

City of Walthourville
Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2024 @ 6:00 PM
Walthourville Police Department

I. Call 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 Bridgette Kelly	Councilman Robert Dodd

Councilman Mitchell Boston was present via telephone

The attendance of the council constituted a quorum.

Attorney Andrew Ruberti was present in the absence of Attorney Luke R. Moses

III. The Invocation was given by Mayor Hayes.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.

V. Adoption of Meeting Agenda: The motion to approve the agenda was made by Councilwoman Kelly and the second was added by Councilwoman Underwood. Vote: 5-0: Motion Carried Unanimously

VI. Adoption of the Regular Meeting Minutes from the April 23, 2024, Meeting. The motion to approve was made by Councilman Dodd and the second was added by Councilman Underwood.

Vote: 4-1: Motion Carried.
Opposed: Mayor Pro Tem Lovette

VII. Presentation

None

VIII. Agenda Item(s)

1. LCPC Ms. Lori Parks
Ms. Parks presented a Business License Request for All Monde Studio, the business owner is Ms. Alissa White and the business will be located at 4981 West Oglethorpe Highway, Suite 4. The business will be a full-service salon that offers hair color services, natural hair care, and hair extensions. The business operating hours will be Tuesday-Saturday from 8:00 AM-6:00 PM. The motion to approve was made by Councilwoman Kelly and the second was added by Mayor Pro Tem Lovette.
Vote: 5-0: Motion Carried Unanimously.

2. LCPC Ms. Lori Parks
Public Hearing: The motion to enter the Public Hearing at 6:04 PM was made by Councilwoman Kelly and the second was added by Mayor Pro Tem Lovette. Vote: 5-0: Motion Carried.

Ms. Parks presented a Zoning Permit for 125 Smith Road for a new double wide manufactured home from Hinesville Home Center. The owner of the property is James E. Hendry and the applicant is James

The motion to approve the Water Rate Increase effective immediately for the June 2024 bill was made by Councilman Boston and the second was added by Councilman Dodd.

Vote: 3-2: Motion Carried

Members voting favorably were: Councilmen Boston, Underwood and Dodd.

Members opposing: Mayor Pro Tem Luciria L. Lovette and Councilwoman Bridgette Kelly.

3. Water Rate Increase

Mayor and Council

A Water Rate Study was conducted (free of charge) by Georgia Rural Water Association Based upon their findings they recommended an increase to the city’s Water Rates. Water Rates in the city have not increased since 2012. On February 26, 2024, Mr; Bill Powell with Geogia Rural Water made his initial presentation to the Mayor and Council. Mayor Pro Tem Lovette stated she cannot support an increase because an audit has not taken place on the city’s finances. Mayor Hayes stated the council voted to reappropriate the funds that had been set aside for the audit and no one is forfeiting the audit.

Councilman Boston stated he wanted to remind everyone that an audit has to be done and the CPA has not submitted the 2021, 2022, and the 2023 (which will be due on June 30). He added these audits have to be done, he is not concerned about a Forensic Audit, but a yearly audit is required.

Councilwoman Kelly inquired about the City CPA and Mayor Hayes started, “we are looking at a CPA and I will have more information that will be forthcoming.” She further informed the Council that CPA, Mr. Matthew Caines resigned effectively immediately. Mr. Caines presented the Mayor with an Engagement of Services letter in January, and the city would not execute the letter. Mr. Caines stated without a signed engagement letter he would not perform any work for the city because it would be operating out of the GAAP Guidelines and the city owed him money for his services.

The motion to approve the Water Rate Increase as proposed by Georgia Rural Water and effective immediately for the June 2024 bill was made by Councilman Boston and the second was added by Councilman Dodd.

Vote: 3-2: Motion Carried.

Members voting favorably were Councilmen Boston, Underwood and Dodd.

Members opposing were Mayor Pro Tem Lovette and Councilwoman Kelly.

Proposed Rate increased that will be effective in June 2024 are listed in red:

