



**Minutes**  
City Council Meeting  
June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
6:30pm

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

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

***Call Meeting to Order***

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

***Invocation and Pledge***

Mayor Almagno read a live stream viewer's request to know who was present in the audience and listed those attending the meeting and were not visible on the stream.

***Consent Agenda***

- a. Approval of Minutes: Council Meeting 5/28/24 and Work Session 6/4/24.

**Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the consent agenda as presented with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 5-0.**

***Public Comments***

Jennifer Reagan of 350 Peach Orchard Road stated that there used to be a stop sign at the entrance of Peach Orchard Road and The Oaks Assisted Living, but the sign was damaged at some point and was never replaced. Reagan, having witnessed many near accidents, requested a new stop sign be placed at the entrance. Council was in agreement to replace the stop sign, and City staff will move forward with the replacement.

***Public Hearings***

***Reports***

***Old Business***

1. Consideration/Approval of CAO Contract

Council had no additional comments regarding the CAO contract for FY2025.

**Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the Chief Administrative Officer contract for FY2025 as presented with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 4-0.**

**In Favor: Erik Keith, Kerri Davis, Maarten Venter, Alice Venter.  
Opposed: Joseph Satterfield.**

## 2. Consideration/Approval of FY25 Annual Budget

Mayor Almagno called on Council for any additional comments regarding the budget after extensive discussions over the last few months.

Council member Maarten Venter requested confirmation that with the proposed budget, there are no options other than increasing the millage rate, like pulling from fund balance. CAO Emily Woodmaster stated there is already a proposed pull from both the general fund and enterprise fund balance, but that the only other option would be to make additional cuts. All originally proposed police and fire positions, two vehicles, and various equipment purchases have been cut.

Venter continued that while there are businesses coming online in the coming months that will bring money to Baldwin, the Council has approximately until 2026 before the new inland port opens up in Hall County, and that Venter hopes enough businesses will come to Baldwin to alleviate the burden from residents.

Council discussed the drastic increase to home valuations in the last few years, and how Habersham County residents' taxes are not offset by LOST like Banks County residents in Baldwin. Mayor Almagno stated that in conjunction with department heads, a "breather year" is being taken before adding public safety to Highway 365 since the growth is not quite at Baldwin's doorstep. However, the public safety additions to the highway will be required before too long.

Council member Alice Venter expressed that she had had one citizen contact her regarding her intended vote on the budget, and that when Venter asked the citizen for any suggestions on how to reduce the budget, she received no answer. Venter asked citizens if they have suggestions for the budget to please bring them forward.

Jennifer Reagan stated that viewing the cost divided over 12 months for the services rendered seemed to be worth it in her opinion.

Cindy Lifsey of 253 Chandler Heights Circle stated that there had to be something in addition to be cut and that government must be responsible to its citizens.

Mayor Almagno read the highlighted portion of Resolution [#2024-06145R](#).

**Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve and adopt the Fiscal Year 2025 budget as presented with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Passed 3-0.**

**In Favor: Erik Keith, Kerri Davis, Alice Venter.**

**Opposed: Joseph Satterfield, Maarten Venter.**

## 3. Consideration/Approval of FY25 Appointments

At the June work session, the appointments for fiscal year 2025 were discussed, as well as the position of Mayor Pro Tem, which must be nominated and approved by Council.

Kerri Davis nominated Alice Venter for the position and Venter accepted the nomination.

**Action: A motion was made by Kerri Davis to nominate Alice Venter as Mayor Pro Tem for FY25. Motion Carried 5-0.**

**Action: A motion was made by Joseph Satterfield to approve the remaining FY25 appointments as presented with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion carried 5-0.**

4. Consideration/Approval of Banks County Hazard Mitigation Plan Resolution #2024-06143R

Council had no further questions or comments regarding the Banks County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the Banks County Hazard Mitigation Plan Resolution #2024-06143R as presented with a second by Joseph Satterfield. Motion Carried 5-0.**

### ***New Business***

5. Consideration/Approval of Personnel Policy Manual

Woodmaster reviewed the process and steps taken over the last few years to update employee benefits, fine-tune policies, and create a more streamlined document of personnel policies for onboarding new employees. The Policy Committee met many times and worked through difficult questions and potential scenarios to create an updated policy that truly reflects the City of Baldwin. City Clerk Erin Gathercoal will be sending the update policy manual to Council that evening, and Woodmaster encouraged them to review and to bring any concerns to her so that they may be promptly addressed. Ideally, the Personnel Policy Manual will be approved at the first council meeting in July.

**Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to move the approval of the Personnel Policy Manual to the first meeting in July with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 5-0.**

6. Consideration/Approval of Special Election for Post 2 Resolution #2024-06144R

Mayor Almagno explained that this resolution is needed as a result of Council Member Satterfield's resignation from his post, effective immediately following the July 29<sup>th</sup> council meeting. This resolution fixes the Special Election to the same date as November's presidential election, sets the qualifying fee, and explains the qualifying timeline.

Once approved and signed by Council, the resolution will be submitted to Laurel Ellison with Habersham County Elections & Voter Registration.

**Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the Special Election for Post 2 Resolution #2024-06144R as presented with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 4-0.**

**In Favor: Erik Keith, Kerri Davis, Maarten Venter, Alice Venter.  
Abstention: Joseph Satterfield.**


***Executive Session***

***Announcements***


- a. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Baldwin Water War is on June 15<sup>th</sup> from 2:30 – 4:30 pm at Mitchell Gailey Park! Bring your water guns and a towel to beat the heat! Sign up today at City Hall, via the Facebook event, or email [baldwinevents@cityofbaldwin.org](mailto:baldwinevents@cityofbaldwin.org).
- b. City Offices will be closed June 19<sup>th</sup> in observance of Juneteenth.
- c. Join us for the next installment of Movies in the Market on June 28<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 p.m.. Bring your lawn chairs and 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 Goonies*. Concessions are available, with all proceeds going to Shop with a Hero.
- d. Mayor Almagno thanked City staff for a successful kickoff event for the Mayor's Reading Club the previous Friday. Nearly 30 children attended the event and the new Little Free Library at the Farmers' Market was officially opened.

***Adjournment***

**Action: A motion was made by Erik Keith to adjourn the meeting with a second by Joseph Satterfield. Motion Carried 5-0 at 7:27 pm.**

  
Stephanie Almagno, Mayor

7/15/2024  
Date Approved by Council

  
Erin Gathercoal, City Clerk

