



February 26, 2024
6:00 PM
Woodbury City Council
Minutes

ANTICIPATED ATTENDING

- Mayor Ronnie Garrett
- Councilmember Cindy Ellison
- Councilmember Amanda Hardnett
- Councilmember Jada Holmes
- Councilmember Bobby Jones
- Police Department, Interim Chief Richard Wolverton
- Public Works, Director Buck Holmes
- Water Director, Cody Kelly
- City Clerk, Deondra Stevenson

1. WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- Mayor Ronnie Garrett

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

- February 2024 Agenda – 1st motion to adopt the agenda was made by Councilmember Amanda Hardnett. Councilmember Jada Holmes made a second motion. Unanimous vote. Motion approved.

3. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

- January 22, 2024 Minutes – 1st motion to adopt the January 22, 2024 minutes was made by Councilmember Jada Holmes. Councilmember Carolyn Ellison made a second motion. Unanimous vote. Motion approved.

4. MAYOR'S UPDATE – Mayor Garrett updated citizens on the status of changing the name of “Rose Avenue” to “Mitch Moreland Avenue”. He stated the city would be sending letters to residents regarding the name change. Mayor Garrett stated the water and sewer rates have increased to comply with USDA requirements to service the debt for the water system improvement loan. Mr. Garrett stated that he has been in conversation with the bank, and they are willing to start a conversation with the City of Woodbury to provide interim financing. He stated that USDA has told him that if United Bank can provide interim financing, then USDA will reinstate the loan grant. He stated that the City of Woodbury is out of compliance with the USDA agreement signed four years ago. He stated that the

loan must be paid with money from subscribers and not tax money. He explained that the water rates have not increased for two years. This has put the city out of compliance with USDA and put the city behind in servicing the accrued debt. He stated that this puts the city in jeopardy of losing the USDA loan, which is why he felt it necessary to raise the water rates to stay in compliance with the agreement of the USDA loan. He noted that he understands the council has an issue with him raising the rates and asked to hear from them for discussion. Councilmember Amanda Hardnett addressed Mayor Ronnie and stated, from the last meeting minutes, that the council voted not to raise the water rates due to the city being two months behind on their water bills. She explained that the council also stated to give the citizens time to catch up on the bills they already have before increasing the rates. She stated that even if the rates needed to be raised, the citizens should have been made aware before Mr. Garrett's final decision to do so. Councilmember Carolyn Ellison stated to Mr. Garrett that he suggested at the last city council meeting to wait until the end of the year to raise the water rates. Mayor Garrett admitted that he made a mistake and should not have said what he said. Councilmember Amanda proceeded to inform the mayor that he and the council have to work together. She also stated there should be no surprises when it comes to decision-making, and that the council should be informed immediately of any decisions being made so they can inform the citizens. Mayor Garrett agreed that he would communicate with the council moving forward. Mayor Garrett asked Public Works Director, Buck Holmes to update citizens on the one speed bump being installed on Dogwood Lane & the four speed bumps being installed on Folk Avenue. Mr. Buck told the council and the citizens that he and the City Clerk, Deondra, had done research and got prices for the speed bumps. He explained that the speed bumps are about \$75 a piece, which puts the total at \$300 for four speed bumps. He said the speed bumps are also going to need two signs put on each side to let people know "speed bump ahead". Those signs will be \$26.40 a piece for eight, which will be \$212. He also said they would need eight poles to put the signs on. Those poles are \$34.40 a piece which totals \$276. The total amount for the four speed bumps, poles, and signs is approximately \$787. Mayor Garrett updated citizens that the city has sold one of the surplus police cars that the previous mayor was driving for \$3000.00. He also stated the city has three more surplus cars that someone has inquired about buying for \$4000 a piece according to Interim Chief Richard Wolverton. Mayor Garrett also informed the council that the budget they received in their packet was not sufficient and he has to "re-work the budget". Mayor Garrett also informed citizens that their tax bills had been mailed out. Moreover, some of them had been sent back. He also stated that some people's water bills had been sent back as well. Some people have not received their bills at all. He said that he spoke with the postmaster, and they informed him that the problem was in Atlanta, and it would be a few weeks before they could get it all straightened out. Mayor Garrett also updated citizens on revising the charter. He says that they cannot do it in time for the Legislature to approve it this year. Moreover, he understands the current charter is outdated and asked the City Attorney, with the approval of the council, if he could assist the City of Woodbury in developing a new charter. Mr. Mayfield said that he has done several municipal charters, and the process will be fairly simple. He will be able to cut through a lot of the jargon that is in the old charter and streamline four copies to the council for review and comment. Mayor Garrett says they will wait for a streamlined copy of the new charter from Mr. Scott Mayfield. Mayor Garrett stated that the City of Woodbury Public Works will begin installing sewer and water taps instead of using an outside contractor. Councilmember Jada Holmes asked for a timeline on changing the name of the street from "Rose Avenue" to "Mitchell Moreland Avenue." Mayor Garrett stated that he would give citizens thirty-day notice regarding the name change. Public

