

City of Walthourville
Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes
February 26, 2024 @ 6:00 PM

I. Meeting Called to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mayor Sarah B. Hayes.

II. Roll Call was taken by the City Clerk with the following members present:

Mayor Sarah B. Hayes	Mayor Pro Tem Luciria L. Lovette
Councilman Mitchell Boston	Councilman Patrick Underwood
Councilman Robert Dodd	

Member Absent: Councilwoman Bridgette Kelly

The attendance of the council constituted a quorum.

Attorney Luke R. Moses was in attendance.

III. The Invocation was given by Councilman Mitchell Boston.

IV. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.

V. Adoption of Mayor and Council Agenda: The Motion to approve was made by Mayor Pro Tem Lovette and the second was added by Councilman Dodd.

Vote: 4-0: Motion Carried Unanimously.

VI. Adoption of Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes:

- February 13, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes, the motion to approve was made by Councilman Boston and the second was provided by Councilman Dodd.

Vote: 3-1: Motion Carried: Opposed Mayor Pro Tem Lovette.

- February 13, 2024 Executive Session Minutes, the motion to approve was made by Councilman Dodd and the second was added by Councilman Boston.

Vote: 3-1: Motion Carried: Opposed Mayor Pro Tem Lovette.

Councilman Boston, asked Mayor Pro Tem Lovette if there was a reason why the minutes could not be a unanimous vote, was there a problem with them? The Mayor Pro Tem said, “she had not had an opportunity to read them.”

At this time, there was a deviation from the printed agenda and LCPC made their presentation to the Mayor and Council. The numbering will be out of order due to the deviation.

VIII. Agenda Items

1. LCPC

Ms. Lori Parks

Ms. Parks presented a Business License Request for Heelz N Wheelz, LLC (Private Membership Club). The business owner is Mrs. Latonay Maxwell and the property owner is the late Mr. Charles Frasier. Heelz N Wheelz, LLC is a private membership club that is operated by ladies first motorcycle club. The establishment is not open to the public and it is a place of fellowship for the SEGA (Southeast Georgia Alliance) Motorcycle Club. There are 32 motorcycle clubs between Long, Liberty and Chatham Counties that are members of SEGA. There will be no alcohol served and they will only be operational on Tuesday nights, which is called Hang Night and is a social event.

Mrs. Maxwell stated SEGA was started in Augusta, Georgia in 2005. She said this is a community-oriented organization, and they are actively involved in the communities that they are in. She added the ladies get together once a week in a social setting to discuss their activities and upcoming events. She stated they believe in following rules and this is not a disorderly organization.

The motion to approve was made by Councilman Dodd and the second was added by Mayor Pro Tem Lovette. Vote: 4-0: Motion Carried Unanimously.

At this time, the regular agenda format resumed as printed.

VII. Presentations:

Liberty County Board of Commissioners

The Honorable Justin Frasier

Commissioner Frasier announced that today, “was a difficult day in Liberty County, longtime Tax Commissioner, the Honorable Mr. Virgil Jones passed away, earlier today.” He asked for a Moment of Silence in his honor. After his announcement the Mayor Pro Tem stated a Walthourville citizen, Ms. Humphries passed away, also.

Commissioner Frasier stated he was present on behalf of the Liberty County Economic Development Authority and he was committed to attracting and bringing new businesses and industries, supporting the existing enterprises and implementing strategies to the municipalities in Liberty County. His presentation stated:

What? The mission of the Economic Development Authority is to foster economic growth through collaboration and innovation for the continued prosperity of our community.

Why? Helps increase the strength and diversity of local and regional economies to create jobs and improve the quality of life for residents.

Who? It is the Community Stakeholders who consist of the Liberty County Commissioners and the Cities of Midway, Walthourville, Riceboro, Flemington and the Private Sector.

How? An Economic Comprehensive Plan will be developed and used.

Commissioner Frasier stated he was visiting every municipality in Liberty County and would like to ask Walthourville to sign the resolution for this Economic Development opportunity. Councilman Boston stated he was familiar with the Liberty County Development Authority and felt this would be a good opportunity for the city and we (city) need to move quickly on Economic Development. Councilman Underwood stated the city should sign so that we can explore the opportunities that can be provided in Walthourville. Commissioner Frasier stated he wanted to point out that Hinesville was not included as a stakeholder because they had their own authority, the Hinesville Downtown Development Authority who is dedicated and successful in bringing Economic Development. Mayor Hayes thanked Commissioner Frasier for coming and presenting this information. She said the Mayor and Council would discuss this at their workshop at a later date.

