

MINUTES

City Council Meeting Monday, November 18, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order: Mayor Campbell called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m.

Opening: Councilmember Hall gave the invocation with Mayor Campbell leading the City Council in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Roll Call

City Council Members: Mayor Bruce Campbell, Mayor Pro-Tem Marcia Daniel, Councilmember Gwyn Hall, Councilmember Richard Lassiter, Councilmember Natalyn Morris, Councilmember Debbie Ruiz, and Councilmember Kim Tice.

Staff Members: Rhonda Ferrell-Bowles, City Manager; James P. Gerard, City Attorney; Gil Ballard, Chief of Police; Ben Brengman, IT/Special Projects Director; Katie Draeger, Finance Director; Mike Dick, Fire Chief; Carlos Nevarez, Fire Marshal; Jonathan Trego, Planning and Zoning Supervisor; Cliff Ducey, Parks and Recreation Director; Veronica Enoch, Executive Assistant; Tonya Roper, Clerk of Council and Andrew Guzman, IT Technician.

Informal Public Comment: Ed Beatty, owner and general contractor, 1409 Dean Forest Road stated believes he is harassed by Code Enforcement as he was in the process of buying the vehicle, the vehicle, a box truck was stickered, towed with him having to pay \$500 for a release along with \$500 of towing fees. Mr. Beatty stated that the vehicle was parked for two days, and the letters are constant regarding overgrown grass that's a foot high. Mr. Beatty stated he believes the neighbor next door is complaining; he has had a death in the family and has been taking his mother back and forth to the doctor. Mr. Beatty said he does not understand what is going on with Code Enforcement.

Councilmember Hall asked if Mr. Beatty call City Hall regarding notifications?

Mr. Beatty stated he called City Hall and to let the department know.

Donna Williams, the secretary of CVB, stated she is speaking regarding the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). Ms. Williams read an email from the interim Chairperson regarding the resolution for Consideration and the challenges faced by CVB. Ms. Williams stated we do not want the CVB dissolved, we want to fulfill goals and manage funds. Ms. Williams said she is asking to postpone the item for Consideration.

Jim Gerard, City Attorney stated that the resolution is not to dissolve the CVB. It simply authorizes the City Manager to enter into an agreement with the Authority memorializing the winding down and dissolution of the City's relationship with the Authority with respect to the handling of the City's hotel/motel occupancy tax. Such an agreement(a draft being attached to the resolution) would oblige the Authority to transfer the balance of hotel/motel tax occupancy monies which the Authority is

presently holding for the benefit of Garden City to the Savannah Chamber of Commerce to be used by the Savannah Chamber of Commerce to promote tourism, conventions, and trades shows in the City pursuant to a contract which the City and the Savannah Chamber of Commerce entered into in August of this year. He noted that the last meeting of the Authority was in March 2023, and that there had been no tourism-related activities conducted by the Authority that had been reported to the City since that date.

Councilmember Morris said will we still participate with the organization?

Mr. Gerard said the Authority can continue promoting tourism in Garden City through fund-raising events, available grants, and public donations, but not through the receipt of the City's hotel tax money which is being given to the Savannah Chamber of Commerce commencing January 1, 2025, pursuant to the August 2024 contract.

Councilmember Hall said the committee needs to show action before appointing new members.

Mr. Gerard said we need clarification regarding the membership.

Rochelle Ferguson stated that she was a member of the CVB, there were guidelines setup on how to resign but none of that was done. Ms. Ferguson stated the President, and the Treasurer resigned but not via the protocols. Ms. Ferguson said she is a vested member of the community of over 30 years and would like to remain unless the authority is dissolved.

Anne Westbrook with Edna Jackson; Georgia House of Representatives stated that as an entity of State Government she agrees with the City Attorney. Representative Westbrook said the issue is there are not enough members to do business, and a bill could be done to do away with the entity.

Councilmember Lassiter said we have to appoint the necessary bodies.

Representative Westbrook said the Mayor and Council can reappoint.

Representative Jackson stated that what you have is a Board that is not functioning, the Board will need to find members to reorganize, the meetings can be virtual or in person, and the funds can be placed into an escrow account until a decision is made. She said you must have people to serve and not just take titles as these are your funds. We, as Representatives, want you to be able to come to a conclusion, we want as many people happy as possible, and we don't want to see you fail.

