



Minutes
City Council Meeting
June 12th, 2023
6:30pm

Baldwin Courtroom, 155 Willingham Avenue, Baldwin, GA 30511

Acting Mayor Alice Venter, Council Member Larry Lewallen, Council Member Theron Ayers, Council Member Stephanie Almagno, and Council Member Maarten Venter were all in attendance.

Call Meeting to Order

Acting Mayor Alice Venter called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

Invocation and Pledge

Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Minutes: Council Meeting 5/30/23 and Work Session 6/6/23.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the consent agenda as presented with a second by Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 4-0.

Citizen Comment

Public Hearings

Reports

Fire Department – Chief Joe Roy

Fire Chief Joe Roy presented Council with a six-month department update of positives, negatives, and future goals (see attached report).

Old Business

1. Consideration/Approval of Farag Water Account Adjustment

CAO Emily Woodmaster presented to Council an abnormal water billing situation that requires council consideration on behalf of Heather Farag. The total amount owed is just over \$30,000, the largest water loss seen on a residential account in Woodmaster's time at Baldwin. The Farag house, a vacation home for the family, is outside the city and only receives water from Baldwin. In December with the great freeze, many citizens experienced leaks for the first time due to pipe busts. The Farag house used approximately 130,000 gallons in the days following the freeze.

Baldwin Utility Billing bills a month after the meter is read. During the bill run process, utility employees look for high usage. After seeing the Farag usage, a black box was run, and it was determined Farag had a leak. In February when Farag got her bill it was almost \$2,000. The City notified them they had a leak, and the Farags had it fixed. Utility Billing followed standard process to ensure that the leak was completely fixed since only one adjustment is allowed per year. The leak reoccurred and the next bill was \$10,000. Woodmaster encouraged

Farag to turn her meter off after another black box was run. On March 7th, the next bill run indicated almost 800,000 gallons in use. On April 12th, Farag determined the leak was under the driveway. Currently, the leak is fixed, and the meter remains off whenever the family is not at the house.

Woodmaster presented Council with three options, of which she recommended option #3.

1. Write off the entire balance;
2. Reduce the per-thousand-gallon rate to \$10.27 (outside city rate) for the first 4,000 gallons of each month, totaling 16,000 gallons at \$164.32. And reduce the per-thousand-gallon rate for the remaining 1,507,152 gallons to \$2.70 (wholesale rate) for a cost of \$4,069.31 and reduce the \$200.00 already paid to the City. \$4,033.63 would cover all four months of water loss; or
3. Reduce total gallons by 782,000 gallons as the City failed to turn off water on March 7th when it was apparent there was significant water loss. Charge the remaining 725,152 gallons at \$2.70 per thousand gallons. \$1,957.91 would cover all four months of water loss.

A policy has been created in-house so that any of the public works meter readers have the authority to turn off a meter if they detect high usage and notify City Hall to notify the customer. This will not only help prevent customers from receiving high bills, but also to conserve water.

Farag does understand that she does have to pay for the water that passed through the meter, and her account is not incurring any interest or penalties.

Council was in consensus to bring this forward at the end of the month meeting.

2. Consideration/Approval of 2nd Reading of HCDA Annexation Request Ordinance #2023-05124A

Council had no additional questions or comments regarding the annexation request or the ordinance.

Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to approve the 2nd Reading of HCDA Annexation Request Ordinance #2023-05124A as presented with a second by Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 4-0.

3. Consideration/Approval of 2nd Reading of HCDA Zoning Ordinance #2023-05125Z

Council had no additional questions or comments regarding the zoning ordinance.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the 2nd Reading of HCDA Zoning Ordinance #2023-05125Z as presented with a second by Stephanie Almagno. Motion Carried 4-0.

4. Consideration/Approval of Improvements to Courtroom

The sales orders for the proposed courtroom changes stated that the price was good through May 31st, as long as the vender did not change their prices. John Ayers of Ayers Office Supplies told Woodmaster that while the vendor has the right to change prices, he didn't think they would. The improvements will be paid for out of public safety initiatives, which City Attorney Bubba Samuels advised that Court Operations do fall under public safety.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the courtroom improvements, not to exceed \$9,900, as presented with a second by Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 4-0.

5. Consideration/Approval of Justice One Read-Only Contract

Justice One representative Alec Redwine addressed council and recapped the updated Read-Only Contract and the addition of Azure to Court's software.

The City has 30 days to notify Justice One if they intend to terminate the contract, and the contract duration can be set for as long as Council decides. Samuels had no concerns regarding the contract.

Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to approve the Justice One and Courtware Solutions Inc. Vendor Network and Data Agreement and the Non-Exclusive License Agreement as presented with a second by Larry Lewallen. Motion Carried 4-0.

6. Consideration/Approval of Ratification of Valvoline Decision

Council had no questions or concerns regarding the Valvoline decision.

