



MINUTES

Mayor & Council Meeting

February 6, 2023 • 6:00 PM



Council Chambers, 50 Booster Field Drive, Whitesburg, Georgia 30185

ELECTED OFFICIALS & CITY STAFF PRESENT

Mayor, Amy Williford (AW)	Councilmember, Lucy Gamble (LG)
Councilmember, Chris Lewis (CL)	Councilmember, Donna Whitley (DW)
Water Superintendent, Robert Gamble (RG)	Chief Of Police, Chris Gilliland (CG)
Assistant City Clerk, Wanice Odell (WO)	

I. CALL TO ORDER BY: Mayor, Amy Williford at 6:01 pm

1. Call To Silence All Electronic Devices
2. We Have A Quorum

II. INVOCATION BY: Water Superintendent, Robert Gamble

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE BY: Councilmember Chris Lewis

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA BY: Mayor Williford

Motion: Councilmember Chris Lewis **Second:** Councilmember Lucy Gamble **Vote:** 3-0

V. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:

WS Minutes: (10/25/2022, 11/29/2022, 12/29/2022); Mayor & Council Minutes 12/12/2022
Special Called Meetings 12/19/2022, 01/17/2023

Motion: Councilmember Chris Lewis **Second:** Councilmember Lucy Gamble **Vote:** 3-0

VI. CITIZEN COMMENTS & DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEMS: *(Please state name & address; speaking limited to 3 minutes)*

None

VII. BUSINESS SESSION:

1. **Councilmember Whitley “Budget”** – We are still waiting to find out what our actual money is going to be with the LOST funds, we should have our final numbers by the end of February. I make a motion we adopt to keep the 2022 Budget in place until we have the 2023 Budget finalized. Tab 1

Motion: Councilmember Donna Whitley **Second:** Councilmember Chris Lewis **Vote:** 3-0

2. **Councilmember Whitley “Sealed Bids”** – There were 4 Sealed Bids Submitted to Whitesburg City Hall from January 17th to January 31, 2023, we will now open these bids. Tab 1
 Bid #1 - Dan Ungaro - \$1034.64 (F250) & \$ 484.32 (F150), Bid #2 - William Tanner - \$25.00 (F250) / Bid #3 - Bryan Duke - \$300.00 (1998 Ford Ranger). Bid #4 - Charlie Thurman - \$725.00 (2000 F250). Councilmember Whitley made a Motion to award the highest bids as follows: Sealed Bid#3 Goes To: Don Ungaro, Freedom Equipment Co, PO Box 43892, Atlanta, GA 30336 (1998 Ford F150 @ \$484.32) and (2000 F250 @ \$1034.64), Sealed Bid F# 4 Goes To: Bryan Duke, 908 Banning Rd, Whitesburg, GA 30185 (1995 Ford Ranger) \$300.00

Motion: Councilmember Chris Lewis **Second:** Councilmember Lucy Gamble **Vote:** 3-0

3. **Councilmember Whitley “Water Department Guidelines”** - During the last work session, we talked about revising some of our water guidelines and fees such as deposits, reconnect fees, and also holding firm to cut-off dates, etc. We needed to do something to try and catch the water revenue up from where we have been in a deficit for so long caused by customers up and leaving and not paying their bills, customers (these are mostly renters). I met with the office staff who process the utility billings, and it was decided from researching other surrounding cities (info provided in your handouts) that one way is to increase deposits for renters from \$100 to \$250 Tab 1

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(Note: we originally had the Renters Deposit at \$275, but took into consideration Councilmember Gambles concern that many citizens already struggled to pay their bills and lowered it to \$250), also, we dropped the \$25 Administrative Fee that we were going to implement on cut-off day, because we decided it was not fair to those who were at the end of the cut-off list or at work and did not have the same opportunity to come pay their bill and only be charged the \$25 fee vs the \$50 cut-off charge. We are suggesting a small increase in owner deposits from \$50 to \$75. We also believe there needs to be a stronger penalty for repeat reconnects within the same year; we are proposing the first reconnect fee remain at \$50.00; however, the next reconnect in the same calendar year and after will increase to \$100. (You must go 1 Year without a reconnect to start over at the first time \$50 reconnect fee).

