

City Council Meeting Minutes

City of Sylvester  
City Council Regular Meeting  
City Hall Council Chambers  
Tuesday, January 6, 2025  
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  
Assistant City Manager Richie Childers  
Assistant 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

Attorney Castellow entered at 6:01 p.m.

**Agenda Amendment/Approval**

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

**Speakers Appearance**

None

**Unfinished Business**

**Enterprise Fleet Program**

Mr. Richie Childers, Assistant City Manager, with reminder of the presentation provided by Enterprise at the December meeting, informed the Mayor and Council of a decision that is necessary, should the city council choose to move forward or decide against the fleet program.

Upon a motion by Councilman Jackson, with a second by Mayor Proctor, the Enterprise Fleet Program for the City of Sylvester vehicle fleet gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Giddens and Jackson. Voting no were Councilmen Carter and Powell. The vote passed 3-2.

## **New Business**

### **A. Event Application/Road Closure: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. March/Parade**

Ms. Kelly Grantham, Community Development Specialist, offered details for the Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. March/Parade. This public event, conducted by Bishop Tremaine Alford, will take place January 13, 2025, from 10:45 a.m. until 12:00 noon. The route for the route will begin at 317 West Railroad Street to S. Livingston Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive to Main Street to Kelly Street and end at the Worth County Courthouse. After the march, at Irene P. Hall Park, the birthday celebration will begin with gospel music, hot dogs and hamburgers from 1:30 until 4:00 p.m.

Upon a motion by Councilman Powell, with a second by Councilman Jackson, the request to close streets application for the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. March/Parade gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

### **B. 2025 City Council Meeting Calendar**

Mayor Proctor referenced the Council Meeting calendar for 2025, with council meetings held every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday, unless observed by a holiday. This year's calendar is almost identical to last year; there are three (3) months, July, November and December which have only one (1) council meeting due to holiday observance.

Upon a motion by Councilman Giddens, with a second by Councilman Jackson, the 2025 City Council Meeting calendar gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

### **C. 2025 City of Sylvester Holidays**

Mayor Proctor advised on the observed holidays for 2025. The noted days are similar to 2024, except for a change from Christmas Eve to the day after Christmas. City Manager Davis mentioned this year, the holidays mirror the state calendar.

Upon a motion by Councilman Carter, with a second by Councilman Jackson, the 2025 City of Sylvester Holidays gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

### **D. Resolution 2025-01: 2025 Municipal Election Qualifying Fees**

City Clerk Bivens provided details of Resolution 2025-01: Municipal Election Qualifying Fees. The election to be held November 4, 2025, is for the City Council position of Mayor, with a qualifying fee of \$432 and official seats for Wards 3 and 4 for \$360.00 each. The qualifying period is August 18-20. Details must be advertised in the Sylvester Local by February 1, 2025.

Upon motion by Councilman Giddens, with a second by Councilman Jackson, Resolution 2025-01: Municipal Election Qualifying Fees gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**E. Resolution 2025-02: Liberty Avenue Parking Lot Acceptance**

Mr. Childers provided details of the Liberty Avenue Parking Lot and a resolution accepting a deed of gift from Worth Investment Company. The property is located near North Washington Street, behind the West Kelly Street buildings.

Upon a motion by Councilman Jackson, with a second by Councilman Giddens, Resolution 2025-02 gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**F. Beer, Wine and Alcohol License**

**i. Application: Circle K**

**ii. Renewals: Dynamic Spirits, Blake’s Game Room, Skillz, Snipes Piggly Wiggly, The Palace and This & That Lounge**

Mrs. Tenneisha Cushion, Deputy City Clerk, informed the Mayor and Council of the new application for Circle K, due to a change in Store Manager. Renewals listed: Dynamic Spirits Package Store, Blake’s Game Room, Skillz, Snipes Piggly Wiggly, The Palace and This & That Lounge for 2025 renewals were provided as well, with staff seeking approval for these businesses.

After discussion of application review, selection with correction of paid amounts and background checks, upon a motion by Councilman Jackson, with a second by Mayor Proctor, the Beer, Wine and Alcohol License Applications for Circle K and renewals for Dynamic Spirits Package Store, Blake’s Game Room, Skillz, Snipes Piggly Wiggly, The Palace and This & That Lounge gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**G. 2025 Surplus Property List**

Mr. Childers presented the Mayor and Council with a 2025 Surplus Property List of items that have reached their service life or the cost to repair is greater than the vehicle value. Should council approve, the items will be placed for bid in the future, upon approval of an auction company.

Upon a motion by Councilman Carter, with a second by Councilman Powell, the 2025 Surplus Property List gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Powell. Voting no was Councilman Jackson. The vote passed 4-1.