WATER AND SEWER RATE COMPARISON								
FOR THE CITY OF WALTHOURVILLE								
CURRENT RATES INSIDE					PROPOSED NEW RATES INSIDE			
	Water	Sewer	Total		Water	Sewer	Total	
10 Gallons	\$ 18.00	\$ 23.35	\$ 41.35		\$ 23.00	\$ 23.00	\$ 46.00	
20 Gallons	\$ 22.50	\$ 26.10	\$ 48.60		\$ 27.00	\$ 29.50	\$ 56.50	
30 Gallons	\$ 27.00	\$ 28.85	\$ 55.85		\$ 31.00	\$ 36.00	\$ 67.00	
40 Gallons	\$ 31.75	\$ 31.60	\$ 63.35		\$ 35.25	\$ 42.50	\$ 77.75	
50 Gallons	\$ 36.50	\$ 34.35	\$ 70.85		\$ 39.50	\$ 49.00	\$ 88.50	
60 Gallons	\$ 41.25	\$ 37.10	\$ 78.35		\$ 43.75	\$ 55.50	\$ 99.25	
70 Gallons	\$ 46.25	\$ 39.85	\$ 86.10		\$ 48.25	\$ 62.00	\$ 110.25	
80 Gallons	\$ 51.25	\$ 43.35	\$ 94.60		\$ 52.75	\$ 68.50	\$ 121.25	
90 Gallons	\$ 56.25	\$ 46.85	\$ 103.10		\$ 57.25	\$ 75.00	\$ 132.25	
100 Gallons	\$ 61.25	\$ 50.35	\$ 111.60		\$ 61.75	\$ 81.50	\$ 143.25	

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

CURRENT RATES INSIDE

PROPOSED NEW RATES INSIDE

	Water	Sewer	Total	Water	Sewer	Total	Increase %	Increase \$
Zero Gallons	\$ 18.00	\$ 23.35	\$ 41.35	\$ 23.00	\$ 23.00	\$ 46.00	11.25%	\$ 4.65
1,000 Gallons	\$ 22.50	\$ 26.10	\$ 48.60	\$ 27.00	\$ 29.50	\$ 56.50	16.26%	\$ 7.90
2,000 Gallons	\$ 27.00	\$ 28.85	\$ 55.85	\$ 31.00	\$ 36.00	\$ 67.00	19.97%	\$ 11.15
3,000 Gallons	\$ 31.75	\$ 31.60	\$ 63.35	\$ 35.25	\$ 42.50	\$ 77.75	22.73%	\$ 14.40
4,000 Gallons	\$ 36.50	\$ 34.35	\$ 70.85	\$ 39.50	\$ 49.00	\$ 88.50	24.91%	\$ 17.65
5,000 Gallons	\$ 41.25	\$ 37.10	\$ 78.35	\$ 43.75	\$ 55.50	\$ 99.25	26.68%	\$ 20.90
6,000 Gallons	\$ 46.25	\$ 39.85	\$ 86.10	\$ 48.25	\$ 62.00	\$ 110.25	28.05%	\$ 24.15
7,000 Gallons	\$ 51.25	\$ 43.35	\$ 94.60	\$ 52.75	\$ 68.50	\$ 121.25	28.17%	\$ 26.65
8,000 Gallons	\$ 56.25	\$ 46.85	\$ 103.10	\$ 57.25	\$ 75.00	\$ 132.25	28.27%	\$ 29.15
9,000 Gallons	\$ 61.25	\$ 50.35	\$ 111.60	\$ 61.75	\$ 81.50	\$ 143.25	28.36%	\$ 31.65
10,000 Gallons	\$ 66.25	\$ 53.85	\$ 120.10	\$ 66.25	\$ 88.00	\$ 154.25	28.44%	\$ 34.15

The base charge for zero gallons for water is \$23.00.
\$15.99 base, \$5.01 debt, and \$2.00 admin

The base charge for zero gallons for sewer is \$23.00.
\$16.22 base, and \$6.78 debt

The base charge for water for an account with multiple ERU's is the number of ERU's multiplied by \$21.00, the base and debt service. Then the \$2.00 will be added.

The base charge for sewer for an account with multiple ERU's is the number of ERU's multiplied by \$23.00, the base and debt service.

100 Gallons	\$	66.25	\$	53.85	\$	120.10	\$	66.25	\$	88.00	\$	154
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IX. Department Comments

City of Wathourville

1. Water Department

Mr. Patrick Golphin

Reported that meters were read on May 4th and bills were generated and sent to Spartanburg, SC. Councilman Dodd asked about the billing and the entire process was explained. Meters are read on the 5th of every month, if the fifth falls on a holiday or Sunday it is read the day prior. After the electronic meter reads the information is downloaded and reviewed and compiled by City Hall under the direction and supervision of Mr. Golphin. City Clerk, Shana T. Moss stated the bills are sent out within 3-4 days of the meters being read. After they are electronically read, they are generated as quickly as possible to get to the company to ensure the citizens obtain them before the due date on the 20th of the month. Late fee's are assessed on the 25th of each month will disconnects occurring the previous month. Bills are monitored weekly in City Hall and the citizens that are nearing disconnect are given a courtesy call.

