

City Council Meeting Minutes

City of Sylvester
City Council Regular Meeting
City Hall Council Chambers
Monday, August 19, 2024
Call to Order 6:00 p.m.

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

Call to Order: Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr.

Invocation/Pledge: Dr. Willie Mae Marlin

Agenda Amendment/Approval

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

Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilmen Giddens and Powell, combined, minutes from the July 15, 2024, and August 5, 2024 – Regular Meetings were approved. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Speakers Appearance: None

Public Hearing

Applicant: Ms. Martha A. Boutwell
Zoning Request: R-1 Conditional Use (H) Home Occupation

The Public Hearing was called to order, unanimously, at 6:03 p.m. With Mrs. Glenice Stephens, Community Development Director, providing details of the request by the applicant Ms. Martha A. Boutwell. The site is .32 acres in Ward 2 at 507 N. Isabella Street, with proposed use of home occupation for a home studio to provide piano, voice, guitar and ukulele lessons for ages 6-75. The use will not adversely affect the esthetics of the neighborhood, nor create an increase in traffic. There will be no more than 2 additional cars during instruction, 1 leaving and 1 arriving.

Pictures and documentation, including Section 5.03 of the zoning ordinance, subsection H, were provided to the panel prior to the Public Hearing. All advertisement and public notice requirements were satisfied. The applicant was present for any questions.

Ms. Boutwell informed of her various degrees, her love for music and the many years of experience she holds. She expressed of her honor and passion and the impact it will have on the historic district of the city.

There was no public comment.

Mayor Proctor inquired on the time frame of lessons, where it was clarified that school age children will attend after school, with accompaniment of parent/guardian, and parents have the ability to take lessons during school hours.

The Planning Commission recommends approval and with two phone calls received, there were no issues on this request. Staff recommends a vote for this agenda item.

Upon a 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 6:09 p.m.

Upon a motion from Councilman Giddens, with a second by Councilmen Carter and Jackson, simultaneously, the zoning application of Ms. Martha A. Boutwell at 507 N. Isabella Street, for use of a home studio for various music lessons, gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Unfinished Business

Ordinance 2024-04: Hours of Operation

City Manager Chris Davis informed of Ordinance 2024-04 and discussions in past council meetings. Staff recommends approval for Mayor Proctor to sign this ordinance, with City Council approval, for enforcement. After further review, the hours of operation for businesses with on-premises consumption of alcoholic beverages to close at 2 a.m., to take effect immediately.

Upon a motion from Councilman Carter, with a second by Councilman Giddens, the request for Mayor Proctor to execute Ordinance 2024-04 gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Powell. Voting no was Councilman Jackson. The vote passed 4-1.

New Business

A. Event Application: Worth County Community Pep Rally

Mrs. Karen Singletary, Main Street Director, offered details for the Worth County Community Pep Rally requested to be held at the Pedestrian Mall at the Depot. This event, a kick off the high school football season, is open to the public and will be held August 29, 2024, one day before the 1st home game. The time is 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. with 300 participants, showcasing the band, cheerleaders and other fall season groups.

Upon a motion by Councilman Giddens, with a second by Councilman Carter, the event application request for the Worth County Community Pep Rally gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

B. Beer, Wine, and Alcohol License Application: El Supremo Grill

Mrs. Tenneisha Cushion, Deputy Clerk, offered details of the beer, wine and alcoholic beverage application submitted by the owner of El Supremo Grill, 107 North Isabella Street. Staff is seeking approval of this application, with all documentation completed and submitted as required.

Upon a motion by Councilman Jackson, with a second by Councilman Carter, El Supremo Grill's application gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

C. LMIG Project Discussion

Mr. Davis advised on the annual Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG) Project and the need for a list of roads to be paved in each ward. The Council should submit a list of five (5) for their district, at their earliest convenience. With further discussion and an inquiry if alleys are also included, Mr. Davis will research and provide details at a later date.

D. Worth County Alumni Donation

Mr. Davis advised the Mayor and Council of the email from Mr. Jarvis Jefferson, Worth County Alumni President. The email requests a donation of \$5,000 toward the annual alumni weekend event to take place September 26 -29th. Additionally, a discussion of in-kind services by Sylvester Police and Public Works, litter and debris pick up downtown and at the Pedestrian Mall and at JW Holley Grounds, shutting down at the proper time with crowd control and donation totals were all mentioned.

The amount of \$4,000 was verified for the donation last year. This event's economic impact, other festival donations and protection of the city being a priority were emphasized. A review of the numbers will take place, to determine the amount available for a donation, and in the future, budgeting this event will help to ensure a contribution is available.

