



Minutes

City Council Meeting

July 8th, 2025

Immediately Following Work Session

Baldwin Police Training Facility, 155 Willingham Avenue, Baldwin, GA 30511

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

Call Meeting to Order

Mayor Almagno called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

Invocation and Pledge

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to amend the agenda to add under New Business Item #6: Consideration/Approval of Habersham County Drug Court MOU and Item #7: Discussion of Fire Department Consolidation with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 5-0.

Councilmember Alice Venter requested to have a motion to add "Discussion of Additional FY26 Budget Cuts" to the agenda.

Action: A motion was made by Kerri Davis to add Item #8: Discussion of Additional FY26 budget Cuts to the agenda with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 5-0.

Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Minutes: Council Meetings 6/9/2025 and 6/26/2025.

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

No one came forward, however, Mayor Almagno read an email from water customer Jason Hughes of 6434 Old Highway 441 North, who was unable to attend the meeting (see attached).

Public Hearings

Reports

Water & Wastewater Treatment - City Engineer Fletcher Holliday

City Engineer Fletcher Holliday provided a report for the month of May for the water and wastewater treatment systems (see attached), as well as upcoming projects and highlights. Council had no additional questions or comments.

Mayor Almagno returned to Public Comment, as an email had been submitted to read into the record.

Old Business

New Business

1. Ratification of June 26th, 2025 Declaration of Emergency

On June 26th, Mayor Almagno declared a state of emergency due to the issues with the water system. This was done as part of the application for emergency GEFA funds and reduces the application/submission process.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to ratify the June 26th, 2025 Declaration of Emergency with a second by Nancy Lehman. Motion Carried 5-0.

2. Consideration/Approval of Pursuing GEFA Loan for Baldwin Mountain System

Woodmaster presented a request to authorize the Mayor and the CAO to submit documentation to apply for \$545,000 in funding from GEFA. There is a possibility of principal forgiveness, but this is only the beginning of the application process so no terms are guaranteed. If principal forgiveness is not possible, the City will utilize Banks County SPLOST funds from 2022, as funds are specifically allocated to infrastructure.

Mayor Almagno and Councilmember Alice Venter thanked State representatives for their assistance in pursuing these funds.

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to authorize the Mayor and CAO to execute any necessary documents in pursuit of a loan from GEFA for the Highway 441-Willingham waterline repairs with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 5-0.

3. Consideration/Approval of SRO Contract with Habersham Co. Board of Education

Woodmaster reviewed the SRO contract as discussed in the work session. Woodmaster and staff are still working on totaling all associated costs for the SRO, including uniforms, gas, vehicle, training, liability and health insurance, etc.

Woodmaster noted on page 6, subparagraph (d) a type that will be corrected from "Demorest PD" to "Baldwin PD." Council had no further questions or concerns.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to approve the SRO Contract with the Habersham County Board of Education and to authorize the Mayor and the CAO to execute the contract as presented with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 5-0.

4. Discussion/Approval of Animal Control Invoice

As discussed in the earlier work session, the decision Council must make is how to pay the invoice for animal control services. Councilmember Maarten Venter requested that the item be tabled for more discussion with the County.

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter AV to table "Discussion/Approval of Animal Control Invoice" with a second by Erik Keith. Motion Carried 5-0.

5. Consideration/Approval of SPLOST VIII Project List

Council had no further questions or comments regarding the proposed SPLOST VIII project list.

Action: A motion was made by Kerri Davis to approve the SPLOST VIII Project List and to authorize the Mayor to approve the Habersham County SPLOST VIII IGA with a second by Maarten Venter. Motion Carried 5-0.

6. Consideration/Approval of Habersham County Drug Court MOU

Woodmaster presented an MOU with Mountain Judicial Circuit for Corporal John Groves. A few months prior, the same MOU was approved by Council for Assistant Chief Ferguson to work for Habersham County Drug/Accountability Court. As the County is struggling to find officers, Corporal Groves has offered his off hours' time to assist. This MOU will authorize Groves to utilize City equipment while working for the Drug Court. Groves' K9 Hulk will not be utilized unless requested.

Council had no further questions or comments.

Action: A motion was made by Alice Venter to approve the Habersham County Drug Court MOU for Corporal Groves and to authorize the CAO to execute the MOU as presented with a second Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 5-0.

7. Discussion of Fire Department Consolidation

Discussions regarding consolidating fire service have been ongoing for a few months; however, Woodmaster reported that the City of Cornelia has rescinded their offer to contract fire services. Cornelia's board decided they were no longer interested in consolidation due to the upcoming growth expected in Cornelia. While Cornelia maintains a "subscription fee" for Mount Airy, they do not wish to take on additional contracts like Baldwin or Demorest.

Councilmember Alice Venter expressed her disappointment with Cornelia's rescinded offer.