Georgia Rural Water

Mr. Bill Powell

Mr. Powell stated he had been contacted by City Clerk, Shana T Moss to conduct a water rate study for the city and the last rate increase in the city was in 2012. He said that Georgia Rural Water provided the Water Rate Study, free of charge since the city is a member of Georgia Rural Water. He stated he has worked closely with Ms. Moss and Mr. Patrick Golphin analyzing documents and gathering information for him to conduct the study.

He informed the Elected Officials about HB 489 that was adopted in 1997 pertaining to water rates that a city charge such as inside the city limits rates and outside the city limits rates. No municipality can arbitrarily charge more than one price if it cannot be justified that the cost is more to provide the same service regardless of inside versus outside rates. He referenced the City of Winder, Georgia is being sued by Bartow County for charging different rates and said this is something that the Mayor and Council should take into consideration.

Mr. Powell said he reviewed the city's operating budget, current operating expenses and the debt service in making his determination. He stated Walthourville should have increased their rates a few years ago to keep up with the demands and expenses of the water system. The city has added more customers which equates to more water management. He is proposing the following water rate increases.

**WATER AND SEWER RATE COMPARISON
FOR THE CITY OF WALTHOURVILLE**

	CURRENT RATES INSIDE			PROPOSED NEW RATES INSIDE			% Increase
	Water	Sewer	Total	Water	Sewer	Total	
Zero Gallons	\$ 18.00	\$ 23.35	\$ 41.35	\$ 23.00	\$ 23.00	\$ 46.00	11.25%
1,000 Gallons	\$ 22.50	\$ 26.10	\$ 48.60	\$ 27.00	\$ 29.50	\$ 56.50	16.26%
2,000 Gallons	\$ 27.00	\$ 28.85	\$ 55.85	\$ 31.00	\$ 36.00	\$ 67.00	19.97%
3,000 Gallons	\$ 31.75	\$ 31.60	\$ 63.35	\$ 35.25	\$ 42.50	\$ 77.75	22.73%
4,000 Gallons	\$ 36.50	\$ 34.35	\$ 70.85	\$ 39.50	\$ 49.00	\$ 88.50	24.91%
5,000 Gallons	\$ 41.25	\$ 37.10	\$ 78.35	\$ 43.75	\$ 55.50	\$ 99.25	26.68%
6,000 Gallons	\$ 46.25	\$ 39.85	\$ 86.10	\$ 48.25	\$ 62.00	\$ 110.25	28.05%
7,000 Gallons	\$ 51.25	\$ 43.35	\$ 94.60	\$ 52.75	\$ 68.50	\$ 121.25	28.17%
8,000 Gallons	\$ 56.25	\$ 46.85	\$ 103.10	\$ 57.25	\$ 75.00	\$ 132.25	28.27%
9,000 Gallons	\$ 61.25	\$ 50.35	\$ 111.60	\$ 61.75	\$ 81.50	\$ 143.25	28.36%
10,000 Gallons	\$ 66.25	\$ 53.85	\$ 120.10	\$ 66.25	\$ 88.00	\$ 154.25	28.44%

The Mayor and Council were relieved that the rates were not as expensive as anticipated. They took no action and also said this item would be discussed at a workshop. Mr. Powell advised the Mayor and Council to please review this information because the revenue is not sustaining the expenses of the water. He stated Water is the most precious thing we have, we cannot live without water and it has to be safe. He left them with this nugget, "When your outgo(expenses) is more than your ingo (revenue)t then upkeep will be your downfall. Mr. Powell said he would be happy to come back to the workshop if they had additional questions. Mayor Hayes informed him, that she would be in contact with him.

AGENDA ITEMS

2. City of Walthourville Councilman Mitchell Boston
Reported the city's recycling program needs to be eliminated. He said basically every household has two polycarts and both of those polycarts are being taken to the landfill, which is costing the city money. He suggest eliminating the recycling but give the citizens an option to pay to keep the additional trash can. Most of the city's recycle polycarts are blue and green. He is proposing an additional \$6.00 monthly to keep the trash can.