2. Fire Department

Chief Nicolas Maxwell

Reported 59 calls were answered from the last two weeks. A tree fell on Busbee Road that the Fire Department assisted with traffic control. He stated the department took 2nd place in the 200 Club (Fallen Hero's) Tournament that was held on May 11, 2024 in Hinesville. They had teams from Savannah, Liberty, Hinesville and Long County participating. Mayor Pro Tem Lovette asked about a citizen that is AKA "Mr. Tank," donated vehicles for the department to use in their training efforts. Chief Maxwell, replied that, "yes he did, and it was greatly appreciated." She also stated she has not received but two emails about the Park Rentals for the year. City Clerk, Shana T. Moss stated she sends the email every time the Park is rented and that sometimes the Mayor Pro Tem will respond by typing, "Received." Ms. Moss gave the dates for 2024 of the emails that she sent about Park Rentals. The dates were: February 27, March 8, March 23, March 31, April 3, April 12, April 19, and May 10.

3. Police Department

Chief Christopher Reed

Reported that Officer Carter was recuperating from surgery and beginning therapy and rehab. He stated that Officer Carter is optimistic and is looking forward to rejoining the department. He stated his department is monitoring traffic paying close attention to Shaw, Talmadge, Highway 84 and Dunlevie Roads. Mayor Pro Tem Lovette gave accolades to the department on behalf of the Lovette, Baker and Martin Family for the aid the department rendered during the death of the late Mrs. Clara Roberts. Chief Reed stated that is the service they provide for any family, and they take pride in helping people in their darkest hour.

XI. Elected Officials.

Post 1-Councilman Mitchell Boston

Councilman Mitchell Boston, stated he still wanted to go on record as saying "the City of Walthourville need to be out of the Sanitation Business." The city still owes \$140,000 on the Garbage Truck. We are falling further and further behind in debt and there are no other cities around us that are responsible for their sanitation, they privatize it. Mayor Pro Tem, stated she thinks we should look into mulching the dry trash and allowing the citizens to use the mulch for their gardens. She stated that would help with the tonnage. Councilman Boston countered saying, "Eliminating dry trash is not going to fix it."

Mayor Pro Tem Lovette asked, "have you supplied the data to support the tonnage and can I get the data to support?" Councilman Boston said he ask about the bills monthly and the bills remain the same. Mulching will not cut the bill in half, nor will it cut it in half by 75% it might reduce it by 10%.

Councilman Boston wrote and read a detailed letter stating his stance on the city's Sanitation Department. His major concern is the city cannot afford to continue operating in the trash business. Councilman Boston requested his becomes a part of the City's Official Minutes. Please see the letter in its entirety.

"I am writing to present a crucial proposal for the privatization of our city's sanitation department, a move that will alleviate our financial burden and potentially enhance the quality of service for our residents. Currently, our sanitation department is facing significant financial challenges, which threaten the fiscal stability of our city. The annual cost of \$130,000 to the landfill, coupled with the escalating expenses of vehicle maintenance, insurance, fuel, and other liabilities, has resulted in our department operating at a substantial loss.

****Financial Burden:****

Our latest payment to the solid waste service was \$21,551.70, and our outstanding balance is currently \$54,138.44. With payments being made an average of every 90 days, our debt is projected to reach approximately \$85,000 by the next billing cycle. Additionally, we are burdened with a \$40,000 truck note, and our reserves have been nearly depleted. This financial strain will soon necessitate an increase in taxes, specifically through a higher millage rate, impacting all our constituents.

****Benefits of Privatization:****

1. ****Cost Savings:****

- ****Elimination of Operational Costs:**** *Privatizing our sanitation services will eliminate the costs associated with vehicle maintenance, insurance, fuel, and liabilities. This will significantly reduce our financial obligations and help stabilize our budget.*

****Landfill Fees:**** *We will no longer be responsible for the \$130,000 annual fee to the landfill, substantial saving that can be redirected towards other essential services and infrastructure improvements.*

2. ****Revenue Generation:****

- ****Franchise Fees:**** *By selecting a private sanitation company, we can negotiate a franchise fee that will generate additional revenue for our city. This new income stream will further strengthen our financial position.*

3. ****Employment Security and Enhancement:****

- *Our current CDL drivers will be offered employment with the chosen private company, often with better pay and benefits. This ensures job security for our employees while potentially improving their working conditions and compensation.*

****Addressing Concerns:****

1. ****City of Allenhurst:**** *We currently provide trash services to Allenhurst without a formal agreement. They have the option to contract with the same private company we select or choose another provider, allowing them the flexibility to decide what best suits their needs.*

2. ****Constituent Costs:****

- *Concerns about increased garbage bills can be mitigated by highlighting that most households currently use multiple trash cans while only paying for one. Privatization would standardize billing, ensuring fairness*

3. ***Debt and Tax Implications:***

- *Continuing with the current system will only deepen our debt, leading to inevitable tax hikes. Privatizing sanitation services will prevent this scenario, avoiding increased taxes and allowing us to manage our finances more effectively.*

Conclusion:

Privatizing our sanitation services offers a pragmatic solution to our current financial woes, ensuring cost savings, generating revenue, and providing job security for our employees. This move will not only stabilize our budget but also enhance the quality of life for our residents by avoiding higher taxes and ensuring efficient waste management.