Ms. Natasha Price approached council, regarding litter pick-up during this event last year. She mentioned the trash left over was not from the alumni event. There were two other events held downtown, on the same night. She ensured the Pedestrian Mall and neighboring areas were in good, clean condition upon their departure and Mayor Proctor thanked her for her representation.

No action was taken on this item, which will be revisited at a future meeting.

E. Utilities Reconnect Fee

Mr. Davis advised on the review for reconnect fees with staff in a future council meeting; with anticipation current fee of \$60.00 being reduced. An upgrade to equipment with disconnects were also discussed, with plans to make changes on the day of customer cut-offs.

Conversations with the Mayor and Council, also allowed creating a grace period from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. on cut-off day. This will allow more time for payment in office. The upgrade would then allow review of the disconnect list on laptops or tablets in real time.

No action was taken on this item, which will be revisited at a future meeting.

F. Millage Rate

Mr. Davis informed the Mayor and Council that the time has come for a review of the millage rate. Collaboration with Worth County has begun and staff planned to present the options for the city. However, no real numbers from the Tax Commissioner have been provided. Once the tax digest is received, the panel's discussion can take place, with the possibility of a Called Meeting to set the millage rate.

No action was taken on this item, which will be revisited at a future meeting.

Reports/Remarks

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

Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr., Ward 2 – Councilman Jackson inquired about the plan to control trash at the Jeffords Park Basketball and Tennis Courts. A citizen also informed that the game warden warned of writing citations for fishing at the ponds. Police Chief Ronald Jackson advised the game warden has jurisdiction in the city, and a fishing license may be required of citizens, even if the pond is city owned. He plans to reach out to the game warden, but it may be best practice to place rules/regulations signs, highlighting the accessible hours at the ponds. Concerns about drowning and city liability were also mentioned. Attorney Castellow will review and report the findings in a future meeting. The repair at the curve toward the end of Carter Road was also mentioned.

Councilman J. Mark Giddens, Ward 3 – Councilman Giddens extended thanks to Mr. Greg Jackson and Public Works and Mr. Tyree McGee and the Utilities Department Staff for the upkeep of the trees on Highway 112 and clearing the ditches on North Main Street.

Councilman Earnest Carter Jr., Ward 4 – Councilman Carter provided the Mayor and Council with a packet including documents for his investigation request of Consent Agenda changes and manipulation of minutes in March 2023. Attorney Castellow’s email response to the investigation request was also provided. Councilman Carter requested Attorney Castellow read a portion of his response. City ordinances, relating to the Consent Agenda and updates, three other items were added to the Consent Agenda, and when the agenda was presented to the panel. City Clerk Bivens and Mayor Proctor provided his recollection of the update to the Consent Agenda. Questions on consulting invoices from the previous City Manager, details of conversations held with former city staff, auditor, invoice dates and payment specifics, as well as invoices obtained by open records request, returned payments and customer rebates were all referenced. Councilman Carter also expressed thanks for the maintenance/gravel placement on Rosebud Lane and the long-awaited park benches arriving at Shipp Park.

City Attorney Lester Castellow – Attorney Castellow had no report.

City Manager Chris Davis – Mr. Davis informed the panel of an Executive Session necessary for litigation and personnel.

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. – Mayor Proctor requested the panel inform of what the expectations at the park on the signs and they be posted accordingly. Locking the courts was also mentioned. Mayor Proctor complimented Councilman Carter on his detailed review on certain topics, with mention of insight from others, and also advised the panel to review minutes and inform of errors or questions as soon as possible, prior to voting, versus years down the line, for memory purposes.

Executive Session

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

Executive Session: 7:08 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened: 7:43 p.m.

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

Upon return from Executive Session, Councilman Powell motioned to reconvene the regular meeting, with a second by Councilman Jackson. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

Announcements: Mayor Proctor informed of an item that should have been placed on the Agenda, resulting in the need for a Special Called Meeting to take place Wednesday, August 21, 2024, at 7:00 or 7:30 a.m.

Adjournment

With all agenda items covered, Councilman Carter motioned to adjourn, with a second by Councilman Jackson. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Powell, Giddens and Jackson. The vote passed 5-0.

Mayor Proctor duly adjourned the meeting at 7:47 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL
SYLVESTER, GEORGIA

HAROLD PROCTOR, JR., MAYOR

ATTEST:

MARKESHA BIVENS, CITY CLERK

APPROVED