

**MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
February 6, 2024**

The Regular Meeting of the Cordele City Commission was held on February 6th, 9:00 AM, Cordele City Hall Courtroom, 501 North 7th Street, Cordele, Georgia with the following present:

Joshua Deriso, Commission Chair	Royce Reeves, Sr., Commission Vice Chair
Vesta Beal-Shephard, Commissioner	Wesley Rainey, Commissioner
Isaac Owens, Commissioner	Angela Redding, City Manager
Tommy Coleman – City Attorney	Alisha Williams, Asst. City Clerk

Staff present: Rusty Bridgers – Finance Director, Deputy Chief Frank Bullington, Irene Cantrell – HUA Director, David Wade – Human Resources Director, Jackie Walker – Chief Municipal Court Clerk, Police Chief Jalon Heard, Koby Worley – Street Superintendent, Rick Smarr – Social Media Marketing Manager, Debbie Wright – UC&T Director.

Staff absent: Fire Chief Todd Alligood, Steve Fulford, Genivieve (Janice) Mumphery.

Media Present: Cordele Dispatch – Sarah Brown.

Call to Order: Commission Chair Joshua Deriso called the Regular Meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Invocation: There was a moment of silent prayer.

Pledge Allegiance to the United States Flag: The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Owens.

Roll Call: A quorum was established.

Attendee's Name	Title	Absent	Present
Joshua Deriso	Commission Chairman		✓
Royce Reeves, Sr.	Commission Vice Chairman Ward 2		✓
Vesta Beal-Shephard	Commissioner Ward 1		✓
Isaac Owens	Commissioner Ward 3		✓
Wesley Rainey	Commissioner Ward 4		✓

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – February 6 2024: Commission Vice Chair Reeves moved to approve the Agenda for February 6, 2024; seconded by Commissioner Owens; the Agenda was approved by the Commission.

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – January 16, 2024: Commissioner Shephard moved to approve the Minutes for January 16, 2024; seconded by Commission Vice Chair Reeves; the Minutes were approved by the Commission.

APPROVAL OF CALLED MEETING MINUTES – January 22, 2024: Commission Vice Chair Reeves moved to approve the Called Meeting Minutes for January 22, 2024; seconded by Commissioner Shephard; the Called Meeting Minutes were approved by the Commission.

SPEAKERS APPEARANCES: Speakers will have five (5) minutes: No Requests.

SPEAKERS ON A SPECIFIC AGENDA ITEM: Speaker will have three (3) minutes:
No Requests.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT REPORT: Monica Rentfrow, Director Reported.

Downtown Cordele Fourth Quarter Report:

- Interest in the old Christmas that used to be over 7th Street. Will start this summer attempting to refurbish the Christmas tree. Mrs. Rentfrow stated that Downtown Cordele will reach out to the Community and Businesses to assist with refurbishing the tree. This project will start around May or June so funds can be raised to assist with refurbishing the tree.
- The Fourth Annual Rail Fan Festival was wonderful. There was approximately 400 people in attendance. SAM Shortline provided the shuttles and sold almost 300 tickets.
- Holiday Trains: With SAM Shortline, all holiday trains start from downtown; had about thirty-five hundred people over two weekends.
- Downtown Spooktacular: Spooktacular was a success, as always. Several hundred people was in attendance. There was a new event last year.
- New Restaurant Downtown: Slammin Sami's is located in the old Cordele Bank Building.
- Alamo House: Phase Two – Hazardous Materials report has been completed and submitted to the property owner.
- Yearly Assessment has been completed. As soon as the impact reports are received, they will be shared with the Commission.

CITY SOLICITOR: Blake Brantley

Mr. Brantley has been with the City of Cordele for a little over four (4) years. He stated he has been employed with many municipal courts over the years. The City of Cordele Municipal Court is one of the most efficient courts, it operates really well.

Commissioner Owens asked Mr. Brantley, what does he do as a Solicitor?