I urge you to consider this proposal seriously and support the transition to privatized sanitation services. Let us take a decisive step towards securing the financial health of Walthourville and providing better services for our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mitchell Boston

Walthourville City Council Post 1”

Councilman Boston said he would like to make a motion to advertise for bids for Sanitation. The second was added by Councilwoman Kelly. Vote: 3-2: Motion Carried.

Members Voting Favorably: Councilman Boston, Councilman Dodd and Councilwoman Kelly.

Members Opposed: Mayor Pro Tem Lovette and Councilman Underwood.

Post 2-Councilman Patrick Underwood

Councilman Underwood said he has received a call concerning the Meat Market and the boxes. The owner was asked to place a fence around the area. He stated during his conversation with the owner the owner said some of the employees were leaving the garbage can open, they have been instructed to close the lid. Councilwoman Kelly asked about why he can't be mandated and given a time to have the fence erected. Mayor Hayes stated the City Attorney will give him a letter. Councilwoman Kelly said, "it seems we are preaching to the choir and the choir is not singing back when it comes to this fence." She stated he has money to put up a fence and Mayor Hayes said she can't count anyone's pockets. Councilwoman Kelly said, "she can't either, but she can count the cars that be in the parking lot.

Post 3-Councilwoman Bridgette Kelly

Councilwoman Kelly said she had no report.

Post 4-Mayor Pro Tem Luciria L. Lovette

Mayor Pro Tem Lovette stated she has been working with a lady on fence pricing for Johnnie Frasier. The cost of replacing the fence for the perimeter of the park will be \$30,000 and it will be solid Black Aluminum.

Post 5-Councilman Robert Dodd

Councilman Dodd stated Hurricane Season begins on June 1st and it is predicted to be an active season. He will be conducting a brief presentation at a future council meeting. Liberty County had the kickoff Hurricane Awareness meeting on May 8, 2024. Mayor Sarah B. Hayes, Chief Nicolas Maxell and City

Clerk, Shana T. Moss was in attendance. The presentation was conducted by Liberty County EMA, Director, Mr./Councilman Robert Dodd and Deputy Director, Mr. Thomas (Tripp) Dukes.

XI. Citizens Comments (3 Minutes)

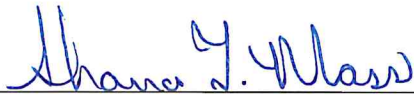
Walthourville Citizens

- Ms. Sylvia Boyd. Ms. Boyd stated her concern was the Meat Market again. She has been to the Mayor and Council previously. The buzzards fly around, and they are huge. She stated she researched buzzards, and they carry germs and diseases. The meat market does not close the lid and they need a tarp to keep the buzzards out. She cannot freely walk in her yard nor down the street for the buzzards. She asked how long it takes for the city to force the Meat Market to put up a fence. Mayor Hayes stated she has spoken with the owner, and he is in the process of trying to install a fence. The person who will install the fence works inside the market daily and in the evenings, he will work on the fence. Ms. Boyd stated this was unacceptable, and Mayor Hayes stated she feels they need some more time, and that they will make good on their promise of erecting a fence. Ms. Boyd stated, "you didn't tell me to wait when you were running for office and came to my house, asking for my vote." And she said, the Mayor takes up her three minutes talking. Mayor Hayes stated she was the Mayor. The Mayor said she has talked to the city's Municipal Court Judge and the city is in the process of trying to obtain a Code Enforcement Officer and anyone in Walthourville who violates this policy, will have to attend court in Walthourville and she has already been in communications with the Judge.

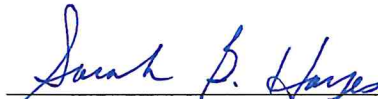
XII. Executive Session

None

- XIII. Adjournment: At 7:11 PM a motion to adjourn was made by Mayor Pro Tem Lovette and the second was provided by Councilman Dodd. Vote: 5-0: Motion Carried Unanimously



Shana T. Moss, City Clerk



Sarah B. Hayes, Mayor