



Minutes

City Council Meeting

December 9th, 2024

6:30 pm

Baldwin Municipal Courtroom, 155 Willingham Avenue, Baldwin, GA 30511

Mayor Stephanie Almagno, Councilmember Erik Keith, Councilmember Nancy Lehman, Councilmember Kerri Davis, Councilmember Maarten Venter (via phone), and Councilmember Alice Venter were all in attendance.

Call Meeting to Order

Mayor Almagno called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Invocation and Pledge

Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Minutes: Council Meeting 11/12/24 and Work Session 12/3/24.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the consent agenda as presented with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 5-0.

Public Comments

Alice Venter – Alice Venter withdrew her request to address the Council.

Monsa Mora of 120 City Park Drive stated that she and her husband recently purchased 392 King Street where there are is a condemned mobile home, along with two other condemned structures. Due to financial difficulties and her family's current living situation, she asked Council if they were to consider granting a Special Use Permit to allow for a new mobile home to be installed to replace the condemned one. The current zoning (R-2) does not allow for mobile homes (manufacture homes, Class A), however, the current structures were grandfathered in when the 2006 Zoning Ordinance was adopted. Council requested that Mrs. Mora work with the City Clerk and review the application procedures.

Public Hearings

Reports

Municipal Court – Clerk of Court Susan Newsom

Susan Newsom provided a brief update to the Council on the Municipal Court. She is actively working to create more effective Court security and procedures and is contacting other court clerks to learn about their methods and recommendations. She said that no progress has been made on acquiring classes for interpreter licensing, as all the classes are still full. Newsom will work to find a licensed interpreter to utilize for Court so the City will not have to wait to send someone to the classes. While this will be an increase in cost for interpretation services, Newsom said that she foresees being able to budget for a licensed interpreter with little issue. At this time, Court has not grown to the point to justify adding an additional Court session to the current two.

Council had no further questions for Newsom.

Old Business

1. Consideration/Approval of ARPA Funds Obligation Project Agreements

CAO Emily Woodmaster reviewed the ARPA Funds project list presented at Tuesday's work session, stating that no changes had been made since Tuesday. Fire Chief Roy briefly spoke regarding the Breathing Air System, which is approximately 25 years old. The fill station component of the system is down and Chief Roy was hesitant to invest money in further repairs if Council is willing to approve the ARPA Funds for the replacement. Codification through MuniCode was quoted at just under \$15,000 a few years ago, however, they no longer provide quotes before they are provided the ordinances. Woodmaster recommended splitting the cost of the codification service over two budgets, utilizing the set amount from ARPA funds and budgeting the remaining costs.

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the ARPA Funds Obligation project list and to authorize the CAO to execute all agreements as presented with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 5-0.

New Business

2. Consideration/Approval of Fire Dept. and Water Treatment Plant Fiber Agreements

Woodmaster presented two agreements for dark fiber agreements, meaning the lines will only be dedicated to the City of Baldwin. The first agreement is for a line to run between the Fire and Police Departments. While agreements are normally for five year terms, Trailwave agreed for the City to pay \$3,300 for the infrastructure up front so a one-year agreement could be utilized.

The second agreement is for the Water Treatment Plant, where the SCADA System upgrade needs fiber in order to operate the most efficiently and effectively.

The Samuels Firm has reviewed the agreements and found no concerns.

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the Trailwave Fiber Agreement for the Fire Department and Water Treatment Plant as presented and to authorize the CAO to execute the agreement with a second by Nancy Lehman. Motion Carried 5-0.

3. Consideration/Approval of 1st Reading of Aguilar Zoning Change Ordinance [#2024-12156Z](#)

Woodmaster presented an application for a zoning change at 112 Shore Street. At some point, the property was zoned Neighborhood Commercial (NC), despite a residential house being built several decades prior. After searching the City's records, however, City staff could not locate any ordinance or other record that delineated the zoning change and why it occurred. The issue came forward because the current family occupying the home wants to update their porch and the structure is considered non-conforming under the NC zoning. City staff is requesting that the property be properly zoned to Residential Single Family (R-2), which is inline with surrounding properties, so that the family may move forward with the proper permitting procedures.

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the first reading of the Aguilar Zoning Change Ordinance #2024-12156Z as presented with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 5-0.

4. Consideration/Approval of Habersham Co. Fire Service Consolidation Feasibility Study Resolution #2024-12157R

The City of Baldwin and other neighboring cities were invited to a conversation about the ability to consolidate fire services with Habersham County Fire Services. The County has requested that all cities interested in participating in a feasibility study pass a resolution, which states that the cities will provide requested data to the County and that Habersham County will fund the study. A consultant present at the original meeting estimated up to one year to complete the study.

Participating in the feasibility study is not an agreement to consolidate services, but to collect data to see if consolidation would be possible.

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the Habersham County Fire Service Consolidation Feasibility Study Resolution #2024-12157R as presented with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 5-0.

5. Consideration/Approval of Emergency Expense for High Service Pump

City Engineer Fletcher Holliday presented an emergency purchase for one of two high service pumps at the Water Treatment Plant. As these pumps are essential to daily operations at the Plant, the pump has already been replaced and the expense of \$18,465 for parts and labor must be approved by Council as it is over the \$5,000 limit. This expense was expected and subsequently budgeted as the motor was approximately 30 years old. Holliday stated that the dead motor can hopefully be rewound (approximately \$4,000 - \$5,000 at a later date) to be kept as a spare.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the emergency expense for the high service pump at the Water Treatment Plant and to be expensed from the current FY25 budget as presented with a second by Nancy Lehman. Motion Carried 5-0.

Executive Session


Announcements

- a. City offices will be closed on December 24th and 25th in observance of the Christmas holiday, and January 1st for New Year's Day.
- b. Due to unforeseen delays, 2024 property tax information is not yet available. The City will make every effort to expedite the release of the tax bills. As it is the City's practice to extend the due date in the event of billing delays, the City will allow 60 days for payment upon the release of the tax bills. Upon the establishment of a new due date, the City will utilize its website, social media, and utility bills to notify its residents.
- c. Mayor Almagno stated that she would be attending the State of the County address happening tomorrow at Partnership Habersham (of which Baldwin is not a member), acknowledging the location is not a public venue.

- d. Mayor Almagno thanked Councilmember Kerri Davis for going to Baldwin Elementary School earlier that day to read to students.
- e. Mayor Almagno thanked all participants and contributors to the Baldwin Christmas Tree Lighting the previous Friday, including Little Gypsy Camper, Santa Clint Eller, Bar and Arrow, Marlene's Cakes, and Baldwin Elementary School Choir. Approximately 200 guests attended.

Adjournment

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to adjourn the meeting with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 5-0 at 7:46 pm.


Stephanie Almagno, Mayor

1/13/2025
Date Approved by Council


Erin Gathercoal, City Clerk