Works Director, Mr. Buck explained that they would like to unveil the new street name and sign on Mr. Mitchell's birthday, on March 18, 2024.

5. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

- Police Department – Interim Chief Wolverton – Wolverton reiterated what the mayor said in his update that the Woodbury Police Department had five cars go into surplus based on the vote from the council last month. One was sold and they have three more to sell. He said Warner Robins Police Department is going to donate one of their cars after it passes through their city council. He stated that Warner Robins is going to come and help WPD finish the audit in the evidence room, and it should be completed by mid-March. Wolverton also stated that the Georgia Bureau of Investigation would be coming to inspect the police department's computer network in April.
- Public Works – Director Buck Holmes – Mr. Buck Holmes requested from the mayor and council that they give the Public Works department a raise. He noted that his guys are saving the city a lot of money by fixing leaks in house and not contracting out. He also stated that they had not had a raise in two and a half years. Mayor Garrett stated he would send a suggested raise increase to the council for approval or disapproval.
- Water & Sewer – Director Cody Kelly – No report
- Planning & Zoning – Chair Dave Williamson – No report
- City Clerk- Deondra Stevenson – No report

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Historic Preservation Committee – Cathy Harbin asked if the City Attorney Scott Mayfield could sit in with their committee to interpret the legalities in the ordinance. She also stated that HPC desires to get together with all committees to know what the other is working on to be in congruence with each other. She asked if there is any update regarding the GDOT project that the former interim chief spoke about months ago. She was told GDOT had started the process.
- Business Forum – No report
- Events Committee – Chairwoman Deondra Stevenson reminded everyone about the upcoming Spring Fling event on March 23, 2024. There will be a volleyball tournament beginning at 9:30am. There will also be an egg hunt that begins at 12pm. She stated their committee is open to donations and sponsors.

7. **WOODBURY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY** – Ms. Meares gave an update regarding honoring Garry Kendrick Sr. and adding his accomplishments to the timeline in the City Hall Lobby. She said they are currently looking for pictures and information to add. They will also be adding the Pimento Festival to the timeline, and they are looking for other things to add as well. She reminded everyone that the WDA meets the second Monday of the month at 6PM and everyone is welcome to join.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Appoint a City Auditor- David Moses of Mauldin & Jenkins – Mayor Garrett asked for a motion that the City of Woodbury contract Mr. David Moses with the minimum fees with the understanding that they may need to go higher. Councilwoman Jada Holmes stated that she does not think council should vote on the motion as a whole due to not having all the information before tonight’s meeting. She stated that she wished council had received all the information they asked for during the last meeting. She said she thinks it is hard for council to make a decision without all the information requested. Mayor Garrett asked for a motion to table appointing a city auditor until after Mr. Moses looks at the City’s 2021 financial records. Councilwoman Jada Holmes made the 1st motion to table the proposal pending Mr. Moses coming in to look at the 2021 financial records. Councilwoman Amanda Hardnett made the second motion. Motion approved.

