



## *Minutes*

City Council Work Session

July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

6:30pm

Baldwin Courtroom, 155 Willingham Avenue, Baldwin, GA 30511

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Mayor Stephanie Almagno, Council Member Joseph Satterfield, Council Member Kerri Davis, Council Member Maarten Venter, and Council Member Alice Venter were in attendance.

### *Call Meeting to Order*

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

### *Public Hearing*

#### *Old Business*

1. Updated Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual

Council had no questions regarding the updated personnel policies and procedures manual and was in consensus to bring this forward to Monday night's meeting for a vote.

#### *New Business*

2. Updated Purchasing Policy

Due to the size of the document, Council received the proposed updated purchasing policy earlier in the day via email but will have a hard copy at the July 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. CAO Emily Woodmaster explained that primary change to the policy was replacing any language of "City Clerk" with "Chief Administrative Officer/CAO," as when Woodmaster was still serving as City Clerk and the CAO title/job description had not yet been determined. Woodmaster has also spoken with legal counsel about creating an ordinance to authorize City staff to dispose of items under \$500.00 without the approval of Council. Current policy requires Council approval for all disposals, no matter the value. This ordinance will soon be presented to Council and added to the updated purchasing policy.

Council was in consensus to bring this forward to Monday night's meeting for a vote.

3. Highland Pointe Speed Bumps

At the May 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, Nick Shirley, a resident of Highland Pointe, presented Council with a list of signatures of his neighbors who were in favor of adding speed bumps to Highland Pointe to combat an ongoing speeding issue. Originally Public Works Director Scott Barnhart had hoped to relocate the speed bumps in the City Hall parking lot to Highland Pointe but was unsuccessful, so new speed bumps must be purchased. Council was presented with a cost estimate for four speed bumps, necessary hardware, signage, and approximate shipping for \$1,764. Woodmaster stated that the request presented to Council for vote would be not to exceed \$2,000 to accommodate potentially higher shipping costs. Public Safety Funds would be utilized

for this expense, and assuming prompt shipping and delivery, estimated completion is the end of July or early August.

Council was in consensus to bring this forward to Monday night's meeting for a vote.

#### 4. Phone System Upgrade

Woodmaster presented a request to update the current phone system across all City Departments, which was originally in FY24's budget but was cut. Currently Baldwin contracts phones through Cirrus Networks and has utilized Cirrus for the last 15 years. Woodmaster requested a quote from Cirrus last fall to upgrade the technology due to ongoing issues with the system and the physical hardware being past its recommended lifespan. Woodmaster also reached out to at least three other agencies over the last few months for quotes, but they did not respond.

For 35 new phones, Cirrus quoted \$8,300 to upgrade the technology with a three-to-six-year lifespan, Wi-Fi port, fax lines, and labor. This does not include the monthly fee of \$538 per month.

Sangoma also submitted a proposal for 35 new phones, plus new features in addition to regular phone/voice over IP (VOIP) service. These features include voicemail transcription, transferring calls to a cell phone or computer, and more. Service through Sangoma would be subscription-based and the City would lease the phones, keeping the same phone numbers. Every three years, the system would be automatically upgraded. There would be a one-time charge of \$535 and a monthly charge of \$1,000 for a three-year term. While the monthly charge is higher than Cirrus, Woodmaster stated that this would be a better investment in more modern technology, as Cirrus would charge \$8,300 upfront every three years. This subscription-based model also falls in line with Baldwin leasing other equipment like printers and vehicles, which in turn increases efficiency and eases the accounting process. Woodmaster also confirmed that Sangoma expressed no issue with the requirement of a one-year contract (as opposed to their traditional three years) so as not to bind future Councils. She also stated that she utilized Sangoma's quote when building the FY25 budget.

Council was in consensus to move forward with Sangoma, and Woodmaster will confirm details of contract to present for Council approval at a future meeting.

#### 5. Water and Trash Rate Increase Resolution [#2024-07146R](#)

Woodmaster reviewed a proposed 3% increase in the tiered water and sewer rates, which were discussed during the budget cycle. The increase is due to a population increase and the required increase to keep in line with projections for the City's bond, which was determined based off an assessment of the entire system. Water rates are based on Baldwin's assets at both treatment plants, the pump and lift stations, underground, and in personnel.

Council member Maarten Venter asked to discuss the administrative fee applied to all water bills every month. Woodmaster stated that the fee was a result of Council's

decision years ago to move to a per-gallon system, but ancillary costs like printing the bill, postage, meter reading, and utility billing personnel were not contemplated. The current system in place was designed to conserve water, but the goal by FY26 is to move to AWWA standards in administering water rates, which will still be a tiered structure, but will look different from Baldwin's current system. Council was in consensus to bring the water and sewer rate increase forward to Monday night's meeting for vote, under Resolution [#2024-07146R](#).

