

City of Walthourville
Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2024 @ 6:00 PM

- I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mayor Sarah B. Hayes.
- II. Roll Call: The roll was taken by the City Clerk with the following members present:

Mayor Sarah B. Hayes	Councilman Mitchell Boston
Councilman Patrick Underwood	Councilwoman Bridgette Kelly
Councilwoman Luciria L. Lovette	Councilman Robert Dodd

The attendance of the council constituted a quorum.

Attorney Luke R. Moses was present for the meeting.

- III. Invocation was given by Mayor Sarah B. Hayes.
- IV. Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.
- V. Adoption of City Council Agenda: The motion to approve was made by Councilwoman Lovette and the second was added by Councilman Underwood.
Vote: 5-0: Motion Carried Unanimously.
- VI. Adoption of City Council Minutes: The motion to adopt the following was made by:
- December 12, 2023-Regular minutes, the motion to approve was made by Councilman Boston and the second was provided by Councilman Underwood.
Vote: 4-1: Motion Carried.
Voting favorably were Councilmembers: Boston, Underwood, Kelly and Dodd.
Voting opposed: Councilwoman Lovette.
 - December 12, 2023- Executive Session Minutes, the motion to approve was made by Councilwoman Kelly and the second was added by Councilman Boston.
Vote: 4-1: Motion Carried.
Voting favorably were Councilmembers: Boston, Underwood, Kelly and Dodd.
Voting opposed: Councilwoman Lovette.
 - December 21, 2023-Special Called Meeting Minutes, the motion to approve was made by Councilman Dodd and the second was added by Councilman Underwood.
Vote: 4-1: Motion Carried.
Voting favorably were Councilmembers: Boston, Underwood, Kelly and Dodd.
Voting opposed: Councilwoman Lovette.
- VII. Presentation(s): None

VIII. Agenda Items

1. LEMA Mr. Thomas (Trip) W. Duke III
Liberty County Emergency Management Agency (LEMA). Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement (SWMAA). Mr. Duke stated the MOU he was presenting would assist the city in obtaining State Resources in the event of a disaster and emergency. This is a four-year agreement and it would need to be renewed in 2028. Mr. Duke stated, “that a State of Emergency has to be declared before this agreement will be effective.” The motion to approve the MOU was made by Councilman Boston and the second was added by Councilwoman Lovette. Vote: 4-0: Motion Carried.
(Councilman Dodd reclused himself from the vote due to conflict of interest, he is the Liberty County Emergency Agency’s Director).

2. City of Walthourville Mayor and Council

- **Appointment of Mayor Pro Tem:** Mayor Hayes stated she wanted to nominate Councilwoman Kelly. Councilman Underwood made the motion, and Councilwoman Kelly seconded. Councilmembers: Dodd, Boston, and Lovette voted against Councilwoman Kelly. Vote: 2-3: Motion Failed.

City Attorney Luke Moses said “by operation of the city’s Charter, the incumbent on the ballot with the most votes when last elected would automatically become Mayor Pro Tem. which was Councilwoman Lovette.” Although she ran unopposed, her name did appear on the ballot. Mayor Hayes inquired if there was an alternative. Attorney Moses referenced Article Two Section 2-6 of the City’s Charter, stating that, because the charter reads that the Mayor and Council get to decide, “this is one of the rare instances when the Mayor can cast a vote.” Councilwoman Kelly then nominated Councilwoman Lovette and the second was added by Councilman Underwood. Councilmen Boston and Dodd voted no, Mayor Hayes abstained, and Councilwoman Lovette cast the deciding vote for herself.

Vote: 3-2: Motion Carried.

- **Appointment of City Attorney:** The motion to approve Luke R. Moses as City Attorney was made by Councilman Underwood and the second was provided by Councilman Boston. Vote: 4-1: Motion Carried.
Members voting favorably were Boston, Underwood, Kelly and Lovette.
Member voting unfavorably was Councilman Dodd.
- **Appointment of Municipal Court Judge:** The motion to reappoint Judge Robert Pirkle was made by Councilman Underwood and the second was added by Councilman Boston. Vote: 3-0-2: Motion Carried.

Members voting favorably were Councilmen Dodd, Underwood and Boston. Members abstaining were Mayor Pro Tem Lovette and Councilwoman Kelly.

- Appointment of City Finance Officer. Mayor Hayes stated the city needs to look into hiring an onsite Finance Officer. Mayor Pro Tem Lovette stated the city definitely needs one. She suggested looking for a city employee with the knowledge, skill set and education. Attorney Moses stated that a full-time position would need to be advertised and that a city employee could apply. Mayor Hayes requested a motion to approve the hiring of a City Finance Officer, with the salary of the person being revisited. The motion to approve was made by Mayor Pro Tem Lovette and the second was added by Councilman Boston. Vote: 5-0: Motion Carried Unanimously.

