

City Council Meeting Minutes

City of Sylvester  
City Council Regular Meeting  
City Hall Council Chambers  
Monday, June 17, 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 (via phone)  
Mayor Pro-Tem Earnest Carter, Jr., Ward 4  
Interim City Manager Tanita Norris  
City Clerk Markesha Bivens

**Absent:** City Attorney Lester Castellow

**Call to Order:** Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr.

**Invocation/Pledge:** Dr. Willie Mae Marlin

**Approval of Agenda:**

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

**Approval of the Minutes:**

Upon motion from Councilman Jackson, with second from Councilman Carter, the May 6, 2024 and May 20, 2024 Regular Meeting were approved. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**Speakers Appearance: None**

**Public Hearing**

**Applicant:** Southern Sky Center for Diverse Arts and Culture, Inc.  
**Zoning Request:** R-1 to Agriculture to Conditional Use (F)

The Public Hearing was called to order at 6:04 p.m., upon motion by Councilman Carter, with second by Councilman Powell. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Ms. Kelly Grantham, Community Development Specialist, provided details of the request by the applicant Southern Sky Center for Diverse Arts and Culture Inc. The site is 5.35 Acres of land in Ward 4, 512 East Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, at the Community Gardens, with proposed use for promotion of agriculture education, outreach mentoring and training for youth and adults who should desire to pursue agricultural opportunities, as well as health and wellness education.

**6:06 p.m. Attorney Castellow arrives.**

Pictures and documentation was provided to the panel, prior to the Public Hearing. All advertisement and public notice requirements satisfied. The applicant was present for any questions and there was no public comment.

Per the letter of intent, future uses will include a barn to shelter existing and future equipment, such as tractors and tillers, with additional shelters to provide storage and educational space to conduct various programs, with no animal housing requests. It is the intent to utilize an existing ground mounted solar panel, with four solar cells, for educational purposes (placed prior to submission of zoning application) and per the applicant, this will be the only one installed.

Upon reviewing the application and opinion from the City Attorney, the Planning Commission forwards a recommendation of approval.

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

**Public Hearing adjourned at 6:23 p.m.**

There was no action taken upon returning to Regular Session. However, this agenda item was revisited, with a vote taken, after Executive Session.

**New Business**

**A. Request to Close Street: Albany Alumnae Chapter - Delta Sigma Theta Sorority**

Mrs. Chiquita Greene, President of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's Albany GA Alumnae Chapter provided the Mayor and Council with details of the Juneteenth Voter Q Event to be held June 19, 2024 at Jeffords Park. This will take place from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. to educate, inform and bring awareness to and register all citizens to vote. RSVP's for transportation to polling locations on Election Day, musical selections from Original Freedom Singer, Mrs. Rutha Harris and DJ NYSE will take place with free food, and a meet and greet with current and newly elected officials. The public is invited to attend.

Upon motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Powell, the Request to Close Street Application for the Juneteenth Voter Q Event gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**B. Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Board Reappointment**

Mrs. Karen Singletary approached the Mayor and Council and asked for the reappointment of Mrs. Carole Overton for the DDA Board. Mrs. Overton is a current downtown business owner and has served actively for many years. For this board, confirmation from the Mayor and Council is required with each appointment.

Upon motion by Councilman Powell, with second by Councilman Carter, the reappointment of Mrs. Carole Overton for the Downtown Development Authority gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**C. Sun Safety Agreement: Emory University Rollins School of Public Health**

Ms. Norris advised the Mayor and Council of the Sun Safety Agreement that will evaluate city employees and aid with working in the sun, staying protected and being aware of the heat stroke signs. An evaluation will take place and upon completion, funding of \$1000 would be provided for safety equipment, drinks, and related protective gear to assist the departments that spend long periods of time in the sun. Surrounding cities have participated in this program, such as Albany and Bainbridge, and staff recommends execution of this agreement.

With motion by Councilman Jackson, and second by Councilman Powell, execution of the Sun Safety Agreement gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**D. Resolution No. 2024-08: Fiscal Year Budget 2024-2025**

Ms. Norris and Mayor Proctor informed that a Work Session is requested to review the budget in depth. Prior to approval of this resolution, Department Heads and City Council will meet to discuss particular line items and give details of the amounts given for each department.

This agenda item is tabled, and a Special Called Meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 26, 2024 at 3 p.m.

**E. Competitive Trust**

Mrs. Norris requested a transfer funds from the Competitive Trust to the Operating Accounts totaling \$1,000,000 dollars, to aid in the balancing of the city's budget and cover outstanding accounts payables from approximately 30-45 days.

Councilman Jackson moved, with a second by Councilman Powell, to transfer the requested funds of 1 million dollars from the Competitive Trust. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**Reports/Remarks:**

Councilman J. Mark Giddens, Ward 3 – Councilman Giddens had no report.

Councilman Earnest Carter, Jr., Ward 4 – Councilman Carter inquired on the gateway to Sylvester signs and if there is a plan to water the plants on a schedule, so they live. The gardener is concerned about the care after installation. Moving forward, Public Works will pay special attention to these areas.

Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr., Ward 2 – Councilman Jackson had no report.

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

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. – Mayor Proctor informed of a \$1.5 million dollar grant awarded for infrastructure of the Quail Pines Subdivision. Developers partnered with the city, interviewed and showed plans for this project for needed water, sewer, drainage and roads. These advancements are for nearly 50 new homes, ranging around \$199,000, for a boost in the Sylvester housing market. Mayor Proctor also announced the search for a City Manager is complete and introduced Mr. Chris Davis, future City Manager. Mr. Davis spoke of his anticipation to work in Sylvester, informed of his experience in Community Development in Tift County and of his involvement in local government for over 25 years. He expressed how he is looking forward to collaborating with this great community.

Attorney Lester Castellow: Attorney Castellow clarified the 14 day window requirement for the public announcement of selected City Manager. Information was made public on May 28, 2024 of the finalists, and once contract details are finished and the contract signed, a vote and start date is the next step.

Interim City Manager Tanita Norris: Ms. Norris had no report.

**Executive Session:**

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

**Executive Session: 6:46 p.m.**

**Regular Session Reconvened: 7:20 p.m.**

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

Upon return from Executive Session, Mayor Proctor informed due to the work load of Human Resources (HR) Director and Interim City Manager, a proposal was made to increase Ms. Norris' wages by \$2,308.69 weekly. This would be effective from the appointment date through until one (1) month after the official start date of the future City Manager.

With motion from Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Powell, the proposed increase in pay of HR Director and Interim City Manager wages gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**Announcements:**

After further discussion, the Mayor and Council made the decision to vote on the Southern Sky Center for Diverse Arts and Culture, Inc. Zoning Request from R-1 to Agriculture Conditional Use (F), discussed in the Public Hearing.

Upon motion from Councilman Carter, and second by Councilman Powell, the rezoning request for 512 East Martin Luther King Drive for Agriculture Conditional Use (F) gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**Adjournment:**

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

Mayor Proctor duly adjourned the meeting at 7:24 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL  
SYLVESTER, GEORGIA

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HAROLD PROCTOR, JR., MAYOR

ATTEST:

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MARKESHA BIVENS, CITY CLERK