Mr. Robert Gamble commented that this has tee-totally changed from the Work Session. Councilmember Whitley stated, yes, but we took into consideration what Councilmember Gamble said about the many citizens being on limited income and the changes are all for the good of the citizens because we lowered the Water Deposit Rate From \$275 to \$250 and also dropped the \$25 Administrative Fee that was originally proposed. Plus we provided a list of the rate comparison from other cities in our area are charging and we had already adjusted the cut-off dates for 2023 to allow extra days until people received their government checks and pay their bills.

Mr. Gamble commented again that he wasn't aware that these changes were coming. Councilmember Whitley stated we lowered some of the fees, so what did you wanted the fees to stay higher? Mr. Gamble stated well no, I wasn't aware of these changes until we got to the work session meeting; Councilmember Whitley told Mr. Gamble that she had already shared with him previously that the water deposits were going to need to increase. I had met serval times with the staff that does the water billing and handles the outstanding accounts and so forth.

Mr. Gamble asked Councilmember Whitley what part of City Water Ordinance does this fall under? Councilmember Whitley ask, what do you mean, what section of the City Water Ordinance? The city has a Water Ordinance Guidelines, and we need to know what section all this will fall into.

Councilmember Whitley stated we will look into it and Mayor Williford stated we will table this until the next work session.

4. **Councilmember Gamble - "Road Repairs"** We have quotes from the following: **McIntosh Asphalt Paving Concrete** (Jones Mill \$66,359.15 / Kelly Street at \$18,805.60) **Magnum Paving LLC** (Jones Mill Road at \$493,8000.00 / Kelly Street \$51,299.00), and **Charlie T. Paving Co** (Jones Mill Road at \$339,981.30 / Kelly Street \$57,264.00) to be paid from 2018 SPLOST Funds. I make a motion we approve **McIntosh Asphalt Paving Concrete** the work of (**Kelly Street at \$18,805.60**) to be paid from 2018 SPLOST Funds. Tab 2

Motion: Councilmember Lucy Gamble **Second:** Councilmember Donna Whitley **Vote:** 3-0

Councilmember Gamble "Recreation Gym Roof Repairs" We obtained (3) Quotes from: **Eagle Watch** for \$32,400, **Macs Metals LLC** for \$31,500, and **Matt Braswell** for \$7,000 (replacing all screws and removing skylights and replacing with metal – did not believe the roof needed full replacement). I make a Motion to go with contractor **Matt Braswell** for the **\$7,000** quote to be paid from the 2018 SPLOST Funds. Tab 2

Motion: Councilmember Lucy Gamble **Second:** Councilmember Chris Lewis **Vote:** 3-0



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5. **Councilmember Lewis – Police Clerk Conference** - I have two items for approval: Tab 3
 I make a motion to approve the attendance of Mrs. April Fordham at the 2023 ICJE Conference on April 27-28 in Atlanta, which is mandated by the courts. The estimated cost after mileage and parking is approximately \$550.

Motion: Councilmember Chris Lewis **Second:** Councilmember Donna Whitley **Vote:** 3-0

Councilmember Lewis - Bundle Package Plan Azon Enterprise, Inc “Body Cams & Tasers” Tab 3 – I make a motion we approve the purchase of Bundle Package of (8 Body Cameras & 8 Tasers) from Axon Enterprise, Inc. in the amount of \$86,812, which will be spread over 5 years and will be paid from the ARPA “American Rescue Plan Act of 2021” Funds. (First initial payment of \$26,331.84 with following payments of \$15,120.04 through 2027.

Motion: Councilmember Chris Lewis **Second:** Councilmember Donna Whitley **Vote:** 3-0

VIII. CITIZEN COMMENTS: (Please state name & address; speaking limited to 3 minutes)

Sheri Wright - New Manager Whitesburg Public Library - I am a hometown resident and happy to be working here in the city. While our Library is small that doesn't mean you don't have access to a wide variety of materials. We are part of the PINES (Public Information Network for Electronic Services), which is Georgia's "borderless Library" system that allows PINES card holders free access to books and other materials in 300 library branches and affiliated service outlets throughout the state. Every resident of Georgia is eligible to receive a free PINES Library card. Your PINES Library Card allows you access to more than 11 million books and other materials that can be checked out from and returned to any participating library free of charge. Our Library offers free internet data access cards that can be checked out for 2 weeks at a time, we also have 9 public computers that allow PINES Library Card Holders to use here onsite. Please stop by and give us a visit. Thank you for your time.