Mr. Gerard stated that helped draft the legislation creating the Authority with Representative Ron Stephens, and that the City has been good about appointing replacements for vacancies on the Authority. The hotel tax money can only be used to promote tourism, conventions, and trade shows in the City. He stated that based on the Authority's continued inactivity, Representative Stephens had encouraged the City to look at alternatives to giving the hotel tax money to the Authority such as transferring the funds to the Savannah Chamber of Commerce.

Representative Jackson stated that we were not privy to what you were planning, if people can't serve then a spot should not be held. She said to give it one more chance – the funds need to be utilized, and we thank you for the opportunity to speak on the matter.

Given no other speakers, Mayor Campbell closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

Public Hearings:

Alcoholic Beverage License Manager's Application: Receipt of public comment on a manager's alcoholic beverage license application made by Jontae Sandria to sell wines, beer, and/or malt beverages at Food Lion LLC. (D/B/A Food Lion #811) 109 Minus Avenue, Garden City, Georgia.

Given no speakers for those in favor or opposition; Mayor Campbell closed the Public Hearing.

Alcoholic Beverage License Application: Receipt of public comment on an alcoholic beverage license application made by Walgreen Co. to sell wines, beer, and/or malt beverages at Walgreen Co. (D/B/A Walgreens #11538) 4210 Augusta Road, Garden City, Georgia.

Given no speakers for those in favor or opposition; Mayor Campbell closed the Public Hearing.

Alcoholic Beverage License Application: Receipt of public comment on an alcoholic beverage license application made by Payal V. Shah to sell wines, beer, and/or malt beverages at Sai Shiv 1912 LLC (D/B/A Mini Mart) 403 US Hwy 80 W Suite M, Garden City, Georgia.

Given no speakers for those in favor or opposition; Mayor Campbell closed the Public Hearing.

Alcoholic Beverage License Application: Receipt of public comment on an alcoholic beverage license application made by Angel U. Lares to sell wines, beer, and/or malt beverages at EL Fogon Katracho LLC, 1550 Dean Forest Road, Suite C, Garden City, Georgia.

Given no speakers for those in favor or opposition; Mayor Campbell closed the Public Hearing.

City Council Minutes: Councilmember Tice motioned to approve the minutes from the November 4th Pre-Agenda Session and City Council meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hall. The motion passed with all voting in favor of the motion.

Items for Consideration

Second Reading - Ordinance – De-Annexation (Ogeechee Road Property): The Clerk of Council read the heading of an ordinance to de-annex five (5) lots or certain parcels of land owned by Kevin Beckwith, Belinda Lee LLC, John Kimker III, Eric Kimker, Joseph Kimker, and Ogeechee Intermodal, LLC from the existing corporate limits of Garden City, Georgia.

Councilmember Daniel asked if the lots attach to the recreation center.

Mr. Gerard replied that the properties are on one side of the road across from the recreation center.

Councilmember Lassiter made a motion to approve the ordinance on the second reading. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Morris. The motion passes with Councilmember Hall, Councilmember Lassiter, Councilmember Morris, and Councilmember Tice voting in favor. Councilmember Daniel, Councilmember Ruiz and Mayor Campbell voted in opposition of the motion.

Resolution – Georgia Ports Authority Lease Agreement(Fire Department): The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution to approve the terms of an updated lease agreement with Georgia Ports Authority for the use and occupancy of a 0.39-acre parcel located at 160 Main Street in Garden City, Georgia for use as a fire station facility; authorizing the City Manager to execute the agreement on behalf of the City, and for other purposes.

Councilmember Tice made a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Ruiz and passed without opposition.

Resolution – Chatham County Automatic Aid Agreement (Fire Department): The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution approving an agreement with Chatham County, Georgia for the fire service automatic aid, and for other purposes.

Councilmember Ruiz made a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Daniel and passed without opposition.