**H. Utility Bill Incentive**

Mr. Davis summarized the incentive program for customers who pay for February and March by the due date, they will save \$20 on their utility bill. This will aid in motivating customers to pay on time and stimulate revenue for residential and commercial customers on a trial basis.

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

**I. House Bill 581: Homestead Exemption Opt-Out**

Mr. Davis informed of a joint meeting with the Worth County Board of Commission, Board of Education and the municipalities, Poulan, Sumner, and Warwick to discuss House Bill 581. This action will not affect any current exemptions that the citizens of Sylvester are currently able to use. In order to maintain property taxes at the local level, with the recent property evaluation, all Worth County entities have agreed to opt out, hold three (3) public hearings, vote and submit information accordingly, by March 1, 2025, completing the process. The public hearings will be held on January 21, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. and January 27, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

Upon a motion by Councilman Carter, with a second by Councilmen Giddens and Powell together, the Mayor and Council resolved to opt out of House Bill 581: Homestead Exemption. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**J. 2025 Annual Appointments**

Upon a motion by Councilman Powell, seconded by Councilman Jackson, the 2025 Annual Appointments gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, Jackson and Powell. The vote passed 5-0.

**K. Reports/Remarks**

Councilman Melvin Powell, Ward 1 – Councilman Powell reported concern about the homeless in the city, during the freezing temperatures and mentioned the Henry Hall Woolard Center as a warming place. Other cities are able to do so, and although it may not be a budgeted item, and staffing is a factor, constituents are voicing their concerns; a request was made for an executive session, but denied, due to the agenda’s prior approval.

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

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

Councilman Earnest Carter Jr., Ward 4 – Councilman Carter reported a street light needing repaired at Cecil Street and Rosebud Lane.

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. – Mayor Proctor agreed the homeless population needs to be warm, and a comfort station is necessary, but would like to ensure it is legally possible. Mention of another facility, security and examples of how other communities keep citizens out of the cold during freezing temperatures, were provided. Churches and other organizations were mentioned to maybe assist with this issue.

City Attorney Lester Castellow – Attorney Castellow mentioned he looks forward to working with the Mayor, Council and City of Sylvester, in response to the appointments approved for 2025.

City Manager Chris Davis – Mr. Davis advised our insurance provider to research the liability of a comfort station and address staffing concerns, but agrees this is a major need. The process began with review of easements, locates and sewage at the Village Community Garden. Mr. Davis, Mr. Childers, Chief Jack Colby and Mr. Casey Chatman will visit the City of Pooler, Georgia Fire Department to continue researching about the purchase of a fire truck at 1/3 of the price of others quoted in the past. City Hall will be closed January 20, 2025, in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The upcoming training in Atlanta, Cities United Conference is January 23-27, 2025. The Mayor, City Council, City Manager, Assistant City Manager and key senior staff members will be in attendance. With the City of Sylvester's being recognized for the University of Georgia Archway Project at the luncheon in Atlanta, all elected officials are reminded to attend.

### **Additional Comments**

Mrs. Glenice Stephens noted that a comfort station is one of the GICH Team goals of the Work Plan; facility, staffing, guideline compliance, the Health Department, Red Cross, food, medication and pillows were all discussed. The Mayor and Council were also invited to attend the monthly GICH Meetings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday, monthly at 9 a.m. at the Sylvester Housing Authority Office.

Mr. Matt Seale of Douglas, Georgia approached Mayor and Council concerning the natural gas capacity issue in Albany-Douglas area. He has visited several neighboring communities attempting to create a regional gas authority, draft a resolution and to introduce concerns at the next legislative session.

Councilman Powell addressed finance reports and bank statements, which the council had not received in five (5) months; the training that he was advised is department specific and that he could not attend, with the rudeness of the Mayor mentioned. He requested an executive session to discuss the six (6) month review and the good job of the City Manager. Additionally, he has never been told he is unable to request an agenda change.

City Manager Davis informed the council that data was absent from the system, per the Finance Department, and the desire to provide accurate numbers prior to the meeting is best practice. City staff will provide the reports and have done everything requested openly, with no denial and are committed to viewing spending as less as possible.

Mayor Proctor reminded the panel, some discussions can be addressed at City Hall in person. His intention was not to be disrespectful, and would like to hear all valid points. However, when no member of the council voices to amend, or misses the opportunity to do so at the beginning of the meeting, the council meeting agenda is set.

**Executive Session:** None

### **Adjournment**

With all agenda items covered, Councilman Carter motioned to adjourn, with a second 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 7:18 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL  
SYLVESTER, GEORGIA

HAROLD PROCTOR, JR., MAYOR

ATTEST:

MARKESHA BIVENS, CITY CLERK

APPROVED