

CITY OF WHIGHAM
COUNCIL MEETING
JANUARY 10, 2023

The Whigham City Council met in regular session on Tuesday, January 10, 2023 at the Whigham City Council Chambers with Mayor Trey Gainous presiding. Gainous called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and Robert Porter opened the meeting with a prayer and led the Pledge to the Flag.

Those present were: Mayor Trey Gainous, Mayor Pro Tem Jim Sellers, Jimmie Laing, Joel Singletary, Andrew Walden, Robert Porter, Police Chief Tony Black, Onie Ekekwe and Trent from Pinewood Nursing Home/Cadence Healthcare, Laura Register from the Cairo Messenger and City Clerk Rachel Jenson..

Agenda Adoption

A motion was made by Jimmie Laing to adopt the agenda. Robert Porter seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Minutes Adoption

A motion was made by Jim Sellers to adopt the minutes from the December 1st and December 13th meetings. Andrew Walden seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Public Participation

Pinewood Nursing Home: Onie Ekekwe, the executive director of the Pinewood Nursing Home in Whigham, thanked the Mayor and Council for allowing him to come speak to them. He also thanked the Mayor and the Chief of Police for their presence and participation at the facility for recent activities they have put on for the residents. Ekekwe stated 2022 was a great year for the nursing home. They recently had a meeting with Representative Campbell on needs of the facility and improvements to be done. Mr. Trent, who is the Owner of Operations/Investor of the building, came to show his support for the staff and of Mr. Ekekwe. He stated that the Nursing Home facility had a loyalty to the community and wanted to help build the City in any way they could. Trent stated that about \$750,000 had been invested into the building so far and they wanted to continue to do upgrades, especially to the exterior but would need support from the community as well. Trent stated that the building is capable of housing 142 residents but they are only able to house up to 80 right now due to their sewer system not being able to accommodate more. The nursing home is interested in working with the City for grants and other fundings for the City to get a sewer system that the Nursing Home can tie into. Trent stated a lot of work has been done to the plumbing, but it would be about a \$1 million dollar project to upgrade for just them. The Mayor and Council thanked Trent and Ekekwe for coming to speak to them and they would be interested in speaking further on the sewer topic.

Reports

City Hall

Unpaid Utility Accounts/Customer Deposit Amounts: City Clerk Jenson stated she had reached out to the software provider for utility billing for a report with the unpaid balances left by customers. Jenson stated that the average of all the bills was in the \$300 range. Of course, there were some accounts that had balances under \$5 but there was also an account left that was over \$1200, so there was a variety in

the balances left. The Clerk stated the City Attorney had drafted a letter stating the customer had a remaining balance with the account information that she and the Assistant Clerk were interested in sending out to the people that had left forwarding addresses. The Clerk passed the letter for all the Council to see. Jenson also asked the Council consider raising the deposits and suggested that we inquire with local municipalities and power companies that run a "soft credit check" to determine what program they use to see what their customer's deposit amount would be, based on any balances left at other locations and credit history of the applicant. The Council agreed this would be a good move and asked the Clerk to look into the options and report back.

Cemetery: City Clerk Jenson reported to the Mayor and Council that 22 cemetery lots had been purchased between December 13 and December 31 since the vote to increase the rate to \$750 per lot beginning January 1, 2023 was decided. Jenson reminded the Council that they had considered looking back over the rates to see if they wanted to change them from the new increase to different tiers based on residency. Porter suggested it would be best to just leave the rates all the same. Sellers agreed. The Council decided to leave the rates alone for now.

New Business

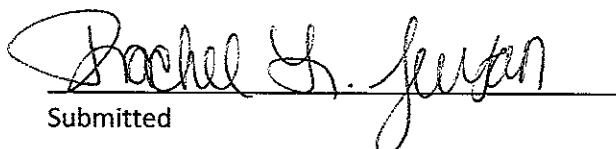
Regional Commission Appointments: Jenson told the Mayor and Council that it was time to renew the appointments for the Regional Commission Representatives. Mr. Jim Sellers was the Elected Official Representative for Whigham/Grady County. The non-public representative for Grady County has been Joe Walden. Both representatives were interested in continuing to serve in these roles. **Robert Porter made a motion to keep the representatives as they had been to serve Grady County and the City of Whigham. Jimmie Laing seconded the motion. Walden and Singletary voted in favor of the motions. Sellers abstained from voting as he was unable to vote since he was "up for re-appointment". Motion carried.**

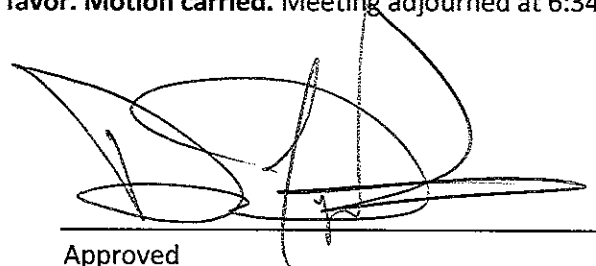
Council Matters of Interest

Mayor Gainous reminded the Council of the Town Hall Meeting on Thursday January 26 from 5 to 7 PM and Friday January 27 from 10 AM to 12 Noon at the Whigham Community Club building.

Michael Bryant, field manager for Representative Sanford Bishop, entered the meeting at 6:33 PM.

With no other matters to tend to, a motion to adjourn was made by Joel Singletary. Robert Porter seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:34 PM.


Submitted


Approved