He further addressed the city's Bulk Trash collection and stated there were no definitive guideline as to what the city would or would not collect. The landfill cost is astronomical monthly ranging anywhere from \$10,000 sometime \$15,000 and the city is picking up anything. He researched other cities comparable to Walthourville and some of those cities have guidelines for what they pick up. Councilman Boston added that he proposes that all leaves have to be bagged because it takes time when the driver has to collect the leaves and they are not bagged, this results in more manpower. Also, yard debris should be 8x8x4 and limbs should be no more than 6 feet long and 4 inches in diameter. Also, he added that the Bulk Truck could operate on a modified schedule, once weekly, biweekly or monthly. Any additional pickups could/would result in a cost. Councilman Dodd stated the city has sent more than 241 tons some months to the landfill at \$49.00 a ton.

Citizens were in the audience and began to talk without being permitted. Mayor Hayes suggested they hear from the citizens.

At 7:14 PM a motion to enter a Public Hearing for Citizens Comments was made by Mayor Pro Tem Lovette and the second was added by Councilman Boston.

Vote: 4-0: Motion Carried Unanimously

- Gail Ford stated Walthourville was a military community and when military citizens PCS they put everything outside. The city will need to have some guidelines and the citizens would need to know the cost.
- Patricia Palmer suggested charging for bulk pickup and eliminating the recycling.

- Charlie Richardson stated he understood trying to reduce operating cost due to the recycling. He added this is very important and the elected officials needed to weigh the options.
- Mayor Pro Tem Lovette suggested the city mulch the dry trash (limbs and leaves). The city would have to purchase a mulcher and obtain a place to conduct the mulching. She reiterated that the recycling program was not initiated to make money for the city but to protect the environment and defray the landfill cost.
- Councilman Boston said the recycling and household garbage was both going to the landfill. The recycling is contaminated if one morsel of food is included in the cart.
- Mayor Hayes added that at one time the garbage truck was inoperable and the recycle truck had to be used to collect the routes.

At 7:26 PM a motion to exit the Public Hearing was made by Mayor Pro Tem Lovette and the second was added by Councilman Boston. Vote: 4-0: Motion Carried Unanimously

The motion to eliminate the city's recycling and retrieve the citizens polycart was made by Councilman Boston and the second was added by Councilman Underwood.

Vote: 3-1: Motion Carried.

Voting Favorably were Councilmen Boston, Underwood and Dodd.

Voting Unfavorable was Mayor Pro Tem Lovette.

Polycarts will begin to be collected on Monday March 4th-March 15th, this information is to be disseminated immediately to the citizens. If a citizen want to retain the additional polycart it will cost \$11.00 monthly, the cost that is currently in place for the city.

3. City of Walthourville

Councilman Mitchell Boston

Reported that there are several nonworking vehicles at Public Works that he would like to be placed on GovDeals. This would generate some funds for the General Fund. He would like to post an old Grapple (Bulk Trash) Truck, a Garbage Truck, a Police Vehicle and an F-150 that has over two hundred and fifty thousand miles. The motion to list these vehicles On GovDeals for sale was made by Councilman Boston and the second was added by Councilman Dodd.

Vote: 4-0: Motion Carried Unanimously.

4. City of Walthourville

Mayor Pro Tem Lovette

Stated the fence at Johnnie Frasier Park needs to be replaced. She is trying to obtain three quotes. She has contacted Hinesville Fence Company She stated she has been unsuccessful in obtaining bids because she was gotten bids before and the city took no action. Therefore companies are hesitant about providing quotes. She asked her colleagues if they wanted to

spearhead the project and obtain quotes she would welcome it. Everyone agreed for her to continue and possibly bring the quotes at the next meeting.

IX. Department Reports:

Water Department

Mr. Patrick Golphin

Reported the Shaw Road project was completed and the pipe was covered. The Water Team had to wait until the ground was dry. The city has a water tap to perform but the city will have to boar across the road. They are waiting to obtain clearance on the permits needed to perform the job. The city will post on Facebook and the city's website to inform the citizens.

Mayor Pro Tem Lovette suggested a digital sign be placed on Talmadge or Highway 84 to inform citizens of news in Walthourville. Mayor Hayes stated she was looking into that.

