bond Online Alternative  
Woodmaster recapped Court Clerk Susan Newsom's presentation at the February work session for a service agreement with Cash Bond Online, providing online bond payments for inmates during the weekends when there are no court employees. City Attorney Samuels has reviewed the service agreement and found no issues.

**Action: A motion was made by Larry Lewallen to approve the engagement of CashBondOnline.Com for Baldwin Municipal Court and authorize the CAO to execute the service agreement as presented with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0.**

5. Consideration/Approval of Digitize Habersham Donation

Woodmaster recapped Peter Madruga's request for a \$1,000 donation to his non-profit Digitize Habersham. Woodmaster said that she had reached out to fellow municipalities regarding if they had contemplated the decision. Cornelia and Demorest have both made the \$1,000 donation and Clarkesville has not formally discussed their donation with their board. Habersham County did consider donating but determined there with other non-profits with more pressing needs and decided to consider the donation for their next budget cycle.

Woodmaster stated that Habersham County does have procedures for determining whether to use public funds for non-profits, including submitting a five-year plan, listing specific benchmarks to determine success, etc. Since the \$1,000 donation Madruga requested was not in Baldwin's FY23 budget, Woodmaster recommended delaying the decision and giving Madruga the opportunity to provide that same information to Baldwin as he submitted to Habersham County, and Council can contemplate integrating the donation into the next budget.

**Council was in consensus to table this item until the next budget cycle.**

6. Consideration/Approval of Public Works Building Bid Award Resolution #2023-02120R

Council approved funds for a new Public Works building in November 2021, using both bond funds and ARPA funds. Woodmaster presented a recommendation of award for Square Deal Enterprises, the one bidder from the bid opening last December. The award is for the site work component of the project, including grading, clearing, storm drainage, etc, in the amount of \$448,757.62.

The original project cost estimate was settled at just over \$900,000. While the site work cost is higher than expected, the funds are available in the bond funds. Rising costs for building materials do create a variable of the unknown to the project, but the goal is still to complete the project under the original estimate.

The current Public Works building is in dire disrepair and the department is in need of a cleaner and safer space. This project will meet Baldwin's minimum development standards and will last 50 years or more into the future.

**Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to award the Public Works Building Site Development Project to Square Deal Enterprise with a cost not to exceed \$448,757.62 as presented in Resolution #2023-02120R with a second by Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 4-0.**

7. Consideration/Approval of Animal Control Invoice

Woodmaster presented a revised invoice from Habersham County for animal control services from July 2022 to November 2022. The original IGA with Habersham required a 60-day cancellation notice, which was sent in September. The services have been rendered, and Baldwin is contractually obligated to pay \$12,351. Woodmaster recommended paying the expense from the general fund balance.

**Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to approve the Habersham Animal Control Invoice for \$12,351.00 to be expense from the General Fund Balance with a second by Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 4-0.**

8. Consideration/Approval of Fire Department Nepotism Waiver

Woodmaster presented a policy waiver of the nepotism clause from Baldwin's Policies and Procedures manual. Assistant Fire Chief Shaun Benfield's son, Hayden Benfield, is wanting to enter the field and has already obtained Firefighter 1 certification and Emergency Medical Responder certification. On a day-to-day basis, Mr. Benfield would report directly to Chief Roy for any disciplinary or human resource issues, avoiding any conflict of interest with Assistant Chief Benfield.

Chief Roy stated that he would like Benfield to work part-time, filling in while full-time firefighters are off the clock or on PTO. While Benfield needs further training and experience before being considered for full-time employment, he has already achieved two valuable certifications. Chief Roy stated that while he has had many people stop by the fire department expressing interest in working for Baldwin, they have little to no training, and that he is not receiving many applications with the necessary training/experience to fill the open full-time position.

**Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to invoke the nepotism waiver for Hayden Benfield to be hired for part time for Baldwin fire department with a second by Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 4-0.**

***Executive Session***

Land Acquisition/Disposal

**Action: A motion was made by Theron Ayers to close the public meeting to enter executive session for land acquisition/disposal with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0 at 7:42 pm.**

**Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to reopen the public meeting from executive session and authorize the execution of the affidavit for an executive session for land acquisition/disposal where land acquisition/disposal was discussed, and no action was taken with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0 at 8:14 pm.**

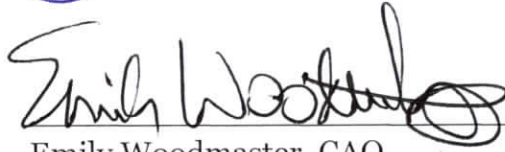
***Announcements***

- a. City Offices will be closed on Monday, February 20<sup>th</sup> in observation of the Presidents' Day holiday.

***Adjournment***

**Action: A motion was made by Theron Ayers to adjourn the meeting with a second by Stephanie Almagno. Motion Carried 4-0 at 8:17 pm.**

  
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Alice Venter, Acting Mayor

  
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Emily Woodmaster, CAO

2/27/23  
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Date Approved by Council

