

Regular Council Meeting

September 5, 2023

Meeting called to order by Mayor Harley at 6:00pm.

Invocation given by Mayor Harley.

Pledge of Allegiance led by Chief Duncan.

Welcome extended to all by Mayor Harley.

Present were Mayor John R. Harley, Councilman Robert D. Bird, Jr., Councilman Justin Wright, Councilman J. Micheal Evans, and Councilman Edward Armijo. City Attorney Rebecca Tydings absent.

Public Comments

Adoption of Minutes Motion made by Councilman Wright to adopt as written; seconded by Councilman Armijo. Motion carried.

- August 1, 2023

Old Business

3rd Public Hearing – Proposed Tax Increase 2023 Millage Rate: Mayor Harley read notification that was published in the legal organ and on social media site. Closed regular council meeting at 6:02pm and opened floor for public hearing.

John Snyder, 107 Willow Glen, inquired about the usage of additional funds and FY 2024 budget.

Mayor Harley reminded all that last year millage rate adopted was the roll back rate. Councilman Bird mentioned Warner Robins need to maintain personnel, also up and coming developments, need to provide additional services. The millage rate is staying the same, but since we are not choosing the roll back the millage rate and keeping the same rate incurs an increase.

Councilman Wright stated this is a good question, trying to answer this is a problem in all local governments, the term is called “churn”, going from one place to another, sign on bonuses are being offered at other places, all are struggling to solve.

Councilman Armijo stated he appreciated Mr. Snyder coming to the meeting tonight. One important thing as a city we take pride in our public safety. We added (2) additional people to our Fire Department, have not done anything in years, have to continue to build our manpower to meet our requirements. The city is growing, all departments are suffering.

Mayor Harley explained that new homes are being constructed, however the city will not yet receive taxes on that completed home. This is a judgement call.

Councilman Evans stated this is planning and growth for the future.

Councilman Wright there is a need for broader conversation pertaining to public safety, currently we have (6) open positions at the Police Department, more than just funding these positions.

Councilman Bird expressed we are a good place to work, have officers that return to work here after they left.

Mayor Harley closed public hearing at 6:11pm.

New Business

Adoption- Ordinance 2023 Millage Rate: Mayor Harley entertained motion. Motion to adopt made by Councilman Bird; seconded by Councilman Evans.

Councilman Wright asked about the open positions, when we get to the end of the budget year and we don't pay for positions, what happens to those funds. These funds are rolled into the fund balance, funds are used for next year's fund balance. Recommended that there is an amendment to the ordinance that if any funds are overage then would do a reimburse similar to one recently by State of Georgia. Mentioned the 12% increase.

City Accountant Harrison explained difference between roll back and current rate, last year we dropped the millage rate by 1.5 millage rate, as far as surplus is rolled back into the new budget, show revenue and look at the fund balance needed and transfer funds; appropriate for next year.

Councilman Evans also spoke about the roll back rate and inquired about future projects for FY 2024. Mrs. Harrison reminded all of upcoming projects for the next budget years, there are some big bills coming.

Councilman Armijo stressed the importance that we have the city safe, manpower and equipment. There is an expense, the department head provided the budget committee with the bare minimum necessary. We need to hear the reality, retaining people, keeping city operating takes a lot of budget management, more challenges ahead of us. Work smart about this, be sensible, all we can do is work with the facts.

Councilman Bird stated it is important, if we continue to choose the rollback rate, we are not allowing the city to grow.

Councilman Wright stated he understands the analogy of preparing for the future, however, with the force of law, does not agree with millage rate increase.

Councilman Evans going to do what it takes to provide the services, no one likes to pay more taxes, will do what it takes.

Mayor Harley calls for vote. Mayor Harley, Councilman Bird, Councilman Evans and Councilman Armijo vote in favor. Councilman Wright opposed. Motion carried. See Ordinance 2023-9.

Point of Information: Update on LWCF Grant Application: Councilman Bird recognized Director of Economic Development Bryant. Mrs. Bryant reminded all that this had been previously voted on to apply for grant. Surplus of funds, wrote a grant up to 50,000 for playground equipment for smaller children and developmental disabilities. It has passed

through the first phase still have a long way to go. There might be the need to gather more information during the grant process.

Point of Information- 120 Water Agreement- Service Line Inventory Compliance: Councilman Evans recognized Director of Operations Brumfield. Mr. Brumfield stated he has contacted 120 water and drawn up a contract to help stay in compliance with State of Georgia new rule. State is offering some assistance, applied last year for grant, appears that we have been approved for first phase of application process.

Comments from Council

Councilman Bird, this past Friday, food truck Friday, didn't stop by, but drove by, attendance was down due to the weather. Reminded all to get out there and enjoy the park.

Councilman Wright, no comment.

Councilman Armijo, recycling center needs volunteers, gives back to community, boy scout troop 400 still looking for more scouts, come by the city clerk's office, all the other civic groups need support encouraged everyone to go and see them out. When you see Fire and Police let them know you appreciate them.

Mayor Harley recognized Chief Duncan. Chief Duncan introduced new hire, Lt. Sales, he will be over Patrol Division, has 20 years of experience, very well versed, a great asset to our city. Worked his way from the ground up to command staff.

Mayor Harley, informed everyone Councilman Armijo has been elected to serve on GMA District 6 board. Also, Councilman Evans has been selected to serve on municipal training board, a great honor, appreciate them both for their hard work and willing to serve. Last week was overdose week, can't imagine having to witness this, watch out for each other. Wished everyone a great Labor Day.

Mayor Harley adjourned meeting at 6:33pm.

Mayor John R. Harley

Attest by City Clerk Krista Bedingfield

Date