

City Council Meeting Minutes

City of Sylvester
City Council Regular Meeting
City Hall Council Chambers
Monday, February 17, 2025
Call to Order 6:00 p.m.

Attendees: Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr.
Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr., Ward 2
Councilman Mark Giddens, Ward 3
Mayor Pro-Tem 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

Absent: Councilman Melvin Powell, Ward 1

Call to Order: Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr.

Invocation/Pledge: City Manager Chris Davis

Agenda Amendment/Approval

Upon motion by Councilman Giddens, seconded by Councilman Jackson, the Council Meeting Agenda gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Jackson. The vote passed 4-0.

Minutes Approval

Upon motion by Councilman Jackson, seconded by Councilman Giddens, the January 6, 2025 – Regular Meeting, January 21, 2025 – Public Hearing, January 28, 2025 – Regular Meeting and Public Hearing Minutes gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Jackson. The vote passed 4-0.

Speakers Appearance

Mr. Randy Jackson, Sylvester Resident, approached the Mayor and Council with worries about “No Parking” signs and the compliance on Worth Street. Housing Authority parking, tickets written in the past, collision concerns and enforcement of the signs were all discussed.

Mr. Aubrey Vance provided information to the panel regarding art galleries and his hope to form an art gallery at the Train Depot. He mentioned local artists, like Mr. Alan Fuller, whose work is featured in Jackson’s Soul Food, and the difference art makes in the community, per his research.

Mr. Donell Johnson, retired City of Sylvester employee, voiced concern on the life insurance policy and the status of this benefit for retirees. This item will be discussed in executive session.

Public Hearing

Applicant: Lowcountry Housing Communities, LLC
Zoning Request: R-1A to RPUD

The Public Hearing was called to order, unanimously, at 6:09 p.m. Community Development Director, Mrs. Glenice Stephens, informed of the West Pine Street location and the proposed use of Multi Family Development.

Lowcountry Housing intends to apply for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for Phase III of West Pine Residences. One (1) acre from parcel 00600037, currently zoned R-1 to combine with 2.198 acres of Lot 2 (zoned R-PUD) is needed to meet the minimum three (3) acre requirement for the potential development.

This development will consist of six (6) one-bedroom units, 24 two-bedroom units, and 18 three-bedroom units, with the purchase of property contingent upon approval of tax credits from DCA.

The proposed use will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or the general neighborhood; is compatible with the general neighborhood, will not adversely affect the health and safety of residents and will not constitute a nuisance or hazard.

The Planning Commission recommends approval of this request.

Mayor and Council Remarks

There were no remarks.

Public Comment

Dr. Artavious Smith, Sylvester resident and property owner, stated he is not against this request, but asked that the regulations for zoning/rezoning of particular areas of the city be fair and in compliance with all citizens. He then referred to a past instance where he may have been misinformed.

With no additional comment, upon a motion from Councilman Carter, and seconded by Councilman Jackson, the public hearings adjourned. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Jackson. The vote passed 4-0.

The Public Hearing adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Upon motion by Councilman Giddens, with a second by Councilman Carter, the Mayor and Council approved the zoning requested of Lowcountry Housing Communities, LLC at the West Pine Street location from R-1A to RPUD. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Jackson. The vote passed 4-0.

Presentations

A. Georgia Economic Placemaking Collaborative (GEPC)

Mr. Richie Childers, Assistant City Manager, detailed the two (2) year program which the City of Sylvester team completed, in partnership with the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) and Georgia Cities Foundation (GCF). This team developed strategies for community development, group members, Mrs. Karen Singletary and Mrs. Delores Seay-Carter and Mr. Richie Childers received recognition at the 2025 Cities United Summit via award and grant funding for projects such as, lighting the train at Jeffords Park, pink water at the fountain for Cancer Awareness, a mobile selfie wall for pictures during various events, and the story walk at the Gervaise Lawhorn Park's "Duck Pond" walking track.

B. Sylvester Fire Department

Mr. Davis read the letter of recognition received from the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance and Fire Safety, highlighting how the department has met all the requirements for 2024; underscoring the commitment to safety and adherence to state regulations of the community. The city has also secured a low-interest loan to purchase the aerial fire truck, mentioned in a previous council meeting, and Mr. Casey Chapman was announced as the Assistant Fire Chief.

C. Georgia Clerks Education Institute

Mr. Davis presented two (2) newly certified Georgia clerks, Mrs. Tenneisha Cushion, and Ms. Markesha Bivens. These individuals completed 101 hours of coursework and instruction to fulfill the state education requirements of the Georgia Clerks Education Institute.

