



Minutes
City Council Meeting
September 25th, 2023
6:30pm

Baldwin Courtroom, 155 Willingham Avenue, Baldwin, GA 30511

Acting Mayor Alice Venter, Council Member Larry Lewallen, 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 6:30 pm.

Invocation and Pledge

Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Minutes: Council Meeting 08/28/2023.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the August 28th, 2023 council meeting minutes as presented with a second by Theron Ayers. Motion Carried 4-0.

Bradley Cook – “Safe Park Habersham”

Bradley Cook, President of the Habersham Rotary Club, addressed Council regarding an initiative to address homelessness in the County. Safe Park Habersham is designed to help mothers living in their cars with their children by giving them a safe place to park their vehicle and provide resources to acquire housing. The initiative is going live on October 1st. Cook encouraged Council to reach out to him if they have any questions.

Citizen Comment

Jim and Lisa Hebin of Demorest addressed Council regarding their interest in a 12-acre parcel at 115 Industrial Park Road. The Hebins proposed a joint venture with the City and finding a dividing line of three or four acres for the residential house currently on the property and the rest of the acreage to the City. Acting Mayor Venter suggested the Hebins contact ReveSolutions (who is leasing an adjacent property from the City) and meeting with City staff to discuss ideas.

Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to amend the agenda to add a public hearing for Chitwood Development Ordinance #2023-08130Z with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0.

Public Hearings

Chitwood Development Ordinance #2023-08130Z

Acting Mayor Alice Venter opened the public hearing at 6:54 pm.

CAO Emily Woodmaster recapped the history behind the Chitwood

Development's request and the need to provide Lula Capital with an additional year (four years total) to develop a plan for the additional land acquired and to present a plat to the City.

Reports

Police Department – Chief Chris Jones

Police Chief Chris Jones presented Council with a report of August 2023 statistics and updates (see attached report).

Old Business

1. Consideration/Approval of 1st Reading of Chitwood Development Ordinance #2023-08130Z

Acting Mayor Venter opened the floor for discussion regarding the Chitwood Development.

In Favor: None.

In Opposition: Habersham County Commissioner Jimmy Tench stated his opposition to the development due to the land being stolen and that no one can build on it.

Acting Mayor Venter closed the public hearing at 7:22 pm.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the 1st Reading of Chitwood Development Ordinance #2023-08130Z as presented with a second by Theron Ayers. Motion Carried 3-1 (Aye: Ayers, Almagno, Venter; Nay: Lewallen).

2. Consideration/Approval of LeadsOnline Agreement

Assistant Chief Justin Ferguson recapped the LeadsOnline Agreement presented at the August 28th council meeting with the updated one-year agreement and no additional changes.

Action: A motion was made by Larry Lewallen to approve the LeadsOnline Agreement as presented with a second by Stephanie Almagno. Motion Carried 4-0.

New Business

3. Consideration/Approval of Entertainment District Resolution #2023-09131R

In 2022, the Alcohol Ordinance was amended to allow for an entertainment district for the Fall Festival, and then implemented a “floating district” per event by resolution. This implements the floating district for the Fall Festival on October 21st, 2023 and authorizes Los Cerritos to serve alcohol at this event.

Action: A motion was made by Larry Lewallen to approve the Entertainment District Resolution #2023-09131R as presented with a second by Stephanie Almagno. Motion Carried 4-0.

4. Discussion of 2023 Millage Rate

Woodmaster presented Baldwin’s five-year millage rate history and options to set the 2023 millage rate. She also reviewed Governor Kemp’s Property Tax Relief Grant, which provides additional relief to property owners. 2023 showed an increase in both Habersham and Banks County’s digests due to additions and reassessments.

Almagno stated that while much was accomplished with the millage rate increase last year, she would not advocate for having no rollback and that Council needs to provide relief to property owners. Council Members Lewallen and Venter voiced their support for a full rollback.

Council was in consensus to discuss the 2023 millage rate further at the October work session. No formal action was taken.

Executive Session

Announcements

- 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 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 or by emailing baldwinevents@cityofbaldwin.org.
- c. Almagno addressed a citizen complaint about trash services and delay of service. She requested that the City speak with FC Sanitation about a marked decrease in the quality of service as the company has widened their service area. Woodmaster said she would invite the owner of FC Sanitation to the next meeting to address the concerns.
- d. Council Member Larry Lewallen announced that he would be resigning his post on the city council upon completion of the meeting.

Adjournment

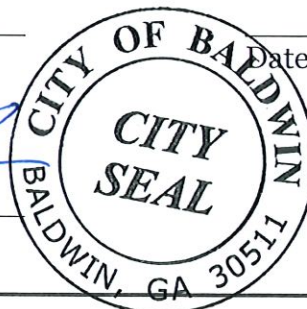
Action: A motion was made by Theron Ayers to adjourn the meeting with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0 at 8:17 pm.



Alice Venter, Acting Mayor



Erin Gathercoal, City Clerk



10/10/2023

Date Approved by Council