Fire Department

Chief Nicolas Maxwell

Reported since the last meeting the department has answered 15 calls, 11 of those were medical. Five calls were in Allenhurst. The department has completed hose, ladder, and nozzle testing and this was done at under 17% of what was budgeted. They are developing an inspection preventative plan.

Police Department

Chief Christopher Reed

Reported 41 citations have been written, 10 of those were warnings. There was a shooting in Walthourville and it was an isolated event, the public was never in jeopardy. He gave an update on Animal Control and stated they would only respond if it was a vicious or sick dog. One of the city's Tahoe's need a Cadillac Converter.

X. Governing Body Comments

Mayor Sarah B. Hayes reported that she was meeting with officials in Liberty County. She was glad that everyone is coming out. She stated the elected officials are working hard and listening to the citizens. The city will be holding Millage Rate Public Hearings on March 14th at 5:00 PM and 7:00 PM at the Police Department. She also requested to change the time of the final meeting on March 22 to 6:00 PM instead of 5:00 PM. The Mayor will be enroute from attending Newly Elected Officials Training in Tifton, Georgia.

Mayor Pro Tem Lovette inquired about how the city can move forward with the Forensic Audit. She stated the citizens are requesting the audit be completed.

Councilman Boston stated, "we have just been addressed by the Water Expert that we aren't changing enough for water. Trash collection is not yielding the city revenue to break even. Citizen, Gail Ford asked, everytime we meet, we hear that we are being charged another fee, "how did we get here." Councilman Underwood stated we got here when the previous elected officials took revenue out of the budget. Mayor Hayes interjected and said we are not going to belittle the previous administration. She stated the audit will be done when the city gets some more funds. Attorney Moses stated pertaining to the Forensic Audit, it is in an unfunded mandate, no one has eliminated it, it has not been thrown out

Councilman Mitchell Boston

Post 1

Reported a citizen on Kent Road is requesting a sign for a Autistic Child in the area. He asked about T-SPLOST Funds being used for speed bumps in subdivisions. Attorney Moses stated the city would not be liable if a citizen's vehicle was damaged because they traveled too fast going across the speed bumps. Attorney Moses further added that the city might be able to acquire G-MEG Funds for speed bumps and that he would research it.

Councilman Patrick Underwood

Post 2

Reported that Congressman Buddy Carter was suppose to attend the meeting today. However, due to the student being killed at UGA he had to be in Athens. He plans to invite Senators Warnock and Ossoff to come to a meeting. The city will host an Easter Celebration on March 30th at Johnnie Frasier Park from 12:00 PM-2:00 PM. Donations are being accepted and no city funds will be used for this event. He and Councilmen Boston and Dodd will be attending New Elected Officials State Mandated Training in Athens on February 28th-March 1st.

Councilwoman Bridgette Kelly
Absent

Post 3

Mayor Pro Tem Luciria L. Lovette

Post 4

Reported she had spoken about the fence. Also, she wanted to be made aware of any activity including Park Rentals for Johnnie Frasier Park. City Clerk Moss presented email notifications beginning in 2022-current as of February 24th that the Mayor Pro Tem was notified of the parks rentals.

Councilman Robert Dodd
No comments.

Post 5

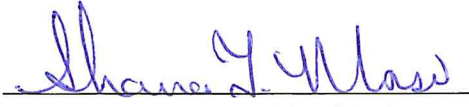
XI. Citizens Comments

1. Shirley Thornton asked if citizens could cancel their trash subscription with the city. If not, the citizens need to be given notice; please respect the citizens and let them know.
2. Gwendolyn Dykes spoke about the Fire Fee. She asked if the Fire fee was just for the Fire Department? She was informed yes. She doesn't mind paying, but everyone should pay. Also, this Fire Fee will only be effective through December because next year the millage rate will be intact. She was told yes by Mayor Hayes.

XII. Executive Session

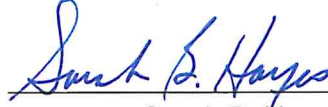
None

- XIII. Adjournment: At 8:24 PM a motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Boston and the second was added by Councilman Dodd. Vote: 4-0: Motion Carried Unanimously.



Handwritten signature of Shana T. Moss in blue ink.

Shana T. Moss, City Clerk



Handwritten signature of Sarah B. Hayes in blue ink.

Sarah B. Hayes, Mayor