New Business

A. Sylvester Car Show Committee

Mr. Chris Shipp, Sylvester Car Show Committee Chair and Mrs. Kayla Meyers, recently installed CEO of the Sylvester-Worth County Chamber, asked for use of the Pedestrian Mall and the Depot for Sylvester's Annual Car Show. The event will take place on April 19, 2025, downtown, with the closing of Front Street. 2024 held a successful event with trophies, awards and fundraising for scholarships for Worth County High School.

B. Beer, Wine and Alcohol License Application: Fish Hooks

Mrs. Tenneisha Cushion, Deputy City Clerk, summarized the new application for Fish Hooks, due to a change in ownership. Staff is seeking approval for this business to serve beer, wine and distilled spirits for 2025.

Upon a motion by Councilman Jackson, with a second by Councilman Carter, the Beer, Wine and Alcohol License Application for Fish Hooks gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Jackson. The vote passed 4-0.

C. Shepard Cemetery Expansion

Ms. Jinny Boyd, Special Projects Manager, provided a review of the Shepard Memorial Cemetery Expansion Project. The goal is to allow additional single and double space plots for the community, where Public Works informs, there may be enough spaces for of 2025.

Keck & Wood Engineers provided a quote in the past for \$82,100. However further research finds, by utilizing the city's resources, obtaining wetland permits, etc., this project can be completed for an estimated \$20,000, preparing land for the spaces, obtaining bids and adding four-plus-acres to the cemetery, lasting five (5) to – seven (7) years. This would also remedy the complaints of water on plots, due to the design and reroute of water to the nearby ditch.

Upon a motion by Councilman Carter, with a second by Councilman Jackson, the Shepard Cemetery Expansion Project gained approval. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Jackson. The vote passed 4-0.

D. Comfort Station Meeting Recap

Mrs. Stephens summarized the request of the council to hold a Comfort Station meeting, which was held on February 26, 2025, at 6 p.m. The difference between shelter and comfort station, short versus long-term location guidelines, max time length allowed and regulations were discussed.

Should it be decided to proceed, a plan would need to be created to determine when, how many participants will allow opening, providing timely information, and staff designation would all need to be finalized. Mentions of church and nonprofit assistance like Red Cross donations and/or hotel accommodations for citizens were also discussed; however, there was no action taken on this item.

E. Discussion: Worth County Board of Education Baseball Field

Mr. Davis clarified this is not a discussion of Pope Park, but the new baseball field project near Worth County Elementary School. Discussion with Mr. Tyree McGee, Sylvester Utilities Director, was mentioned that Superintendent Mr. Nehemiah Cummings had a different understanding of project responsibility. In-kind services, labor, materials, return from utility rates, seasonal usage, and other projects were all discussed. There was no action taken on this item.

Reports/Remarks

Councilman Melvin Powell, Ward 1 – Councilman Powell was not present.

Councilman Isaac Jackson, Jr., Ward 2 – Councilman Jackson extended gratitude to the Sylvester Fire and Police Departments for their immediate response to an accident on US Highway 82.

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

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

Mayor Harold Proctor, Jr. – Mayor Proctor commended the staff for a job well done for the first ever Sweetheart Dance on Valentine’s Day. Due to the regional championship basketball game, it was a small turn out, but a great time, with participants visiting from out-of-town. He agreed the public safety departments do a great job and will review the status of the concerned citizen on Worth Street.

City Attorney Lester Castellow – Attorney Castellow had no report.

City Manager Chris Davis – Mr. Davis informed the panel of the CPR training dates, the Annual Chamber Luncheon and request for a four (4) way stop at North Westberry and Price Streets, due to safety concerns. He will be out of the office with his son’s basketball team for their state championship game.

Executive Session

Councilman Jackson moved to convene an Executive Session to discuss litigation, real estate and personnel, seconded by Councilman Carter. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens, and Jackson. The vote passed 4-0.

Executive Session: 7:00 p.m.

Regular Session Reconvened: 8:02 p.m.

Announcements

Upon return from Executive Session, Councilman Carter motioned for the surplus of property, a two-plus-acre parcel south of East Crockett Street, seconded by Councilman Jackson. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, and Jackson. Voting no was Councilman Giddens. The vote passed 3-1.

Adjournment

With all agenda items covered, Councilman Jackson motioned to adjourn, with a second by Councilman Carter. Voting yes were Mayor Proctor, Councilmen Carter, Giddens and Jackson. The vote passed 4-0.

Mayor Proctor duly adjourned the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL
SYLVESTER, GEORGIA

HAROLD PROCTOR, JR., MAYOR

ATTEST:

MARKESHA BIVENS, CITY CLERK