Mr. Brantley stated sometimes a Solicitor is referred to as a Prosecutor, it is different from a District Attorney. He stated he is an appointed official. Cases that are prosecuted are from DUI, possession of marijuana and City Ordinance violation (disorderly house or disorderly yard), things of that nature. Mr. Brantley stated, a lot of things that he does for the City of Cordele is managing. Municipal Court does get a few Defense Attorneys. So, makes phone calls, filings-sort those out. An arraignment is the second Tuesday of each month, a trial day is on the fourth Tuesday of each month. A lot consists with coordinating with the Police Department and other people who might have an interest in the case, preparing the case to trial and seeing them through to the end.

Commissioner Owens: We are getting a lot of codes cases now; will those cases be referred out to you?

Mr. Brantley: I have had a meeting with the City Manager about a year ago. We had discussed to get a little more aggressive with some blighted properties, but it is not that simple to go after the property owners when the property falls into a state of disrepair. It starts causing the tax payers money right away. It could affect my case load a little bit, but I do not anticipate much, because there is a limited amount what can be done.

City Manager Angela Redding: Mr. Brantley and she did meet over a year ago, but there is property that the City needs to move forward with. The first part of this is holding the tax payer responsible for the upkeep of the property, and those cases need to be moved forward.

Chairman Deriso asked Mr. Brantley, what is his purpose of being her today?

Mr. Brantley responded, “I believe I was asked by the City Manager to be here today.”

PUBLIC DEFENDER: Dustin Land

Mr. Land stated he is a Defense Attorney in Ashburn Georgia; I think I have been the Public Defender for the City of Cordele for six (6) years.

Mr. Land stated, in general, he comes to Court on arraignment day to speak with people, to help facilitate plea deals. Judge Wright or Mr. Brantley will ask Mr. Land to speak to someone. I will talk with anyone who wants to talk with an Attorney before they enter a plea.

City of Cordele Municipal Court is the most functionally court I attend, as far as, how it operates and how it flows; there is not a lot of continuances. Mr. Land stated, he gets along with everyone that is associated with Municipal Court, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, and Judge. I will echo everything Mr. Brantley said about working together and moving things forward.

Chairman Deriso: Were you also asked to be here by the City Manager?

Mr. Land responded, Judge Wright and the City Manager, I think emailed us and we got our calendars together, so ‘yes’.

MUNICIPAL COURT JUDGE: Judge Russell Wright

Mr. Wright stated, he was previously employed with the City of Cordele, he left in 1967 and it took him about fifteen (15) years to come back. He entered into private practice in 1980, doing primarily to criminal defense and that drifted over to traffic work. We have been trying to come before the Commission for about three (3) to four (4) months, just to introduce ourselves and show our faces. Today is the first time we can get together and be here.

Judge Wright stated, “it is not hard to find lawyers to do this job, it is just hard to find experienced lawyers to do this job.” One thing I do not think people realized is the function of the Solicitor or the Prosecutor in Court. The Solicitor or Prosecutor is basically the Band Leader. A Judge cannot simply change a case, the law does not allow it. But what the law does allow is for the Judge to take the recommendation of the prosecuting official; Mr. Brantley is the prosecuting official. The two most important people in this Court is Ms. Walker and Mrs. Crook. The City of Cordele has the two best Municipal Court Clerks in this state.

Commission Vice Chair Reeves stated, regarding the reason for the Solicitor, Public Defender and the Judge being here, Commissioner Owens requested for them to be here.

Commissioner Owens stated, “yes”, because their names had been heard, but they had never met the people.

Chairman Deriso stated he is concerned about diversity. Chairman Deriso stated that he does not think that there was no consciousness to what the City’s demographic is when hiring, there is some unconscious biases that I believe, that I have heard that went on in the Court. He stated when he came

to Court, he found for that to be true. Chairman Deriso stated he is not pleased with the Court, he has concerns of diversity and fair treatment in the Court.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS:

1. Finance Department: Rusty Bridgers Reported.

Sales Tax Receipts:

Local Option Sales Tax (LOST)

Received 1.30.2024 \$238,707.49 For December

Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST)

Received 1.22.2023 \$231,817.48 For November

Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST)

Received 1.31.2024 \$33,271.42 For December

Total: \$503,796.39

***Note: Mr. Bridgers stated, this will leave one (1) more payment for year 2023.

2. Fire Department Report: Deputy Chief Frank Bullington Reported.

Reporting Period: December 27, 2023 – January 29, 2024

Calls for Service: Total 54

Structure Fire/Cooking	1
Grass Fire/Rubbish	4
Electrical Short	3
Smoke/Odor Removal	2
Fire Alarm	16
Medical Assist	18
Motor Vehicle Accident	1
Other	9

Chief Allgood is attending the Fire Service Legislative Day and Dinner at the State Capitol today, February 6, 2024.