Woodmaster then reviewed the proposed garbage collection rate increase, which was also discussed during the budget cycle. This increase was expected, as it is a direct pass-through increase from FC Sanitation, who split the 24% increase for the City over last year and this year. However, instead of the originally expected 12%, this year's increase will be 9%. Trash service will be bid out this year, but the per-can cost is less expensive than other companies. The City of Baldwin established a municipal trash service years ago, but it was an incredible expense in terms of both capital and personnel. Council was in consensus to bring the garbage collection rate increase forward to Monday night's meeting for vote, under Resolution [#2024-07147R](#).

#### 6. Updates to Axon Contracts

Police Chief Jones recapped Baldwin Police Department's history of Axon and the ease of pulling recorded footage for open records request and superior storage to other companies previously used. Currently, the City of Baldwin has 9 Core Plus packages with three contracts, and with the Police Department adding Officer Ivester, an updated contract is needed for an additional Core Plus, but also to condense the contracts for simplicity purposes. Jones then explained what he referred to as the "Fleet 3 contract" and the "master contract."

The Fleet 3 contract is for seven dashcams in Police Department patrol vehicles (six on the current contract). With an additional patrol vehicle approved by Council, an additional camera will be needed, bringing the total to seven cameras. The contract presented to Council would prorate the current contract, rolling into the current contract and eliminating the need for two separate Fleet 3 contracts. Adding the additional camera saves the City approximately \$4,100 per year (Axon contracts run for 60 months). This contract will need to be signed at the next council meeting on July 15<sup>th</sup>, as the quoted prices will change on July 20<sup>th</sup>. Council had no questions regarding the Fleet 3 contract.

Jones then presented the "master contract" for the Core Plus packages, which run for 64 months. Jones reviewed a yearly breakdown of the costs, which have increased since Jones budgeted for Axon for FY25 at the Council Retreat (utilizing contract costs at the time). However, Axon has agreed to meet the cost that Chief Jones originally budgeted for FY25 for an additional Core Plus and three additional licenses for the evidence technician and investigators. By reevaluating the contract, this will save the City money over the years and will also update the cameras and the tasers. The upgraded cameras will transcribe the video allowing officers to utilize the transcription for reports.

Woodmaster added that there is a third contract for Code Compliance, which will be part of the same program but paid for out of the Code Compliance budget and footage stored separately from PD files. All expenses are currently budgeted.

Council was in consensus to bring this forward to Monday night's meeting for a vote.


### *Announcements*

- a. For our early risers, join us this Saturday at 8:00 am at the Habersham County Parks & Rec fields for a one-pitch softball tournament, with all proceeds funding Baldwin Elementary School's supplies for the 2024 - 2025 school year. If your softball team is interested in participating, contact Shaun Benfield at 706-531-6288 or [sbenfield@cityofbaldwin.org](mailto:sbenfield@cityofbaldwin.org).
- b. Calling all local farmers and foodies! Join us this Saturday at Baldwin City Hall for reFRESH Market! Bring your fruits, vegetables, farm fresh eggs and other goods to City Hall for a FREE place to sell your fresh staples! From 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., get in the sunshine for fresh groceries and unique food truck eateries. Vendor applications can be found at [www.cityofbaldwin.org](http://www.cityofbaldwin.org). Contact John at City Hall for more information.
- c. Kick off the 2024-2025 school year with the City of Baldwin at our Back to School Bash! Join us at Life Church of Baldwin on July 20<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm for a party with free pizza, games, and haircuts!
- d. Join us for the Movie in the Market on July 26<sup>th</sup>, starting at 8:30 p.m.. Bring your lawn chairs & blankets and join us for a FREE night of fun at the Farmers' Market located at 110 Airport Road. This month we will be showing *The Princess Diaries*. Concessions are available, with all proceeds going to Shop with a Hero.
- e. Council member Alice Venter shared her thanks for the success of the Baldwin Pitnic - recognizing the local businesses who have sponsored events, and the Baldwin staff in Fire, Police, Public Works, and City Hall who made it possible.
- f. Mayor Almagno recognized Baldwin Police and Fire who assisted multiple agencies in locating a young boy who went missing in Banks County.

### *Adjournment*

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to adjourn the meeting with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 4-0 at 7:44 pm.

  
Stephanie Almagno, Mayor

  
Erin Gathercoal, City Clerk

7/15/2024  
Date Approved by Council