Action: A motion was made by Theron Ayers to approve the ratification of the Valvoline decision with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0.

New Business

7. Consideration/Approval of MOU for Fire Truck

Council had no questions or concerns regarding the MOU.

Acion: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to approve the MOU for the Fire Truck as presented with a second by Theron Ayers. Motion Carried 4-0.

8. Consideration/Approval of FY24 Budget

Based on conversations had at the May town hall meeting regarding the FY24 budget, Woodmaster went through the budget and made the discussed changes.

At the town hall, Woodmaster called out all the positions proposed to add in FY24 to see what impacted the budget. There are eight positions proposed, including City Clerk, the Court Clerk Assistant moving to fulltime, two additional

patrol officers, a GCIC operator, a firefighter (in tandem with applying for the SAFER Grant), a street technician, and code enforcement.

After the town hall, Woodmaster had a follow-up meeting with department heads, who decided they wanted to each do their part to reduce their budgets so the proposed 8.7% cost-of-living adjustment would not be affected by reconciling the deficit. Department heads agreed to freeze additional positions until December, preserving the 8.7% COLA for all general fund employees, who have not had an adjustment during Woodmaster's time with the City.

An operating transfer is also proposed in the amount of \$260,000 to serve as a balancing mechanism. Additionally, Woodmaster recommended a \$483,065.67 enterprise fund balance direct transfer to the general fund if needed, along with \$150,000 from the general fund unassigned fund balance. It is commonly recommended to maintain two to three months of cash on hand. After the proposed balancing mechanism, Baldwin will still have two months of cash on hand for both the enterprise and the general fund. Part of the balancing mechanism in the enterprise fund is a proposed 2% increase in water rates in order to properly maintain the City's debt coverage ratio.

Samuels advised Council that a public hearing for the budget will need to be held a week before the vote is taken, so a special called meeting will be necessary for adoption of the budget.

Action was taken following discussion of item #9.

9. Consideration/Approval of CAO Contract

Acting Mayor Venter addressed Council regarding Woodmaster's proposed contract as CAO. Woodmaster has been doing the work of five positions for nearly three years at a salary of \$65,000. While the general fund wage study is underway, a preliminary study was done for the CAO, City Clerk, Finance Director, and Head of HR positions at cities similar to Baldwin in population, services, and size. For the CAO, the minimum salary was found to be \$85,000, the mid-point \$106,250, and the maximum \$130,000. Council desires to properly pay Woodmaster for the work she does for the city and also memorialize this in a contract to protect both Woodmaster and the city of Baldwin.

The contract will have a one-year duration and will be reviewed and renewed annually, with work performance reviews from Council and Mayor. The proposed salary for Woodmaster is \$104,000 with a supplement pay from March (when she approached Council regarding her pay) to June 30th in the amount of \$12,283.83. Both Woodmaster and Samuels have reviewed the contract and are satisfied with how it is presented.

Council will review the contract prior to the end of month meeting.

Action: A motion was made by Stephanie Almagno to authorize the presentation of the FY24 budget as presented today for a public hearing at Monday's meeting with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 4-0.

Executive Session

Announcements

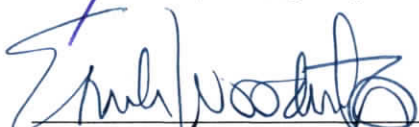
- a. The Piedmont Library System Pop Up Rolling Library will be set up at the Farmers' Market in Baldwin from 11 am – 12:00 pm every Friday through the end of July. We encourage all our residents to come and check out or return books. This is available to anyone with a PINES library card. Cards can be issued on site for those that do not currently have one. Additionally, those attending the Pop Up Rolling Library with children will also receive food bags courtesy of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia.
- b. City offices will be closed Monday, June 19th, in observance of Juneteenth.
- c. The Baldwin City "Pit" nic will be Saturday, July 1st starting at 5:00 pm. We invite our residents to join us at the Farmers' Market for a free cookout with lawn games to show our appreciation. Bring your picnic blankets and lawn chairs and make sure you stay for the fireworks finale!
- d. Stephanie congratulated Emily for becoming a certified city manager, completing 300 hours of training and a capstone. And thanked Emily for doing that to benefit the city.

Adjournment

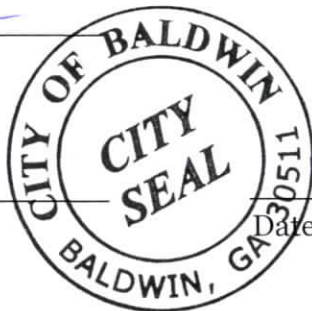
Action: A motion was made by Theron Ayers to adjourn the meeting with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried at 8:24 pm.




Alice Venter, Acting Mayor



Emily Woodmaster, CAO





Date Approved by Council