

City Council Meeting Minutes

City of Sylvester
City Council Regular Meeting
City Hall Council Chambers
Monday, June 3, 2024
Call to Order 6:00 p.m.

Attendees: Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr.
Councilman Melvin Powell, Ward 1
Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr., Ward 2
Councilman Mark Giddens, Ward 3
Mayor Pro-Tem Earnest Carter, Jr., Ward 4
Interim City Manager Tanita Norris
City Attorney Lester Castellow
City Clerk Markesha Bivens

Call to Order: Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr.

Invocation/Pledge: Dr. Willie Mae Marlin

Approval of Agenda:

Upon motion from Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Powell, the agenda gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Approval of Minutes:

Upon motion by Councilman Giddens, and second by Councilman Jackson, the April 1, 2024 and April 15, 2024 –Regular Meeting Minutes were approved. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Speakers Appearance:

A. Mr. Eugene Fairchild, South Georgia Spill Response & Traffic Control (SGSR)

Mr. Fairchild expressed appreciation to the Mayor and Council for allowing his company to hold the 1st Responders Cook Off and Festival. He reported over 20 vendors, four (4) food trucks and various donations given from the community. The Rib and Chicken Cook Off was a big success, with participation from neighboring communities this year. He asks for permission to use the Jeffords Park for the event again next year, on May 3, 2025. Mayor Proctor confirmed positive feedback from the community and is pleased to witness the participation numbers double this year and continue for years to come.

Upon motion from Councilman Powell and simultaneous second from Councilmen Giddens and Jackson, SGSR's request to hold this annual event in 2025 was approved. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

B. Dr. Artavious Smith, Property Owner

Dr. Artavious Smith approached Mayor and Council, regarding Package Store Ordinance 2022-03, amendments, and property near Pope Park and recreation facilities. He also discussed the change of law for on premise consumption near a church, using The Palace Restaurant & Bar and Sylvester Holiness Church as an example.

Attorney Castellow explained dates listed on the ordinances of February 21, 2022 and April 18, 2022, approved by council, with standard repealer language. There was also explanation of how the city may pass ordinances stricter than state law and how on-premise regulations differ from package stores, in proximity of certain facilities.

New Business:

A. The Opal Project at Mary Alice Shipp Center

Mr. Richie Childers, Assistant City Manager, offered details from The Opal Project, a non-profit organization that provides support to special needs individuals. This organization currently leases the Mary Alice Shipp Center and the director reports they have outgrown the facility. They expressed appreciation for usage of this building and continued support from Sylvester, however, they are relocating to Albany. The Mayor and City Council wishes them much success.

B. Shepard Memorial Gardens Water Extension

Mr. Childers provided information related to Councilman Powell's concern, mentioned in a previous meeting, to extend the water system at Shepard Memorial Gardens. A quote for materials from Consolidated Pipe for and Supply and a map of the cemetery was provided. Special equipment is required for this project, due to the large size of the city's plow and rental cost is approximately \$2,500.

C. Service Agreement: Municipal Court Judge

Ms. Norris, informed the Mayor and Council of details of the service agreement for newly appointed Municipal Court Judge, as of May 20, 2024. Staff recommends approval of Mayor Proctor to execute the contract for Mrs. Erika S. Johnson. The contract is controlled by the ordinance and allows for an annual appointment with the new year, or acceptance of a resignation, every January 1st with a salary of \$1,450.

Upon motion from Councilman Powell, seconded by Councilman Jackson, the approval of contract execution for Municipal Court Judge by Mayor Proctor gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

D. Engineering/Traffic Report: State Route 112 at First Baptist Church

Ms. Norris summarized to the Mayor and Council, of the investigation requested by First Baptist Church. In the past, safety concerns were received at City Hall of elderly members and the difficulty of leaving church from parking spaces in reverse, in to oncoming traffic, as well as pedestrian safety.

AE Engineering, now WSB, recommended a flashing beacon be installed at the crosswalk. This will alert oncoming traffic of pedestrians attempting to cross, without undergoing any new construction. Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) approval is required for this project, should a vote be taken; with project cost to be provided in the future, with grant funding also available.