Steve Sutton – 123 Landon Drive, Whitesburg, Georgia

Regarding the Bundle Package of 8 Body Cameras & 8 Tasers, can you give a better understanding of what happens to the upkeep of the equipment monitoring after 2027? Is there any monitoring of the equipment or anything after they are paid for? Chief Gilliland responded the service and monitoring is included during the 5-year period; after the equipment is paid for, there are different service plans available for purchase should we choose to upgrade the equipment. Mayor Williford asked if there were any other citizen comments; none were stated, so we will now move to Mayor/Council/City Staff Comments.

IX. MAYOR / COUNCIL / CITY STAFF COMMENTS:

Police Chief Gilliland - Just a couple of things to mention; we just had our 3-year GBI Audit and everything was good, the Auditor mentioned being impressed with our recordkeeping. January 3rd, we implemented the "warning phase" of the new Red Speed School Enforcement Cameras; as you can imagine, we have received quite a bit of feedback from the community. The cameras are set to trigger a photo of the vehicle at 11 miles over the speed limit. In the 30-day warning phase, there were 2,247 warnings generated. The Red Speed School Enforcement Cameras went live on Friday February 3rd; right before our meeting I checked the system and there have been 124 citations, this is really high! The system repopulates every morning. Workwise, the police officers have been working really hard. There were 151 citations written for January (stop signs, no insurance, suspended driver's license, some speeding "these were in other areas than school zone", etc.) which generated approximately \$37,000 in citations. The "No Insurance", it's required by state law, and the fact is that if they don't have it then ultimately, you're footing the bill in your insurance premiums. We have a ton of people driving without insurance and the officers are trying to stay on top of it and working hard, it's showing they are working day and night. Mrs. Judy Skipper at 255 Main Street, Whitesburg, Ga asked about paying a citation.



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IX. MAYOR / COUNCIL / CITY STAFF COMMENTS CONTINUED:

Chief Gilliland stated the citations coming from Red Speed after they are approved will have all the specific information pertaining to how to pay the ticket should you receive one. Mayor Williford asked how often do you review tickets? Chief Gilliland stated every day. The only ones we do not approve are the ones that come into their system with an issue where the tag could not be read. This is caused by has an issue reading the tag; this is caused into the system that have an issue; these are ones that have a "tinted tag cover", which are illegal. The tinted covers distract the camera from reading the tag. The license plate cover must be completely clear to be legal in the state of Georgia. If the tag does not read, the camera does not know where to send the citation and those must be cancelled out. The Red Speed has a System Attorney is quick to meet with you in the beginning of the installation process and will quickly tell you that your Red System data is subject to subpoena to court to see what you are giving warnings for; they highly recommend that you only allow warnings for Emergency Vehicles (Firetruck, Ambulances, Etc.) you do not start issuing warning citations, you must be fair and consistent across the board. I am not about to put myself on the stand and in jeopardy; everyone will be approved, even if it's my own personal vehicle. Mayor Williford jokingly asked how may patrol cars have you had Chief Gilliland answered, not a single one and audience chuckled as well. Mayor Williford asked, what about Water Department Vehicles? Chief Gilliland answered, not seen any water department vehicles either all laughed. Question was asked if these tickets do not go against your driver's license or insurance? Chief Gilliland answered, Fortunately, there is no insurance impact if you get a red-light camera ticket and there are no points on your driving record.

Ernie Reynolds, County Commissioner - District 5, brought to the attention of the audience about Auto/Vehicle liability insurance coverage is getting more expensive each year for policyholders in Georgia. The reason for these premium increases is largely due to huge liability claim awards that are issued via litigation handled by Georgia's Court System. Georgia has been one of the most prolific producers of "nuclear verdict awards" nationwide. "Nuclear Verdicts" are awards that exceed \$10 million. Last year. Georgia was ranked #3 in the nation for increased liability insurance premiums caused by exorbitant liability awards. This year, Georgia is ranked #1, surpassing California and New York. The situation of continually rising auto/vehicle liability insurance premiums could be remedied - if the state legislature implemented Tort Reform and placed a cap on the dollar amount of liability awards that could be given via the court system. This has been known for several years, but the legislature continues to do nothing about it. Largely, this inaction is because state legislators are affiliated with Trial Attorneys, or are such attorneys themselves, who would be impacted by such Tort Reform. He stated he is working to put a letter together that each of our county Board of Commissioners will sign and also working with our County School Board to have them sign. He said his intention is for this letter to be sent to our local delegation of state senators and representatives and also to the Association of County Commissioners Of Georgia (ACCG). This letter will request them to act on this - for the good of all Georgia citizens and local governments, who find their auto/vehicle liability insurance premiums increasing beyond normal, all because no action has been taken to curb the exorbitant claims awarded through litigation. Mr. Reynolds thanked us for the opportunity to share.