Resolution – Hotel/Motel Authorization to Transfer Tax Funds: The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution for the City’s execution of an agreement with the Garden City Area Convention and Visitor Bureau Authority memorializing the winding down and termination of their contractual relationship with respect to the handling of Hotel/Motel occupancy tax monies.

Councilmember Lassiter made a motion to table the resolution to transfer funds to allow the Convention and Visitor Bureau Authority the opportunity to reorganize. Councilmember Morris second the motion. City Manager stated that the funds have been allocated to Visit Savannah. Councilmember Lassiter withdrew the motion to table the resolution, and Councilmember Morris withdrew her second.

Councilmember Lassiter made a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Morris and passed without opposition. Councilmember Lassiter asked that the Authority provide the City with a current membership list.

FY2025 Fee Schedule: The Clerk of Council read the heading for Consideration by the Mayor and Council to approve the updated schedule of fees for the fiscal year 2025.

Councilmember Morris made a motion to table the item for Consideration. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Ruiz and passed without opposition.

Resolution – FY2025 Budget Adoption: The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution to adopt the FY2025 operating and capital budgets; to provide appropriation of funds for operating and capital expenditures; and to appropriate funding for specific operating and capital funds of the Garden City Government.

Councilmember Lassiter made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilmember Tice seconded the motion, the motion passed without opposition.

Visit Savannah Marketing FY2025 Budget: The Clerk of Council read the heading for consideration by the Mayor and City Council to approve the FY2025 Budget submitted by Visit Savannah to provide services for the marketing and promotion of tourism for the City of Garden City.

Councilmember Hall made a motion to approve the item for consideration. Councilmember Daniel seconded the motion; the motion passes with Councilmember Daniel, Councilmember Hall, Councilmember Lassiter, Councilmember Ruiz, Councilmember Tice and Mayor Campbell voting in favor. Councilmember Morris voted in opposition.

Resolution – FY2025 Alcoholic Beverage License Renewals: The Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution to authorize the renewal of Garden City alcohol licenses for the 2025 calendar year; to provide for review and limited investigation of said license holders and for other purposes.

Councilmember Daniel made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilmember Ruiz seconded the motion, the motion passed without opposition.

Resolution - City Council Meeting Schedule Amendment (December 2, 2024 – December 16, 2024): The Clerk of Council read the heading for a resolution to amend the regular meeting schedule of the Garden City Council; to eliminate the December 2, 2024, and December 16, 2024, regular City Council meetings in observance of Christmas.

Councilmember Morris stated that if there must be a special-called meeting, it needs to be held on the regularly scheduled meeting date.

Councilmember Daniel made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilmember Hall seconded the motion, the motion passed without opposition.

Resolution – GIRMA First Responder PTSD Agreement: The Clerk of Council read the heading for a resolution to add membership in a fund of the Georgia Interlocal Risk Management Agency by executing the application and participation agreement for such fund.

Councilmember Lassiter made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilmember Morris seconded the motion, the motion passed without opposition.

Alcoholic Beverage License Manager's Application: The Clerk of Council read the heading for consideration by the Mayor and Council of an alcoholic beverage license application made by Jontae Sandria to sell wines, beer, and/or malt beverages at Food Lion, LLC (D/B/A Food Lion #811) 109 Minus Avenue, Garden City, Georgia.

Chief Ballard confirmed the application process as complete.

Councilmember Tice made a motion to approve the alcoholic beverage license manager's application. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Daniel and passed without opposition.

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Councilmember Ruiz made a motion to approve the alcoholic beverage license application. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Tice and passed without opposition.

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Councilmember Daniel made a motion to approve the alcoholic beverage license application. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Ruiz and passed without opposition.

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Councilmember Daniel made a motion to approve the alcoholic beverage license application. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Ruiz and passed without opposition.

Executive Session – Pending Litigation/Personnel Matters: Councilmember Tice made a motion to enter Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Daniel and passed without opposition.

Councilmember Lassiter motioned to enter back into regular session. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Morris and passed without opposition.

Mayor Campbell stated no findings came out of the executive session.

Adjournment: Mayor Campbell called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Lassiter motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Morris and passed without opposition.

Transcribed & submitted by: The Clerk of Council

Accepted & approved by: The City Council on 01-06-2025