



Minutes
City Council Meeting
June 26th, 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 6/12/2023.

Action: A motion was made by Theron Ayers to approve the consent agenda as presented with a second by Stephanie Almagno. Motion Carried 4-0.

Citizen Comment

Public Hearings

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

Acting Mayor Alice Venter opened the public hearing at 6:33 pm.

In Favor: None.

In Opposition: None.

Reports

Court – Susan Newsom

Court Clerk Susan Newsom presented Council with a report of improvements and changes to the municipal court (see attached report).

Old Business

1. Consideration/Approval of Farag Water Account Adjustment

CAO Emily Woodmaster recapped the request for a water account adjustment originally presented at the June 12th meeting. This is the first time in five years a residential leak of this magnitude has occurred, so the adjustment request must be presented to Council. During the time of the Farag's leak following the freeze in December, approximately a month's worth of water loss could have been prevented if the City had cut off the meter when the high usage leak was discovered. The water was cut off because Baldwin meter readers did not

previously have the ability to do so without authorization from Woodmaster or the Utility Billing Supervisor.

Woodmaster presented three options for Council, of which she recommended the City share in accountability for the 34-days of water loss, reducing the account balance to \$1,957.91 from \$30,000.

Action: A motion was made Maarten Venter by to reduce the Farag water bill to \$1,957.91 to settle the account as presented with a second by Theron Ayers. Motion Carried 4-0.

2. Consideration/Approval of FY24 Water Rates

Woodmaster recapped the proposed 2-3% increase in water rates. In order to maintain the City's debt coverage ratio by bond covenant, the City anticipated a 5% increase in growth. Any remainder, however, must be made up with an increase in water and sewer rates. This past year, Baldwin grew by 3%, so a 2% increase will meet the 5%, while 3% will help with any future costs.

The water rate is based on the value of Baldwin's assets, which includes the raw water intake system, the water treatment plant, the wastewater treatment plant, and the entire wastewater collection system and water distribution system. The value of those assets is considered, along with the previous year's operational costs to collect, treat, and distribute water, as well as anticipated rising costs of the chemicals to treat water. Baldwin uses the consumer price index and the trend of the industry standard to determine our operations and maintenance expenses.

Baldwin's topography also plays a part in establishing prices in comparison to other cities. Varying heights cause rapid pressure changes in the pipes, which require a pressure relieving valve to reduce line breaks. No rate is created equal in water and sewer because there's no possible way for two cities with different needs to share the same type of system and operate as needed.

Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to approve the FY24 2% water rate increase with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0.

3. Consideration/Approval of CAO Contract

Acting Mayor Venter recapped the CAO contract discussion from the June 12th council meeting and shared a few highlights of the proposed contract that have been met with some confusion, including the employee vehicle and provisions regarding termination.

Almagno discussed Baldwin's past problem of staff turnover when she first joined the Council, and that if Baldwin is to recruit and retain good employees, that involves, good pay, benefits, and taking care of staff. Almagno stated that the current salary for the CAO position is outdated, and the position was long overdue for a wage study, as Baldwin would have no chance of hiring the CAO position at the current salary.

The proposed salary for the CAO is \$104,000, which is not only less than the median presented in the wage study, but also less than neighboring municipalities that are smaller than Baldwin and have fewer services.

Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to approve the Chief Administrative Officer contract as presented with a second by Maarten Venter. In Favor: Theron Ayers, Stephanie Almagno, and Maarten Venter. Opposed: Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 3-1.

4. Consideration/Approval of FY23 Budget Amendments

Woodmaster presented two items of revenue recognition and two budget amendment requests to help clean up the end of FY23 before the new fiscal year begins July 1st. The revenue recognitions were for \$16,000 for Community Events Sponsorships and \$3,639 for Officer Flores' memorial stone at Downtown City Park.

The first budget amendment request was for plan reviews, a cost that is passed to the developers requesting permits. Woodmaster requested approval to increase the budget from \$0 to \$16,400 for Plan Review Expenditures, 100-7200-8521300-00. The second amendment request is for the raw water pump repair. Council originally approved \$60,000 for the repair on March 27th, 2023, but the repair company has now quoted \$89,500 and the work will not be completed by the end of the fiscal year. Woodmaster requested this be expensed from the Enterprise Fund Balance from two line items and allowing those two line items carry into the FY24 fund balance, and then pay the entire expense from the fund balance.

Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to approve the FY23 budget amendments as presented with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0.

New Business

5. Consideration/Approval of Appointed Positions

Every year, Council must appoint certain people/entities to specific positions for the year as required by the City Charter. While hiring a City Clerk is in the proposed FY24 budget, Woodmaster must be reappointed to City Clerk to hold

the position until the position is filled. Once a City Clerk has been found, Council will reappoint them to the position. Council must also reappoint a Mayor Pro Tempore.

Maarten Venter nominated Stephanie Almagno for the position of Mayor Pro Tempore. The nomination was seconded by Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 4-0.

Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to approve the FY24 appointments as presented with a second by Theron Ayers. Motion Carried 4-0.

6. Consideration/Approval of New PTO Tiers

Woodmaster presented an update to Baldwin's PTO program as part of the benefits package for retaining employees. With the proposed additional PTO tiers, employees who have worked for the City of Baldwin for more than 15 years will earn PTO at a higher biweekly rate. Typical 8-hour employees who have worked 15-30 years will 7.693 hours biweekly, with a total personal leave of 200 hours, and employees of 30 or more years will earn 9.231 hours biweekly, with a total personal leave of 240 hours. Non-civilian public safety employees (police, fire, water/wastewater treatment plant) who work 12-24-hour shifts and holidays will earn at a higher rate. Non-civilian employees with 15-30 years will earn 12.308 hours biweekly and employees with 30 plus years will earn 13.924 hours biweekly.

Woodmaster stated that she confirmed with departments heads that their departments could ensure coverage before bringing this proposal to council. The employees still will not be allowed to take paid time off more than two weeks at a time unless using it for authorized medical leave. Two employees currently have 30 or more years with the City and no employees fall under the fourth tier of 15-30 years.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the new Paid Time Off tiers as presented with a second by Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 4-0.

7. Consideration/Approval of FC Sanitation Contract

Woodmaster presented a contract between FC Sanitation and the City of Baldwin for approval. The only change that has been made is the second half of the 24% increase approved two years ago. Woodmaster also stated for citizens that the City does offer house-side can services for those who need their trash picked up at their house instead of street-side. There is a \$5.00 charge for this service from FCS, however the fee can be waived if the resident has disability documentation.

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

Acting Mayor called again for any comments regarding the budget.

Vickie Sanders 146 Banks Highland Drive thanked Council for taking care of City staff, sharing her personal experiences of being underpaid for excessive responsibilities.

Acting Mayor Alice Venter closed the public hearing at 7: 52 pm.

Announcements

- a. The Piedmont Library System Pop Up Rolling Library will be set up at the Baldwin Farmers' Market from 11 am – 12:00 pm every Friday through the end of July. We encourage all residents to come and check out or return books. Additionally, those attending the Pop Up Rolling Library with children will receive food bags courtesy of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia.
- b. The Baldwin City "Pit"nic is this Saturday, July 1st starting at 5:00 pm. We invite our residents to join us at the Farmers' Market for a free cookout. Bring your picnic blankets and lawn chairs and make sure you stay for the fireworks finale! Airport Road from Willingham Ave. to King St. will be closed from 4:30 pm until approximately 10:00 pm.
- c. There will be a Special Called Meeting this Friday, June 30th at 6:30 pm for approval and adoption of the FY24 Budget. This meeting will take place at the Baldwin Municipal Courtroom, 155 Willingham Ave, Baldwin, GA 30511.
- d. City Offices will be closed Tuesday, July 4th in observance of Independence Day.
- e. Acting Mayor Venter announced her plans to begin a "Coffee with the Mayor" series where she broadcasts live on Facebook and Youtube. Venter hopes to hold Q & As with citizens, interview department heads and prominent community members, and do live tours of Baldwin's fire and police departments, water treatment plant, and wastewater treatment plant. The goal will to be better inform citizens about Baldwin's assets and how they are maintained.

Executive Session

Executive Session for Personnel


Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to enter into Executive Session for personnel with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0 at 7:56 pm.

Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to reenter the regular meeting from Executive Session for personnel where

personnel was discussed, no decisions were made, and to authorize the affidavit with a second by Theron Ayers. Motion Carried 4-0 at 8:19 pm.

Adjournment

Action: A motion was made by Theron Ayers to adjourn the meeting with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0 at 8:20 pm.



Alice Venter, Acting Mayor


Emily Woodmaster, CAO



7/10/2023

Date Approved by Council