

Council Meeting  
August 15, 2022

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

Others Present: John Flythe, Rhonda Rowe, Tim Tanner, Chad Castleberry and members of the public.

Invocation was given by Councilman McClain

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes: Councilman Paige made a motion to accept the minutes of August 1, 2022 as presented. Councilman McClain seconded. All were in favor.

Alcohol License (SRI Holiday Mart, LLC): The council was presented with an alcohol license application filed by SRI Holiday Mart, LLC located at 415 S. Hutchinson Avenue. All fees have been paid and there was no criminal history record on the applicant. Councilman Greene made a motion to approve the issuance of a license. Councilman Paige seconded. The decision was unanimous.

Property Abatements: City attorney Tim Tanner discussed 5 properties that the judge had declared an order for a public nuisance after a complaint was filed in municipal court. The property owners were given 30 days to abate the nuisance. That time has passed so the mayor/council will need to decide if they want to take the next step to abate the nuisance and place a lien on the property for the cost of the clean-up. The property locations are as follows:

212 W. 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
404 S. Pine Street  
413 W. 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
712 S. Pine Street  
411 N. Elm Street

Councilwoman Hayes questioned about the 6<sup>th</sup> property. She was advised that because of an incorrect address, we will have to come back and do that one, along with a few others. The city manager advised that he would like to get prices from contractors to tear the properties down; or, we can use our own equipment. He noted there would be a landfill cost as well; however, there is a special location to place block in the landfill. He would bring the costs back to the council. Councilman Cowart made a motion to accept the order for the property abatements as read. Councilman McClain seconded. There were no opposing votes.

MEAG Vogtle 3 & 4: City manager John Flythe reminded the council that we had discussed Plant Vogtle at the last meeting and that once Plant #'s 3 & 4 hit a certain cost amount, Georgia Power had agreed to tender (buy down our share). He noted that the other owners are Oglethorpe & EMC's; City of Dalton; and MEAG & MEAG Cities. We were told that if one city voted not to sale, that would negate anyone to

sell to Georgia Power. Because several had voted no, we took the same position. Our consultant has read and is familiar with our sales contract with MEAG. He has asked if the council would agree for us to tender our portion to put out and market among the MEAG cities. This has nothing to do with Georgia Power and the buyout on that side. Our cost next year will be over \$1M. We will have the cost for 20 years. He stated that if we could sell it, he would sell it. Councilwoman Hayes asked if it was more beneficial to sell than not to sell? Mr. Flythe advised absolutely. We would not recoup our costs for a number of years so it would be financially beneficial. Mayor Duke questioned if we did need extra energy that we could go to the market and buy as cheap as what we could buy now? Mr. Flythe advised that typically that is true. He noted that in 2021 gas prices were less than \$4 per unit. Today it is \$9 per unit. With the energy craze right now, natural gas dictates the clearing price. He noted that one customer is buying off the market, which is Blockstream. Councilman Cowart made a motion to offer up our portion of Plants 3 & 4 to the other MEAG communities for 20 years. Councilman Greene seconded. All were in favor.

Tax Millage: City manager John Flythe stated there has been a lot of conversation concerning the county's reevaluation of property, which is required by the state. He noted that reassessments were up from year 2021 to 2022 by approximately \$10M and that there had been a natural gain in personal property. Last year, the city's tax rate was 6.387 mills. In order to not have the public hearings advertising a tax increase, we would have to roll back the tax rate to 6.000 mills. If we roll back the rate, it will be a neutral effect to our citizens. He noted that based on the digest numbers, last year the city's tax levy amount was \$850,725; this year, with natural growth, it will be \$875,452. Mr. Flythe noted some of the growth was from the airport as well; there have been approximately twenty airplanes added at the airport. Councilman Greene made a motion to roll back the millage rate to 6.000 mills. Councilman McClain seconded. There were no opposing votes.

Utility Billing Work Session: City manager John Flythe asked the council to set a date to hold a work session on the utility billing. The council agreed to Wednesday, August 24, 2022 at 4:00 pm. Mr. Tanner noted that we may need to hold a special meeting at 5:00 to finalize the Texas Road property swap if the paperwork is complete before then. Councilwoman Hayes then questioned city attorney Tim Tanner that he had stated at the last meeting that it was illegal to forgive bills; so shouldn't it be illegal to double bill the citizens for something that is not their fault, especially for negligence on someone else's part? Mr. Tanner replied that it would be if anyone billed you for a service you didn't receive, not forgiving bills is a public gratuity law that everyone has to go by.

There was no further discussion and the meeting was adjourned.

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Rhonda P. Rowe, City Clerk

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Luther L. Duke III, Mayor

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