



CITY OF THOMSON
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
DECEMBER 14, 2023

6:00PM

Thomson-McDuffie Government Center

Present:

Kenneth Usry, Mayor
Alton Belton, Councilmember
Keryl Corley, Councilmember
John Smalley, Councilmember
Scott Whittle, Councilmember
John Waller, City Administrator
Lucretia Ferguson, City Clerk
Jimmy Plunkett, City Attorney

Also Present:

Chief Courtney Gale, TPD
Josh Heath, McDuffie Progress
12 Interested Citizens

Not Present:

Elaine Johnson, Councilmember

At 6:00pm, Mayor Usry called the regularly scheduled City Council meeting to order and Mayor Usry gave the invocation, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag.

CITIZEN INPUT: Evita Paschall introduced herself to the Council. She is a native Thomsonian, an attorney and candidate for Municipal Judge. Thomas Thiemann reported that cars are still passing each other and racing down Whiteoak Street. He also brought their attention to a tree in the parkway forcing the sidewalk up and causing a tripping hazard at the edge of his property. Mayor Usry thanked both speakers.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The motion was made by Councilmember Smalley and seconded by Councilmember Belton to approve the agenda as written. A vote of 4-0 in favor was taken.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- a. Council Meeting, November 9, 2023. A motion was made by Councilmember Corley and seconded by Councilmember Belton to approve the minutes. A vote of 4-0 in favor was taken.

BUSINESS:

- a. Resolution 08-2023 Fiscal 2024 Budget: The 2024 City Budget has been discussed and worked on for several weeks. The culmination of that work has produced a City Budget containing the following major Operating and Capital Funds:

GENERAL FUND	\$5,439,638
WATER & SEWER FUND	\$6,808,897
GAS FUND	\$8,128,021
SOLID WASTE FUND	\$2,025,225
MAINTENANCE FUND	\$322,204
TOTAL 2024 BUDGET	\$22,723,985

A motion was made by Councilmember Smalley and seconded by Councilmember Belton to approve the Budget Resolution. A vote of 4-0 passed the motion.

- b. Municipal Court Judge Appointment: Judge Robert E. Knox, Jr. stepped down as Municipal Court Judge effective December 31st. Letters of Interest and Resumes were accepted. Three candidates that met the Charter's criteria that the judge must be eligible to register to vote in McDuffie County were presented to the Council. A motion was made by Councilmember Belton and seconded by Councilmember Smalley to offer the position to W. Bryant (Bubba) Swan, Jr. A 4-0 vote in favor was taken.
- c. Revolving Loan Fund Committee Recommendation: Stephanie Ivery, owner of Ivery's Restaurant, has requested a second loan from the Committee of \$150,000. She has a current loan on which she has never missed a payment and has a balance of \$35,000. The Revolving Loan Fund Committee examined the required information submitted by Ms. Ivery and recommended that she be approved for a ten-year loan with an interest rate of 6% for the full amount requested. She would be given the opportunity to consolidate the loans or keep them separate. A motion made by Councilmember Smalley to approve the recommended of the Committee was seconded by Councilmember Belton. A vote of 4-0 passed the motion.
- d. City Administrator Contract renewal: Mayor Usry noted that the contract had been discussed at length for a month and the terms were acceptable to all parties. A motion was made by Councilmember Corley and seconded by Councilmember Belton to approve the Administrator's contract. A vote taken, passed the motion 4-0.
- e. Gas Authority of Georgia – Anchor member: Natural gas provider Southern Natural has plans to make available more gas and The Gas Authority of Georgia has presented a plan to the City to become one of its Anchor Members. This involves a commitment to future gas purchases, most likely starting in 2028 or 2029, of 300 MCFs per day. CA Waller spoke on the City currently selling 4100 MCFs per day and that the extra 300MCFs would add \$1.00 per month to the average City gas bill. A motion made by Councilmember Smalley and seconded by Councilmember Corley to commit to the purchase of 300 MCFs of natural gas as an Anchor Member with the Municipal Gas Authority passed with a 4-0 vote.
- f. Resolution 07-2023: GEFA Loan CW2020015A: The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) previously approved a loan to for over \$8,000,000 to the City for required upgrades at the Waste Water Treatment Plant. Prices for needed components have skyrocketed since that time and GEFA has approved the additional \$3,400,000 needed for the project. This dollar amount comes after our engineers, contractor and WWTP director have worked to make the upgrades as efficient as possible. A motion to approve the loan was made by Councilmember Belton and seconded by Councilmember Whittle. A vote of 4-0 passed the motion.
- g. Resolution 09-2023: GEFA Loan DWLSL2022189: The Federal Government has required all cities to complete by October, 2024 an inventory of all lead and copper fittings and lines up to the structure being serviced. City engineers, Carter & Sloope, who are assembling a "table-top inventory",

applied for a loan to defray the City's costs and the City was approved for \$172,000. This amount is a loan of 100% principal forgiveness, which means that the loan does not have to be repaid. A motion by Councilmember Corley, seconded by Councilmember Whittle, to approve the loan passed with a 4-0 vote.

