



CITY OF  
**Swainsboro** GEORGIA  
*Crossroads of the Great South*



## City Council Meeting

The regular meeting of Mayor and City Council will be held on Monday, June 5, 2023, at 6:00 P.M. City Hall

**Members Present:** Mayor Bennett, Councilperson Sconyers, Councilperson Quarterman, Councilperson Parker, Councilperson Stafford, Councilperson Collins (arrived at 6:15)

**Prayer of Invocation:** Pastor Nicholas Robertson, Consuming Fire Ministries

### Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes of May regular meeting were presented. Councilperson Sconyers made a motion to accept the minutes.

**Motion by: Sconyers**

**Seconded by: Davis**

**Vote: 5 - 0**

Councilperson Sconyers made a motion to amend the agenda to add two police items, (1) to hire Cari Hall, (2) to promote Lt. Coleman.

**Motion by: Sconyers**

**Seconded by: Davis**

**Vote: 5 - 0**

Councilperson Stafford made a motion to amend the agenda to move Colby Martin from part-time firefighter to full-time firefighter.

**Motion by: Stafford**

**Seconded by: Sconyers**

**Vote: 5 - 0**

Councilperson Parker made a motion to amend the agenda to add Juneteenth to city's list of observed holidays.

**Motion by: Parker**

**Seconded by: Quarterman** **Vote: 5 - 0**

Councilperson Parker made a motion to amend the agenda to add Ms. Gisel White-Perry to the agenda.

**Motion by: Parker**

**Seconded by: Stafford**

**Vote: 5 - 0**

Councilperson Quarterman made a motion to amend the agenda to add to amend the overtime resolution.

**Motion by: Quarterman**

**Seconded by: Parker**

**Vote: 5 - 0**

### A. Old Business:

1. Council will consider a water rate increase to meet Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) requirements. Mr. Middlebrooks stated the current minimum charge for water, sewer, trash, epd, and inert landfill is presently \$48.80, and we are proposing a \$6.00 increase. The new proposed residential water rates are in blue, and the sewage rates are in green. The present rates allow for a charge of \$7.96 up to 2000 gallons. The proposed new rate is \$10.44 up to 1500 gallons. The current sewer rates are 16.94. The proposed new sewer rate is \$20.26. The new residential rate for a minimum usage bill would be \$54.80. The commercial changes would be an increase of \$12.13. Presently the current rate is \$8.21 for up to 2000 gallons and sewer is \$17.58 for up to 2000 gallons. The proposed new commercial rate is \$12.81 for up to 1500 gallons of water and \$25.11 for sewer. The current minimum usage bill for commercial customers is \$49.89. The proposed new rate would be \$62.02.

**Vote: 5 - 0**

1. Council will consider the approval of the Blight Ordinance. Councilperson Davis made a motion to approve. Councilperson Parkers said unready. He asked if a judge imposes those fees once a property is deemed blight. Attorney Levis replies that the statutes spells out by law what fees may be appropriate by law including cost it depends on what steps the city is taking. If the city is taking remediation measures, it will remediation cost. If they are taking renovation measures, it will be cost. There is a due process that involves a municipal court judge and that will be determined at the court.

**Motion: Davis**

**Seconded by: Sconyers**

**Vote: 6 - 0**

2. Council will hear from Tilson requesting approval to place a new utility pole in the public right of way. Heather Carlisle from Tilson, a telecommunication company, headquartered in Portland, Maine with local offices in Murphy Lake, Georgia. We have a nationwide presence. We partner with other telecommunication companies to assist with their deployment of infrastructure in the right of way and on towers. We are requesting to place a utility pole to support broadband antennas in the area of 207 Anderson Drive. These antennas are for a company called broadband one, which will be a new fix wireless provider internet of things. This will expand broadband accessibility in the Swainsboro area. This technology works through point-to-point technology. The act does provide for reasonable fees that can be charged. Attorney Levis advised that since this may involve rental property by the city, deliberations should be done in executive session. Then if we need to vote, we could come out and vote on it. Mayor stated to postpone this item until the July meeting.

**Councilperson Davis made a motion to amend the agenda to add changing the July council meeting to July 10.**

**Motion: Davis**

**Seconded by: Sconyers**

**Vote: 6 – 0**

3. **Councilperson Davis made a motion to change the July council meeting to July 10**

