

Council Meeting
April 15, 2024

Members Present: Mayor Buddy Duke, members Terry McClain, Greg Paige, Walter Cowart, Celestine Hayes and Jody Greene.

Others Present: City Manager Mark Barber, City Clerk Rhonda Rowe, City Attorney Tim Tanner and members of staff and the public.

Invocation was given by Councilman McClain

Pledge of Allegiance

Jr. Chamber Board Members: Members of the Jr. Chamber Board were present and recognized. The members were Landon Williams, Sam Oller, Melanie Hazeltine and Anna Cook.

Approval of Minutes: Councilman Paige made a motion to approve the minutes of April 1, 2024 as presented. Councilman Greene seconded. All members voted in favor.

Ord. #24-02: This ordinance, rezoning property located at 732 N. Pine Street from R10 to R8M, was read for the second time. Councilman Paige made a motion to approve the ordinance. Councilwoman Hayes seconded. All were in favor.

Georgia DOT Agreement (Res. #24-04): This resolution, entering into a standard utility agreement with the Georgia Dept of Transportation concerning the roundabout at the intersection of State Routes 37 / 76, was presented to the council. This resolution follows the approval at the March 18, 2024 council meeting for staff to remit a request for reimbursement regarding water infrastructure relocation required for the project to the DOT. Councilman Greene made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilman McClain seconded. The decision was unanimous.

Alcoholic Beverage License (RAM 007, LLC): Due to a change in ownership, we have received an application for an alcohol license from RAM 007, LLC d/b/a Holiday Mart located at 415 S. Hutchinson Avenue. All fees have been paid and background checks completed with no unsatisfactory findings. Councilman Greene made a motion to approve issuance of the license. Councilwoman Hayes seconded. There were no opposing votes.

Public Comments:

Dr. Treva Gear – Dr. Gear, on behalf of the Concerned Citizens of Cook County, requested to be heard to discuss light bill cutoff citizen concerns and issues. She expressed her appreciation for helping and assisting those who have had problems paying their bill. When they have come up here, you have been able to work with them and set something up so they could get those paid. It is an unfortunate situation for many, but they do agree that if you use electricity you should pay your bill. Hopefully anything like this can be avoided moving forward. She is asking that looking at the

bills, there are some things that are unclear. She's asking for transparency and clarity. The bills do not indicate the rate the citizens are being charged, even though it has the wattage used. It does not show what they are paying down. Currently it does not show what they paid and what went toward the current and the arrearage. So how can you know that your bill is actually being paid down. It can lead to a lot of discrepancies. She knew a couple people had some concerns at the last meeting and hopefully they've gotten that straight. They need some transparency at the city level so people know this is how much I owe currently, how much is in arrears, and how much I paid; otherwise, we start wondering what's really going on here. Moving forward, they really would like to see the kilowatt per hour, the rates on the bill, so people can know what they're actually being charged and why they're being charged what they're being charged.

George Barnum, Jr. – Mr. Barnum introduced himself as a candidate for Cook County Sheriff. He has 22 years of experience and has worked for the County, Sparks, and served as the former police chief of Cecil. He asked for votes and consideration in becoming the next Sheriff.

Council Comments:

Celestine Hayes – Mrs. Hayes stated she thought it was going to be on the agenda about changing the date and time of the council meetings. Mr. Barber stated that he had sent an email to the council the end of last week concerning the information he received from the County. Just changing the time on Mondays will not work because the County has a work session at 5:00 and then the meeting at 6:00. He would never recommend starting our meeting past 6:00 or 6:30, that gets too late. Nor would he recommend doing it before 5:00. His email was saying to look at a different time because he doesn't think that will work to keep it on a Monday. That would have to be a choice of the council but he thinks it would have to be a different day other than Monday. The email also included that some of the informal conversation of the County did not appear they were willing to make that change. Some of them have their schedule set and their schedule is built around their Monday meeting. The county manager did state he would look at it to possibly bring forth some options. Mr. Barber had suggested we wait and see what changes the County may make, if that is the wishes of the council, to make that change. The email was asking for everyone's opinion of another day or whatever, so that's why it's not on the agenda. Mrs. Hayes asked if he received any response and he advised he had received one response. She stated that her charter stated the meeting was supposed to be at 7:30 and Mr. Barber reminded her that was an outdated charter. The current charter states its on the first and third Monday, but no time is specified. Mr. Barber further stated that is why it is not on the agenda is because he is waiting on a response from the council as a whole. She asked if it was something they could still discuss, maybe changing the day. He advised that would be up to the council. It's hard to make it an agenda item, shooting in the dark what time and what day, since it's going to be a total change. He would need guidance from the council.

She stated she would also like to start having a work session before the council meeting because she never knows what is on the agenda until she gets the email. Mr. Barber replied that again, he would need guidance from the council. Keep in mind as far as the agenda, you're probably not going to get the agenda any earlier that you do now. He is trying to get it

to them on Thursdays; however, the deadline for the public comment section is not until Wednesday at 5:00 so Thursday is the earliest they can receive it.

Terry McClain – Councilman McClain inquired as to how they would know if they have the old charter or the current one.

Executive Session: Councilman McClain made a motion to enter into executive session to discuss litigation. Councilman Paige seconded with all in favor.

Following executive session there was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

Rhonda P. Rowe, City Clerk

Luther L. Duke III, Mayor
