



**Minutes**  
City Council Work Session  
October 3rd, 2023  
6:30pm

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

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Acting Mayor Alice Venter, Council Member Theron Ayers, Council Member Stephanie Almagno, and Council Member Maarten Venter were all in attendance.

**Call Meeting to Order**

*Acting Mayor Alice Venter called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.*

**Economic Development Discussion (max. 20 minutes)**

Council Member Stephanie Almagno shared her experience with visiting Tim Barbir's data center in Maysville, which will be similar to the data center to be built in Baldwin. Citizens in Chandler Heights had expressed concern about noise levels from the facility to Almagno, who shared that she was pleasantly surprised that the noise was less than expected, even when right next to the facility. Almagno also shared that the infrastructure Georgia Power has installed for the facility will be beneficial to Baldwin for years down the road, even if Barbir were to sell.

**Public Hearing**

**Old Business**

1. 2023 Millage Rate

CAO Emily Woodmaster shared an overview of the rollback options with some adjustments to the previously presented numbers:

- a.) No rollback – Millage rate stays the same (Habersham County: 9.342, Banks County: 3.465), and add additional collections, totaling \$892,000 in collections.
- b.) Full rollback – Reducing the millage rate to equal the assessments from the year prior. Even if the digest changes, the actual collections do not, totaling \$760,000. This is also partially caused by Governor Kemp's Homestead Relief Grant, which will reduce qualified property owners' assessed values by \$18,000. made Habersham County exemptions increase from \$1.6 million to \$10.2 million.
- c.) Partial rollback – Number created by the City to meet the FY24 budget set forth by the Council at \$832,000. Habersham County's millage rate would be 8.735 and Banks County would be 3.24.

Acting Mayor Venter reiterated that property taxes only contribute to 24% of the City's budget, and the remaining 76% comes from other budgeting sources including the water treatment plant and school zone cameras. A partial rollback would bring in enough collections to meet the FY24 budget without having to make additional cuts to department needs or provided services. The average

impact per parcel in Habersham would be \$1.34, and the average impact per parcel in Banks County (with fewer parcels) would be \$2.70.

Council Member Maarten Venter stated that after seeing data from Baldwin's public safety, the City needs to maintain services. He reiterated that he would vote only for a full or partial rollback.

Almagno stated that it's the City's responsibility to maintain a balanced budget and to maintain everything that has been accomplished in the last year. She said that having no rollback was not an option, but a full rollback would require asking department heads to make even more cuts to their budgets. Almagno stated that the partial rollback provides an appropriate balance by meeting the needs of the departments and the needs of City services.

Woodmaster explained that the consensus of the Council at this meeting determined the next steps of passing the millage rate. No rollback or a partial rollback would require three public hearings. The millage rate must be certified to the state by November 1<sup>st</sup>, so a Special Called Meeting will be required to meet those requirements.

Council was in consensus to pursue a partial rollback of the millage rate.

### ***New Business***

#### **2. Purchase of New Police Vehicle**

Chief Chris Jones addressed Council regarding adding a seventh police vehicle to the Enterprise lease agreement. The Police Department has hired a new full-time officer, who is driving one of the two remaining Ford Explorers in the fleet. These Explorers are approaching seven years in service when the recommended life of a police vehicle is no more than five years. Enterprise will capitalize 50% of the upfitting, so the City will only have to pay \$9,000 for upfitting at the time of vehicle delivery.

Funds for this new vehicle will come from SPLOST VII and Public Safety Funds. There is currently \$60,000 remaining in SPLOST VII and the City will need \$10,000 from Public Safety Funds to cover payments for the remainder of FY24.

Council was in consensus to bring this forward at Tuesday's meeting.

#### **3. Appointment of Erik Keith**

Due to the resignation of Larry Lewallen, Post 1 on the Council is currently vacant. To ensure the Council will have a quorum for the remaining 2023 meetings, it was proposed that Erik Keith (who qualified for Post 1 uncontested) be appointed to serve the remainder of Lewallen's term. Legal counsel verified that since there only 90 days until election, it follows the City's charter to appoint Keith and then swear him in for his own term in January.

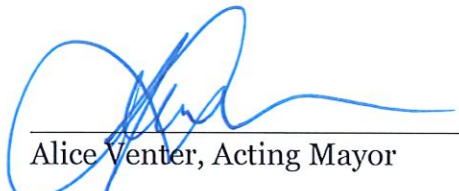
Council was in consensus to bring this forward to Tuesday's meeting.

### ***Announcement***

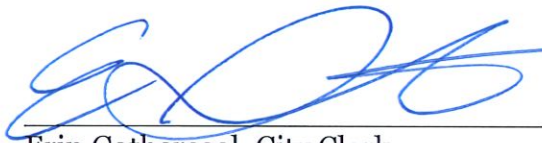
- a. Join us for the final 2023 Movie In the Market on October 20th at 7:30 pm! Bring your chairs and blankets to the Baldwin Farmers' Market for a free screening of "Coco." Light concessions will be available with all proceeds going to our "Shop With a Hero" program!
- b. The City of Baldwin is now accepting vendors for our Sixth Annual Fall Festival on October 21st! We welcome food trucks, crafters, and non-profits to sign up for a booth and be a part of our yearly celebration of Baldwin and our surrounding community. The vendor application is available online at [www.cityofbaldwin.org](http://www.cityofbaldwin.org) or by emailing [baldwinevents@cityofbaldwin.org](mailto:baldwinevents@cityofbaldwin.org). Fireworks at the Fall Festival will be sponsored by Safety Plus.

**Adjournment**

**Action: A motion was made by Theron Ayers to adjourn the meeting with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 3-0 at 7:31 pm.**

  
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Alice Venter, Acting Mayor

10/10/2023  
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Date Approved by Council

  
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Erin Gathercoal, City Clerk