**Motion: Davis**

**Seconded by Sconyers**

**Vote: 6 - 0**

4. Council will hear a request from the DDA regarding the Food Pantry Building. Nicholas Robertson, DDA board member, informs the council that the DDA previously discussed to tear down the food pantry building. However, since then new options have come up and the DDA now wants to remodel the building. We would like to put businesses in the building after it has been remodeled. This will help bring in funds to fund new DDA projects, benefiting the city. The remodeling of the building will fix any present issues. Councilperson Parker asks if the renovations will be at a cost to the city? Mr. Robertson replied, we are asking that the city fund the project. We have a rough quote of \$110,000. When previously discussed it was \$69,000 to tear it down, this was not including putting in a green space. Councilperson Parker replies before we can proceed, we will have to first find \$110,000 to renovate this building. Mr. Middlebrooks recommends that we take \$150,000 from SPLOST funds and renovate the building. So, when we get to renovate city hall, we will have a building to move into. The DDA would have to deed the building to the city. We could then pay for the renovations under our SPLOST city hall renovations line. We would renovate the food pantry building while looking for funds to renovate city hall. Then once done we would deed the building back to the DDA. Councilperson Parker said it was previously discussed that Clearwater would tear down that building. Chris Morton, CWS Project Manager, stated, once he seen the nature of the building it was discovered that there was no interior wall dividing the antique market next door and it would be unsafe for us to do the work. Attorney Levis stated the DDA wants to renovate the old food pantry building so that they will have an additional income stream, so that downstream the city can reduce the necessary funding for the DDA, and they can be more self-sufficient. This will also allow the city to not have to rent a place during the renovations of City Hall. Mayor Bennett postponed this item until the July meeting after we get the vote from the DDA board.
5. Council will hear Clearwater's 2023 Swainsboro High School's Scholarship Winner. Chris Morton, Project Manager, Clearwater Solution presented the 2023 Swainsboro High School's Clearwater Scholarship of \$1,000 to Manuel Fernando. Manuel will be attending Georgia Tech in the fall.

6. Council heard the Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP) Wastewater Gold Award Presentation given by Gary McCoy the District 5 Director and the Vice President for Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP). The GAWP consists of 4,000 members. The Gold Award is an award given in recognition of one complete calendar year of perfect compliance for a permitted wastewater treatment facility. This award is given to the City of Swainsboro on behalf of the excellent wastewater services rendered by Chris Morton, Project Manager of CWS, and his wastewater crew, Wade Holcomb, Perry Johnson, and Will Hutcheson.
7. Council will hear from Ms. Julia Carswell regarding neighborhood issues. She started by informing council of a big hole in the sidewalk on Green Street near the old car wash, which she stumbled and fell into while walking at night. She informed council of a light issue in her neighborhood, the area of Lucky Street, New Street, Flanders Street, and Green Street. She asked council to seek more lights for these streets. The next concern she brought to council was gang violence. She stated gang violence was very bad in her neighborhood, shoot outs occurring often and something needs to be done. Mayor Bennett stated council voted last year to put up more street lights in the worst areas. Chief Ellison said the calls from this area are numerous. Mayor Bennett asked if we have a plan to make this area better. Chief Ellison was prompted to make more of a visual presence in this area. Mayor Bennett signed an executive order putting a temporary juvenile curfew in effect to help combat the issue of kids being out late.
8. Council will consider reappropriation of the Gumlog gym money. Mayor says that the council committee with the CAY group went over the budget for the gym. It will be an estimate of \$900,000 to complete. So, we come up with a proposal to build classrooms in a multipurpose building for the kids. Mayor Bennett stated he contacted one of his architect friends and he is drawing up the plans and it wasn't going to cost the city anything. Councilperson Parker asked if the architect has met with anyone from the CAY committee? Mayor replied he is drawing it up and will present it to them and the group. If any modifications are needed it can be modified. The architect is doing a 3600 square foot multipurpose building and if they want to make changes then CAY can make changes. Councilperson Sconyers said this is so much different than what we had planned with the gym. This is a whole different project. Mayor replied this helps the kids. Councilperson Sconyers replied, he does not mind having two classrooms for the kids but to go in with a community center when we already have community centers in this town that can be used. I am against that, and I think the community will be against spending money on another community center. Councilperson Parkers said Councilperson Sconyers was on this committee, and you did not voice this when we met. The first meeting you did not show up at and the second meeting you did not voice it. Councilperson Sconyers says that I had time to think about it and the community need to have some input in it. Councilperson Quarterman said but we talked about it at the last meeting. Mayor said we will get the architect plans back and give it to CAY to make changes and then we can put it out for bid and see if we can afford it. Councilperson Parker made a motion to have the architect to continue working on the plans to present at the next council meeting.

**Motion: Parker**

**Seconded by: Quarterman**

**Vote: 6 – 0**

9. Council will consider the approval of the Effluent Pump Station Operations Panel Repairs. Chris Morton says the pump is failing and operating on emergency floats at this time due to system failure of main control panel CPU. The system is now obsolete and is no longer sold or able to be repaired due to parts not available any longer. I am asking for \$9583 from sole source GWI to repair, revamp, and rehab the control system. Councilperson Parker makes a motion to authorize the spending of \$9583 from sole source GWI to repair, revamp, and rehab the control system.

