

Minutes

City Council Meeting

September 9th, 2024

6:30pm

Baldwin Courtroom, 155 Willingham Avenue, Baldwin, GA 30511

Mayor Stephanie Almagno, Council member Erik Keith, Council member Kerri Davis, Council member Maarten Venter (via phone), and Council member Alice Venter (via phone) were all in attendance.

Call Meeting to Order

Mayor Almagno called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

Invocation and Pledge

Police Commendation

Police Chief Chris Jones presented commendations to Corporal John Groves and Corporal Aaron Spivey for their service on recent calls.

Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Minutes: Council Meeting 8/26/24 and Work Session 9/3/24.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the consent agenda as presented with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 4-0.

Public Comments

- Tom Whitney of 189 Crooked Pine Trail addressed Council regarding the 15-mph speed limit signs recently installed on his street and Smokerise Drive. Mr. Whitney stated that while he supported ensuring the safety of the community, he is concerned that the speed limit was too low and could present issues with cars driving the hills in poor weather conditions. He stated that a 25-mph speed limit is more ideal (balancing safety and practicality) and is also the standard in residential areas. He requested the City reconsider the speed limit given the unique conditions of Crooked Pine Trail.
- Sally and Rick McEntyre of 109 Bradley Drive and Larry Whitfield of Whitfield's Funeral Home addressed Council, requesting an exemption to the policy prohibiting sales of plots in the Old Section of the Baldwin cemetery to purchase five plots. The McEntyres previously came before Council in August 2023 to request an exemption, which Council denied. The McEntyres are requesting an exemption again on behalf of Mr. McEntyre's mother, who wishes to be buried close to a friend of hers. Mr. Whitfield stated his funeral service had not had any issue burying someone in the cemetery in his 50 years serving the community and that he has confirmed there are no bodies buried in the spaces the McEntyres are requesting.

Mayor Almagno stated that the Council has made their decision last year based on the records of land ownership and plot sales, not on whether or not anyone was laid to rest in the desired plots, and the lack of records goes back to when the cemetery was deeded to the City. Mrs. McEntyre inquired about whether sold plots had been recorded at the county courthouse and stated that no cemetery plots should be sold if the records are that lacking. Legal Counsel Jack Samuels weighed in, reiterating that

the error in record-keeping dates to when the cemetery was first deeded to the City, and that in addition to accurate records being kept for the New Section, the Council recently delineated the lines between the Old Section and the New Section. Mayor Almagno stated that the City will continue to work with the McEntyres in regards to purchasing from the New Section and asked Samuels to look into the subject of filing cemetery plot deeds with the county courthouse.

- Debby Satterfield of 153 Chandler Street addressed Council about a concern with her water bill due to a leak and requested that her bill be adjusted. Mayor Almagno advised her that the Accounts Receivable Supervisor Cindy Hernandez can create an adjustment upon Mrs. Satterfield providing proof that the leak was fixed.

Public Hearings

Reports

Old Business

1. Consideration/Approval of Sangoma Phones Contract

CAO Emily Woodmaster presented the contract for new phones with Sangoma, which was previously brought before Council in July. Woodmaster and City staff have been working with Sangoma to solidify the legal language of the contract to ensure that the document meets all of the City's requirements. The contract has been reviewed by both the City's and Sangoma's legal teams and approved. The addendum gives the City the option to make the agreement for a one-year term. Council had no further questions or concerns.

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the Sangoma contract and to authorize the CAO to execute the contract as presented with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 4-0.

2. Consideration/Approval of Insurance Reimbursement Budget Amendment

Woodmaster reviewed the budget amendment for motor vehicle insurance reimbursements discussed at the September work session. Council had no further questions or concerns.

Action: A motion was made by Erik Keith to approve the insurance reimbursement budget amendment as presented with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried by 4-0.

3. Consideration/Approval of Cornelia Water Sale Agreement

Woodmaster reviewed the Water Sale Agreement between Baldwin and the City of Cornelia discussed at the September work session. Council had no further questions or concerns.

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the Cornelia Water Sale Agreement as presented with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 4-0.

4. Consideration/Approval of Temporary Entertainment District Resolution #2024-09150R

Woodmaster reviewed the Temporary Entertainment District Resolution discussed at the September work session to allow Los Cerritos to serve alcohol at the 2024 Fall Festival. Council had no further questions or concerns.

Action: A motion was made by Marten Venter to approve Temporary Entertainment District Resolution #2024-09150R as presented with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 4-0.

5. Discussion of 2024 Millage Rate

Woodmaster presented an updated list of options for the 2024 millage rate, previously discussed at the September work session. Council member Maarten Venter had requested the numbers for no changes; however, the Banks County millage would change regardless because of LOST numbers. Four options were presented on page 13 of the packet.

City staff's recommendation is the minimum required increase (blue column) of .689 mills, resulting in a millage rate of 9.170. This increase is less than what was anticipated (1.11 mill increase) when the budget was created and passed, due to an increase in the digests increasing more than anticipated.

Council member Maarten Venter reiterated that he would not vote in favor of an increase due to the promise he made to his constituents. The rest of Council was in consensus to move forward with the .689 increase so that three public hearings can be scheduled by Woodmaster and City Clerk Erin Gathercoal.

New Business

6. Consideration/Approval of 1st Reading of Personal Property Sale Authorization Ordinance #2024-09151

Woodmaster presented an ordinance that would authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to dispose (via surplus) of the City's property that is valued at \$500 or less (e.g. cell phones, printers, etc.). Currently, all items for surplus must be presented to Council for approval, and instating the \$500 limit would allow City staff to handle the surplus in-house for those lower-valued items. Council had no further questions or concerns.

Action: A motion was made by Erik Keith to approve the first reading of the Personal Property Sale Authorization Ordinance #2024-09151 as presented with a second by Alice Venter. Motion Carried 4-0.

Executive Session


Announcements

- a. The Public Works Department is holding an open house at the new Public Works building at 201 Industrial Park Road on September 17th. A ribbon cutting ceremony will be at 6 pm, and residents are welcome to drop in between 6 and 8 pm. Light refreshments will be provided.


- b. Join us for Movies in the Market on September 27th starting at 8:30 pm.. Bring your lawn chairs and blankets and join us for a FREE night of fun at the Farmers' Market. This month we are showing "lf." Concessions will be available, with all proceeds going to Shop with a Hero.
- c. The 7th Annual Baldwin Fall Festival will be on October 19th from 12:00 pm - 8:00 pm at the Baldwin Farmers Market and Downtown City Park. Enjoy live music, local crafters and vendors, a wide variety of food trucks, and a closing fireworks show. As always, admission is FREE!
- d. The City of Baldwin is holding a Fall Amnesty Day on November 7th. Public Works will pick up and dispose of trash that would normally be taken to the landfill. We will accept scrap metal, paint cans, furniture, and old appliances. Tires and batteries will not be picked up. All items must be placed at the curb no later than 8:00 am on November 7th. Call City Hall at 706-778-6341 by November 4th to get your name on the list!
- e. Council member Kerri Davis shared the successful turnout at Silent Book Club held at Sweet Acres Winery the previous afternoon. The next one is scheduled for October 13th, which will also be at Sweet Acres. She invited anyone interested in reading to attend.

Adjournment

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to adjourn the meeting with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 4-0 at 7:16 pm.


Stephanie Almagno, Mayor

9/23/2024
Date Approved by Council


Erin Gathercoal, City Clerk