8. Discussion of Additional FY26 Budget Cuts

Councilmember Alice Venter shared information regarding an insurance option for City staff with Capstone Financial that could potentially save the City money and was previously investigated in 2021. Venter said that while the insurance program is "non-traditional," she wanted to implore the City to revisit the conversation about employee insurance. Venter requested the Mayor and Council's commitment to work with City staff to continue finding things to cut in the FY26 budget.

Executive Session

Personnel

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to close the regular session and move into executive session for personnel with a second by Kerri Davis. Motion Carried 5-0 at time at 8:25 pm.

Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to reenter the regular session from executive session and to authorize the execution of the affidavit where personnel were discussed and no action was taken with a second by Alice Venter. Motion Carried 5-0 at time 10:19 pm.

Announcements

- a. The Banks County Library On the Go will be set up at the TAP Yard at 110 Airport Road from 11 am – 12:00 pm every Friday through the end of July. All residents are welcome to check out or return books. Additionally, those visiting the mobile library with children can receive food bags courtesy of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia.
- b. Join us for Theron's Theater at the TAP Yard on July 25th at 8:30 pm for a free screening of *Paddington in Peru!* Bring a chair or blanket and enjoy a night under the stars with your friends and family! Concessions are available with all proceeds going to Shop with a Hero.
- c. Highland Pointe Drive from Dawn Place to Trojan Lane will be closed to through traffic from 6/30/25 to 7/11/25 for road repairs. Access will be limited to residents of those roads.
- d. Chipping for the month of July will be delayed due to equipment issues. Please note that due to budget and staff cuts as requested by the residents, this will be the last monthly pickup for chipping. Only storm debris will be picked up and chipped going forward.

Adjournment

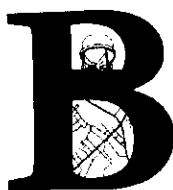
Action: A motion was made by Maarten Venter to adjourn the meeting with a second by Alice Venter. Motion Carried 5-0 at 10:20 pm.


Stephanie Almagro, Mayor

8/5/2025
Date Approved by Council


Erin Gathercoal, City Clerk





May 2025 Staff Report
Baldwin Water & Wastewater Treatment
PO Box 247
155 Willingham Avenue, Baldwin, GA 30511

FY2025 Top Priorities:

- To have as many operators as possible cross trained and licensed at both facilities.
- To obtain State required renewal certification points for all certified operators.

Operations:

- **Water Treatment Facility:** Treated 77.01 million gallons of water for the month with a daily average flow of 2.48 million gallons. The Water Treatment Facility met and or exceeded all drinking water standards for the month.
- **Wastewater Treatment Facility:** Treated 12.561 million gallons of wastewater for the month with a daily average flow of .405 million gallons. The Wastewater Treatment Facility exceeded permit limits for ammonia due to excessive I/I and solids loading.

Maintenance: Ongoing daily/weekly/monthly maintenance of multiple pumps and motors at both Water and Wastewater Treatment Facilities, working with PWD on pumping out influent wet-well at WWTF. Debris is causing issues with pumps.

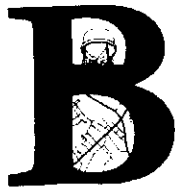
Capital Projects & Needs:

- **Water Treatment Facility:** Filter rehabilitation - completed painting of ceiling and support columns in water treatment plant building.
- **Wastewater Treatment Facility:** Storage/work building, tertiary filter rehabilitation, gravel road improvements.

Active Project Status:

- **Water Treatment Facility:** The SCADA system continues to need improvements to allow operators to visualize and receive real time data with alarms from all components of the distribution and treatment system. The City has authorized Process Worx to move forward with necessary improvements. Work has begun on the SCADA retrofit with the raw water control panel completed and PLC modifications, as well as the SCADA panel. Additional work at water plant is ongoing, overall project is approximately 99% complete.

Partial funding is secured for the pretreatment unit at the water plant;



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design plans have been approved by EPD; additional funding is being investigated.

- **Wastewater Treatment Facility:** Optimization of PAC feed system to enhance phosphorus reduction and decrease chemical usage and cost.

Design plans have been approved by EPD for a solids handling building. EMI and the City are currently seeking additional funding.

Future Projects & Needs:

- **Water Treatment Facility:** With the continued increase of water production, the City will eventually need to look into an offsite reservoir. Additionally, the City will need to evaluate the increasing water loss value within the distribution system. EMI can assist the City with these needs.
- **Wastewater Treatment Facility:** The Wastewater Treatment Facility continues to receive a tremendous amount of inflow and infiltration at the wastewater plant during rain events. Need to address inflow and infiltration issues as well as need additional clarifiers and influent structure at treatment facility. EMI can assist in further completion of an SSES of the collection system as well as assist in seeking funding options for the needed WWTF improvements. We continue to experience operational issues with the existing belt press, resulting in elevated solids levels and recurring permit compliance challenges. It is imperative that we identify funding for the construction of a solids handling building and the installation of a new screw press system.