- Internet Rate Increase – Mayor Garrett said to “scratch that off,” “we are through with that.” The internet rates will not increase.

- Intergovernmental Agreement with the County for Building Inspections – Mayor Garrett told the council that they all should have gotten, in their package, the explanation for the county’s inspection fees. He stated that the county handles everything that has to do with inspections and it seems to him that the city should let the county collect the fees. Councilwoman Cindy Ellison asked if code enforcing is a part of the intergovernmental contract with the county. Mayor Garrett said he thinks that code enforcing is in the contract. Moreover, he will have to check and see. He told the council that the code enforcing is not included, he will let them know. He reiterated, aside from the code enforcing, the city still needs to allow the county to do building inspections and permits. Mr. Garrett proceeded to ask if everyone on the council is okay with not collecting permit fees. Councilwoman Amanda Hardnett asked how will the city’s clerk, Deondra Stevenson, be aware of anything being done in the City of Woodbury. She also asked how the county would correspond with Deondra to let her know who has and does not have building permits. Mayor Ronnie responded that the county would send a copy of every inspection and permit. Councilwoman Amanda stated that the county is not sending copies of inspections and permits and are not holding up their side of the agreement. Mr. Garrett proceeded to say that he would talk to the county. Ms. Deondra intercepted and made it aware that the county did give her access to Cloud Permit where she can go in and see the new permits and inspections, moreover, that is the only way she would know who has and does not have permits. Mr. Ronnie stated that he would reach out to the county and have them send a copy of every building permit that has been issued in the City of Woodbury and also a copy of all the inspections. Also, the city will maintain a file, that way they will know what is going on in the City of Woodbury as far as building goes. Mayor Garrett made a motion to approve the agreement of the county’s fee schedule. Councilwoman Jada Holmes stated that the council had already voted on it and there is not a need for another motion. She stated the council desired more information on the fees and the process.

9. NEW BUSINESS

- Appoint a Mayor Pro Tem – Mayor Garrett asked for a motion to approve Councilwoman Amanda Hardnett as Mayor Pro Tem. Councilman Bobby Jones made the 1st motion to approve Councilwoman Amanda Hardnett as Mayor Pro Tem. Councilwoman Cindy Ellison made the second motion. Motion approved.

- Ordinance to Adopt Restated Employee Benefit Plan – Mayor Garrett stated that this is something that the city doesn't really have a choice, they just have to adopt it. He asked City Attorney Scott Mayfield to summarize the Employee Benefit Plan. Mr. Mayfield explained that GMA, through some company, handles all the benefits. He stated that as IRS changes the rules, GMA changes their rules on how they manage the plans. He said that they already have the same document signed, somewhere in a file. Moreover, this is a restated version of it, changing certain IRS regulations. He reiterated what the mayor said regarding the city having to have it if they desire GMA to continue to do their benefits. Mayor Garrett asked for a motion to reinstate the employee benefit plan. Councilwoman Amanda Hardnett made the motion to reinstate the employee benefit plan. Councilwoman Cindy Ellison made the second motion. Motion approved.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS – Cathy Harbin asked for any updates on the tennis court and the park because it is still sort of raggedy. City Clerk Deondra Stevenson confirmed the city received a check from the insurance company and that she and Public Works Director Buck Holmes are working with companies to pull quotes to see the better options to save money and get the job done. Mr. Ronnie asked for clarification on when the check was received. Ms. Stevenson stated that the insurance company sent a check last year. Ms. Harbin also asked if a resident could request a rezoning of property that is not yours. City Attorney Scott Mayfield told Ms. Harbin that the courts have said no to rezoning property that is not yours. A person would have to go through the process. He stated that the city has the power to file a rezoning permit for any parcel against the homeowners' will. She also followed up with a question from her committee report and asked how the council and mayor would handle the city attorney sitting in on their meetings with them. Mayor Garrett told her that the city attorney would help them and that he is on an hourly retainer.