**Motion: Parker**

**Seconded by: Sconyers**

**Vote: 6 – 0**

10. Council will consider bidding for the purchase of two knuckle boom trucks. Chris Morten, Project Manager, is requesting two knuckle boom trucks. If we get two new trucks, we could sell the current trucks at auction. A Mack is preferred. Mr. Middlebrooks said money is available in SPLOST funds. Councilperson Parker motioned to put a knuckle boom truck on the Georgia procurement website for purchase and to sell one of the existing trucks.

**Motion: Parker**

**Seconded by: Stafford**

**Vote: 6 – 0**

11. Council will approve the joining of Planning Rural Opportunities For Prosperity and Economic Leadership (PROPEL). Mr. Middlebrooks states that this is a University of Georgia project that will be funded by USDA grant. Even if not funded by USDA, the University of Georgia say they will fund the project. The project will work with the county and city doing an initial assessment of what we have has far as infrastructure for economic growth to advance our community. Councilperson Parker made a motion to allow the mayor and the administrator to sign the PROPEL agreement to be part of the project.

**Motion: Parker**

**Seconded by: Sconyers**

**Vote: 6 -0**

12. Council will consider the hiring of a new police officer. Chief Ellison asked the council to consider the hiring of Cari Hall, she is currently going through the background process and contingent her passing the psychological and physical examination. She has to complete all of preliminaries to get post approved by the state. I would like to send her to the academy July 5<sup>th</sup> which is the next academy start date. Councilperson Sconyers makes a motion a to hire Cari Hall contingent she passes her psychological and physical examination.

**Motion: Sconyers**

**Seconded by: Davis**

**Vote: 6 – 0**

13. Council will consider the promotion of Lieutenant Hall to Captain Hall. Chief Ellison stated that he would like council to consider the promotion of Lieutenant Hall to Captain. He was ineligible for a promotion because of a requirement but since February he has held the position of Lieutenant over patrol for eight years. Normally, this is done in February. I have had to add some additional duties to him over the last year and a half with regards to body camera footage and maintaining evidence. I would like to consider him for a promotion to captain. Councilperson Parker asks attorney Levis if this position had to be advertised and interviewed. Attorney Levis responded that if a position was being created, this is not what is happening. This is a rank increase which is an issue for the city council because it effects the budgetary increase of the budget. Councilperson Parker asks that when Captain Young left wasn't the money for the Captain position split over other employees. Chief Ellison replied yes. He was the assistant chief and we abolished that position. Councilperson Parker asked who the captain was before. Chief Ellison replied there was no captain. There is money in the budget due to the cops grant funding the last three positions. Councilperson Parker asks once the grants are over the city would incur this cost. Chief Ellison replied yes. Councilperson Parker stated I was under the impression that the position had to be advertised based on what happened to the DDA position. Attorney Levis stated that was the filling of a vacant position. Councilperson Sconyers made a motion to move Lieutenant Hall's rank to Captain.

**Motion: Sconyers**

**Seconded by: Davis**

**Vote: 6 - 0**

14. Council will consider moving fire fighter Colby Martin from part time to full time. Chief Strobridge asked council to consider the transfer of Colby Martin from part time to full time status. He is already fully trained and we will not have to invest in sending him to the academy. He can move right into the full-time position. Councilperson Sconyers asks the fire chief if he has openings. The fire chief responded yes; he will have one position open if Colby is hired tonight. Councilperson Stafford made a motion to hire Colby Martin as a full-time fireman.

**Motion: Stafford**

**Seconded by: Sconyers**

**Vote: 6 - 0**

Chief Strobridge informs the council that at a later date he will be asking to replace Engine 1. He is working with a company on prices for an engine, but delivery time is two years out. Mr. Middlebrooks asked if we would be able to lock in the purchase price at today's prices and receive it two years from now. Chief replied absolutely if the mayor



and council agrees to the lock in price. Two years from now that price would still be the same.

15. Council will consider amending the overtime resolution to coincide with the biweekly pay. Attorney Levis states that the resolution would change the overtime calculation for the police and fire instead of using a 28 day period it would be using a 14 day period. Instead of using the 121 for police and 212 for fire, we will be using half and this is consistent with our pay cycle.

**Motion: Davis**

**Seconded by: Parker**

**Vote: 6 – 0**

16. Council will consider adding the Juneteenth holiday to the list of observed holidays by the city. Councilperson Parker said that this is a federal and state holiday and staff has asked if would be observed by the city. Councilperson Parker stated that this holiday should be added to the holiday's observed by the city effective this year.

**Motion: Parker**

**Seconded by: Stafford**

**Vote: 6 - 0**

Councilperson Collins thanked the council for there condolences' for the passing of her brother.

Councilperson Parker made a motion to adjourn.

**Motion: Parker**

**Seconded by: Davis**

**Vote: 6 - 0**

### **C. Committee Reports:**

**None**

### **D. Executive Session:**

**None**

Submitted: ***Herman Middlebrooks***, City Administrator