- Appointment of Department Heads. Mayor Hayes disseminated the appointments of Department Heads. Mayor Hayes stated she will be responsible for communicating with the Fire, Police and Water Departments. Mayor Pro Tem Lovette will continue being the liaison with Parks and Recreation. Councilman Mitchell Boston will be the Public Works liaison. Councilwoman Robert Dodd will work as the city's EMA Liaison in conjunction with Liberty County Emergency Management Agency Director. Councilman Patrick Underwood has been assigned to develop the new Youth Commission and other youth related activities. Councilwoman Bridgette Kelly has been tasked with Special Projects and finding grants and other funding.

3. City of Walthourville

- Work Session Dates. Mayor Hayes stated she would like for the council to convene prior to the regular meeting for a working session to discuss any information on the agenda or any pertinent information that they would like to discuss. The next work session will be held February 13, 2024 at 5:00 PM in the council chambers.
- City Charter and Ordinance Review Date(s). The Mayor stated the City Charter is antiquated and needed to be updated as quickly as possible. Attorney Moses pointed out that any changes would have to be channeled through State Representative Al Williams, at the State Capitol which would probably have to wait until next year's legislative session to get done.
- Walthourville's 50th Anniversary Celebration. The Mayor discussed a celebration to mark the 50th anniversary of Walthourville's incorporation as a city. Although the Georgia Assembly passed Walthourville's charter in March 1974, Mayor Hayes said the reason for delaying the celebration until September was to acquire sponsors to fund the event, "due to the fact that March is so close.

Councilman Boston said, "I think the city's finances need to be first and foremost." Mayor Hayes stated she agreed and that is why she supports obtaining sponsors and moving the celebration until September.

IX. Department Reports

City of Walthourville Departments

Fire Department

Chief Nicolas Maxwell

Presented the department's statistics. Chief Maxwell suggested a fair way to assess the fire fee would be to charge a flat fee per square foot: for example, one cent for residential properties, two cents for commercial, and three cents for industrial. No fee would be charged for undeveloped parcels. Chief Maxwell said the city "would need heavy assistance from the Tax Assessor's office" to figure out exactly how much revenue the fire fee would generate, based on properties within the city limits. Mayor Hayes said no one was able to meet with the city until after February 28th. Chief Maxwell further stated, the Fire Department would start a school supply closet for children who lost their school supplies in a fire.

Police Department

Chief Christopher Reed

Presented the department's statistics. Chief Reed announced the Citizens Academy, which gives residents the chance to learn about policing firsthand through a series of classes. They are looking at restarting the Citizens Academy which will take place in March on Thursdays at 6 p.m. if enough people sign up. Citizens in the class will get to go on a ride along with WPD officers. Several young people also had approached the department about starting a youth academy. Mayor Hayes suggested that Councilman Underwood and Mayor Pro Lovette offer activities through the Youth Council and Parks and Recreation.

Water Department

Mr. Patrick Golphin

Reported the Water Department is having some problems with the city's current meters. He stated in June of 2023 a representative presented to the Mayor and Council that the city's current meters are obsolete, the life span is 10 years and the current meters were installed in 2013. The representative presented a proposal to the Mayor and Council to replace the current meters with digital meters would cost the city \$900,000. The cost of a current meter is \$250.00 and currently 40 meters are affected.

Mayor's Corner

Mayor Sarah B. Hayes

Stated she was happy to see everyone come out. A discussion ensued about the city's recycling. She said a lot of manpower is being spent on the city's recycling and some citizens don't participate. Councilwoman Kelly told her fellow colleagues that enforcing penalties against those who use recycling bins for garbage could prove tough. "By the time the Sanitation Team dump it and see it, it's already in the recycle truck." What do you do then?" Councilman Dodd suggested setting up a recycling cage at a central location where residents would drop off their items. Mayor Pro Tem Lovette said, "the recycling program was not started to make money, it was started to protect and save the environment and reduce the city's landfill cost. Councilman Boston said

he has lived in places where sanitation workers refused to pick up garbage if the recycling wasn't done correctly and that was punishment enough.

X. Citizens Comments

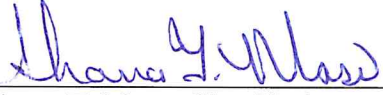
Citizens

1. Ms. Gwendolyn Dykes said that, when the city used to have a central recycling drop-off location, it was "a mess" and that the curbside bins "were a blessing."
2. Mrs. Gail Ford said that, over the past year, she had seen recycling put into the regular trash truck.
3. Mrs. Yvette Sanders said that she agrees with Councilman Boston that people who don't separate their recycling shouldn't have their trash picked up. She added that residents "need clarification on what can and cannot be recycled" and that it was not fair to penalize everyone for a few people's actions.

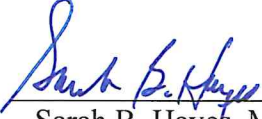
XI. Executive Session

None

- XII. Adjournment: The motion to adjourn at 7:17 PM was made by Mayor Pro Tem Lovette and the second was provided by Councilman Boston.



Shana T. Moss, City Clerk



Sarah B. Hayes, Mayor