Navarus Mahone – Help Us Reach Them – Mr. Mahone stated that he was here for facility use of the community building for an hour or so, Tuesday through Thursday, for senior citizens to enjoy different activities. Mayor Garrett asked Mr. Mayfield would it be a gratuity under the Georgia Constitution if the city allowed Mr. Mahone's request free of charge. Mr. Mayfield replied no because there is an exception with the gratuity if the private entity is providing the service that the city can provide itself, instead of the city providing it, the private entity would provide it. Mr. Mayfield stated that the city can fund a senior citizen itself. Moreover, instead of the city doing it, someone else is doing it. That is not a gratuity and does not constitute a charge. Mr. Mayfield did advise the council that they may want a real short agreement between the city and the non-profit company explaining hours, terms, and rules. Mayor Garrett asked the council if any of them had an issue with Mr. Navarus using the community building for his program. Councilwoman Jada Holmes stated that she agrees with Mr. Scott that it would be nice to have some sort of agreement with hours of operation, the team members, etc. She stated that she feels it is a great idea and it is something that she would like to see. Mr. Scott agreed to send Mr. Navarus via email an MOU to get started. Mayor Garrett asked for a motion to approve Mr. Navarus to use the community building for an hour or more, Tuesday-Thursday, contingent upon him completing a MOU from the city attorney. Councilman Bobby Jones made the first motion to approve Mr. Navarus using the community building for his organization's senior citizen program. Councilwoman Cindy Ellison made the second motion. Councilwoman Amanda Hardnett asked Mr. Navarus for clarification that he knows that he won't use the building if someone is having an event during the days he is supposed

to be there. He stated that he would not interfere with city business or activities at the community building. Councilwoman Jada Holmes clarified that activities would begin after the agreement is in place. Motion approved.

Billie Hardnett – Ms. Hardnett had a complaint about the parking at the community building. She stated that while she was at an event, she had interactions with the resident who lives across the street from the community building. She stated that the resident said that they were blocking her driveway. The resident stated that she has an elderly man living there and the driveway needs to be cleared. The resident proceeded to call the police and take pictures of Ms. Hardnett’s license plate. She stated that the “no parking” signs are not in the right position at the community building because they leave people nowhere to park. She stated that the signs should be moved to fit only the resident’s driveway and not from one end of the sidewalk to the next. Mayor Garrett agreed that the signs should be moved to fit the resident's driveway. He asked Mr. Buck to move it.

11. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS – Councilwoman Amanda Hardnett commented that moving forward, she desires them all to be on the same page so that they don’t run into what they ran into at their work session. She stated she feels like we all should be on the same accord moving forward so they can better assist the citizens as well as themselves to make Woodbury better and move forward positively. Councilwoman Cindy Ellison stated that the council needs better communication. She desires them all to be on the same page and get information ahead of time and not on the same day, so they have time to look over it. Councilwoman Jada Holmes suggested a town hall for the citizens to express their concerns about different things in the city. She feels like it would be great for the city to have a dedicated space to express their concerns, that would be good. Mayor Ronnie stated that would be good. He asked the council to give him a time and day for the town hall meeting.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – Mayor Garrett asked for a motion to go into executive session. Councilwoman Jada Holmes made the first motion to go into executive session at 7:45PM. Councilmember Bobby Jones made a second. All approved

- **Personnel**
- **Legal**
- Councilwoman Jada Holmes motioned to exit executive session at 8:54PM. Councilwoman Amanda Hardnett made the second motion. Motion approved.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Bobby Jones made the motion to adjourn the regular scheduled meeting. Councilwoman Hardnett made the second motion. Motion approved. Meeting adjourned.