After further discussion, it was determined this may not be the best and/or most helpful option. Referring First Baptist Church to SGSR Traffic Control, looking into a church member becoming traffic certified, like a crossing guard, changing the direction of parking, possibility to parallel or assisting the elderly drivers who have trouble departing were all mentioned. There was no action was taken.

E. Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Project Award:

Mrs. Norris advised the Mayor and Council of the project for the Local Road Safety Plan for the SS4A grant program. A vote is required for the grant, and a plan of action is necessary to proceed. A six (6) panel committee reviewed the bids returned from the Request for Quotes and AE Engineering, now WSB, scored the highest. The safety plan, grant administration and related services were illustrated in the packet provided by AE Engineering, now WSB with a total expenditure of \$137,628.00.

This agenda item was tabled, with further review of cost and city responsibility for this project. A vote occurred after Executive Session.

Public Hearing:

2024-2025 Fiscal Year Budget

Public Hearing called to order at 6:31 p.m.

Upon motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Powell the Public Hearing was called to order. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

The meeting requirements were confirmed, prior to this Public Hearing, and by law, advertised in the newspaper, with the budget placed online via the City of Sylvester website and made available at City Hall for review. The Mayor and Council had all necessary paperwork to review for the upcoming fiscal year. There was no public comment.

Councilman Powell requested time to meet with the Interim City Manager, regarding the budget, prior to June 17 Council Meeting, to express concerns. A resolution to adopt the budget must take place before the start of the fiscal year on July 1, 2024.

With a motion from Councilman Carter, with second from Councilman Giddens, the hearing was adjourned. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Public Hearing adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

There was no action taken upon return to regular session.

Report/Remarks:

Interim City Manager Tanita Norris – Ms. Norris informed that today marks day one (1) of the various Summer Programs: Summer Camp is at full capacity, 100 lunches were prepared for the Summer Lunch Program at Henry Hall Woolard Center and Summer Workers totaling 80 students this year. City Manager finalist interviews will begin Tuesday, June 4 at 9 a.m. and June 21-25, is the Savannah Georgia Cities Conference.

City Attorney Lester Castellow – Attorney Castellow had no report.

Councilman J. Mark Giddens, Ward 3 – Councilman Giddens informed of trees grown over the sidewalk, near Tractor Supply at GA-112/Ashburn Highway, where the lane merges into two (2) lanes. Mr. Gregory Jackson, Public Works Director, will review and maintain as needed.

Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr., Ward 2 – Councilman Jackson provided pictures to Mayor and Council of the trash issue at Jeffords Park. Posting rules to set expectations, closing the fences sooner, a stronger police presence, cameras, creating a committee to oversee and provide recommendations, and part-time park attendant were all discussed.

Councilman Melvin Powell, Ward 1 – Councilman Powell had no report.

Councilman Earnest Carter, Jr., Ward 4 – Councilman Carter had no report.

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. – Mayor Proctor had no report.

Executive Session:

Councilman Jackson moved to convene an Executive Session to discuss personnel, seconded, in unison by Councilmen Carter and Giddens. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Executive Session: 6:40 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened: 7:01 p.m.

Councilman Giddens motioned to reconvene and accept the minutes, as read in Executive Session, seconded by Councilman Jackson. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Upon return from Executive Session, Mayor Proctor informed of an increase of the salary of the Interim City Manager at \$1,000 per month to begin and extend one (1) month after the incoming City Manager begins, for training.

Councilman Powell motioned, seconded by Councilman Carter to approve the Interim City Manager's pay increase. Voting yes: Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens and Powell. Voting no: Councilman Jackson. Abstained: none. The vote was 4-1-0. The motion passed.

Additional Announcements:

Ms. Norris provided further details regarding the city’s responsibility for the SS4A project. The amount in question was \$27,526, illustrated in a previous meeting, is the city’s share of 20%, with the ability to seek additional funding. Staff recommends awarding the SS4A Project to AE Engineering, now WSB.

Upon motion by Councilman Powell, with second by Councilman Jackson, the SS4A Project was awarded to AE Engineering, now WSB. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Adjournment:

Councilman Powell motioned to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Giddens. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Mayor Proctor duly adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL
SYLVESTER, GEORGIA

HAROLD PROCTOR, JR., MAYOR

ATTEST:

MARKESHA BIVENS, CITY CLERK