Water Superintendent Robert Gamble – First of all, I need clarification on this timesheet. So, what's the problem with the timesheet? **Councilmember Whitley** answered, there is no problem with the timesheet. When the city went with the new Software company, it was necessary to shift the timesheet days by (1) day in order to process payroll on time for the direct deposits. Robert stated 1/24 was paid in the last pay period, but yet it was starting this new pay period, but there would be "0" hours reported on the timesheet, so we are going to be short 8 hours pay. Assistant City Clerk, Odell explained because those hours were paid in the last pay period on your last check; she also tried to explain for this one pay period 01/24/2023 -02/06/2023 would be for 72 hours rather than the normal 80 hours because of the shift of when payroll was closing. Councilmember Gamble stated basically what he is trying to get you all to understand is the 8 hours in 1/24 is already gone. He believed he was being shorted 8 hours, but technically he was not.

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IX. MAYOR / COUNCIL / CITY STAFF COMMENTS CONTINUED:

The next pay period would begin 02/07/2023 – 02/20/2023 which would equal 80 hours. If you count up all the days from the 2 pay periods for this year so far, the days are all accounted for other than 2/7, which would start the new pay period where the 2/7 (8 hours) that Mr. Robert says he is not being paid for, but actually he is, it will be accounted for in the next check, which is causing him confusion. Robert stated somebody better go back to QuickBooks and get it right cause somebody is getting screwed and shorted 8 hours. Mayor Williford said no, this needs to be settled outside of this meeting. Robert continued to make comments apparently, nobody here understands it looking at Assistant City Clerk stating, "you don't understand it do you"? Assistant City Clerk, Odell responded, Robert, I am not going to argue with you. Robert stated I'm going to turn in my timesheet in like I've been doing, and I expect to get paid for it until this gets straightened out. Councilmember Whitley stated if you turn your time in you will get paid. Mayor Williford again stated, I said enough, we will look into this, and it will be handled outside this meeting. Is there anything else?

Councilmember Whitley - I don't have anything, thank you.

Councilmember Gamble - The Seniors will have their monthly meeting at the Valentine's day meeting at Carrollton Recreation Building on Wednesday, get there early so you can get your seat. Mayor Williford stated she attended the Christmas Luncheon, and it was a lot of fun.

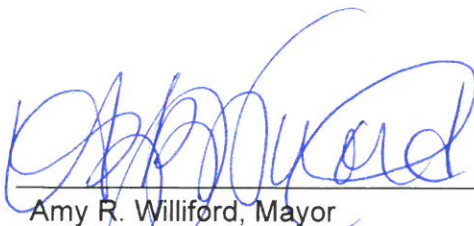
Mayor Williford - I got a call this morning from Martha Arnold, wanting to add another 10x10 room to the old Bank Trailer on 743 Main Street, which is the Golden Age Healthcare building. She's already contacted the county and as long as she doesn't go over the 10x10 size and adds it to the same side as the other, she does not need a permit. This is just my opinion; but, if she continues to do this, I think she needs to start paying ad valorem because she keeps flying under the radar by continuing to only add a 10x10 structures – but yet it increases the size of the building. Ya'll can think about it and we'll decide later, but we'll let her go ahead and build.

Councilmember Lewis - I don't have anything.

Assistant City Clerk Wanice - Nothing for me, thanks.

X. ADJOURNMENT BY: Mayor Williford

Motion: Councilmember Lucy Gamble **Second:** Councilmember Chris Lewis **Vote:** 3-0
Ending Time: 6:58 pm



 Amy R. Williford, Mayor



 ATTEST: Clerk

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