- h. CSRA Regional Commission Appointment: Mayor Usry will rotate off of the Augusta based Commission as Mayor of Thomson, but has been asked to join as a community member. Councilmember Corley made a motion for this community member appointment to the Regional Commission with a second by Councilmember Belton. A vote taken of 4-0 approved the motion.
- i. 2024 City Holiday Schedule: The following schedule was presented to the Council. These holidays mirror the County Holiday Schedule. A motion by Councilmember Corley and seconded by Councilmember Smalley to approve the eleven employee holidays was approved by a 4-0 vote.
- New Year's Day - Monday 1/1/2024
 - MLK Day – Monday 1/15/2024
 - Memorial Day – Monday 05/27/2024
 - Juneteenth - Wednesday 06/19/2024
 - 4th of July – Thursday 7/4/2024
 - Labor Day – Monday 9/2/2024
 - Veteran's Day – Monday 11/11/2024
 - Thanksgiving – Thursday and Friday 11/28/2024 & 11/29/2024
 - Christmas Eve – Tuesday 12/24/2024
 - Christmas Day - Wednesday 12/25/2024
- j. Police Chief Search: With current Thomson Police Chief Courtney Gale's resignation effective on December 29, 2023, the Council has expressed that they would prefer to have a new Chief in place before the end of the year. The job has been posted on the City/County website, our Facebook page and Indeed.com with an application cutoff date of December 22nd. Applications from all over the country have been received by CA Waller, but the Council would prefer more local candidates. A time line has been set for interviews on December 27th & 28th, with the Council interviewing candidates on December 29th during a Called Council meeting Executive Session. If a selection seems imminent, the Council will adjourn the Executive Session for a vote to make the appointment at 5:00pm.

Mayor Usry recognized Chief Gale, who was present, to thank her for the hard work and excellent job she has done as our Police Chief, her involvement with the community and wished her well in her new position as Chief of Police in Watkinsville, GA.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Council Report: Councilmember Keryl Corley spoke on the positive feedback from citizens on the new lights at the tennis courts. She recently attended the EMS banquet and was impressed with the entire division. Councilmember Whittle discussed the great job that Coldwell Banker Watson and Knox Real Estate has done sponsoring the Thomson Christmas Parade for the last three years. This year saw

over seventy participants and he commended all of the volunteers who made the parade possible.

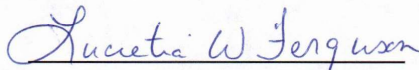
City Administrator Report: CA Waller spoke on several ongoing projects. The railroad crossing at Grady Street will see CSX and GDOT upgrading and installing crossing bars in addition to new lights. The First Avenue \$965,000 grant request has been resubmitted to EPA. A new area of the City has been selected for CDBG Plans for 2024-2027. This area encompasses from Whiteoak Street to Cobbham Road between Jones Road and Mendel Avenue over to include the western properties of Ellington Avenue. Mayor Usry spoke of the City receiving \$1,250,000 for CDBG 2024 and that it is the largest award in the state. CA Waller informed the Council that the Trihalomethane (TTHM) level at the Water Treatment Plant has steadily decreased, but our average for the quarter year is still barely over the allowed percentage. The company from which we planned to buy our own TTHM analyzer has sold the technology and now obtaining one to run our own testing has proved very difficult. At this time, CA Waller called on Councilmember Corley who spoke on the courage and road blocks that Mayor Usry has encountered in his years of public service. She then read a proclamation signed by all Council Members which was greeted by applause from all in attendance. A motion to enter the proclamation on the agenda was made by Councilmember Whittle and seconded by Councilmember Belton. A vote of 4-0 passed the motion.

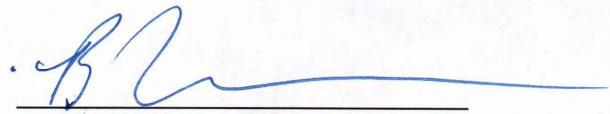
Mayor Report: Mayor Usry spoke on how much he has enjoyed his years of service.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

A motion to adjourn was tendered by Councilmember Corley and seconded by Councilmember Smalley. A vote of 4-0 ended the meeting at 6:48pm.

Respectfully submitted,


Lucretia W. Ferguson, City Clerk


Benjamin C. Cranford, Jr., Mayor