Department News

- We completed annual ladder testing and maintenance. This included 509 feet of ground ladders from Engines 1,2,4, and Ladder 1 and 3. Also tested the aerial ladders on Ladder 1 (75') and 3 (50'). All ladders passed.
- We completed annual testing and maintenance on our Amkus extrication tools. Power unit and tools passed. Hydraulic hoses and fitting are over 10 years old and recommended for replacement. Those items have been ordered.
- Held our quarterly Command Staff meeting on January 17th at Station 1. Discussed 2024 goals and conducted some in-service training with the Officers.

- Attended the pre-construction meetings for the Crisp County Hospital expansion and Murphy Oil.
- Attended the quarterly SHRP II (Traffic Incident Management) class at the EOC. This is a multi-agency event.
- Chief Alligood attended the first two days of the Leadership Crisp program at the Blackshear Resort January 18th and 19th. He is excited to learn more about Crisp County and network with the other leaders in the county.

3. Housing and Urban Development – Irene Cantrell Reported.

Cordele Planning and Zoning Commission:

The Codes Department signed for the approval of the land plat for property located on East 8th Avenue and Hickory Street to be split into five land parcels. The property owner is Cecil Simmons.

Board of Zoning Appeals:

The Board of Zoning and Appeals have tentatively scheduled a Public Hearing/Meeting for the month of March 2024, for a post sign variance request.

Cordele Historic Preservation Commission:

The Historic Preservation Commission has not received any “Applications for Certificates for Preservation” to date for a Meeting to be scheduled for the third or fourth Wednesday in February 2024.

CHIP 2018 Grant Program:

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Grant Administrator is continuing to work with City Manager Angela Redding and staff on compiling information, documents, etc., for the 2024 CHIP Community Housing and Rehabilitation Grant Application Program. This CHIP Application is due January 31, 2024.

Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund – List of Loans:

Hobo Café’ – First Loan

Hobo Café’ – Second Loan

Ray Ray’s Restaurant

The Grant Building

R & D Lawn Care

There have not been any Loan Applications submitted for review.

CDBG 2020 Sewer Improvements Project:

The City Public Works Department has advised that the work at the McLeod Subdivision Sewer Improvements Project has been completed.

CHIP Program

Brenda Wade, South West Regional Commission sent an email stating that the CHIP Grant Application has been confirmed. The Chip Grant Award amount will be announced in late April.

4. Municipal Court: Jackie Walker Reported.

Monthly Court Summary Report

Traffic Cases	103
Criminal Cases	16
Total Court Cases	119
Total Deposits	\$33,770.00
Total Days Jail Incarcerated	0
Total Days Jail	0

Commission Vice Chair Reeves asked the cost for the person to be incarcerated per day. Judge Wright responded, around \$35 to \$37 a day.

City Manager Angela Redding stated she can get the information because the City gets Invoices from the County.

Municipal Court Clerk, Jackie Walker stated that the Court has found other alternatives, instead of coming to jail.

5. Codes/Police Department – Police Chief Jalon Heard Reported.

Police Department – Reporting Period: December 27, 2023 – January 29, 2024

Part I Crimes	41
Homicide/Murder	1 (an arrest was made)
Robberies	1
Motor Vehicle Thefts	4 (4 recovered: 2 adult/1juvenile arrest)
Aggravated Assault	7 (1 juvenile arrest)
Larceny	21 (4 entering auto, 9 other thefts)
Burglary	7 (4 residential, 3 houses)
Part II Crimes	58
Incidents Reported	117
Community Contacts	69
Citations Issued	83
Warnings Issued	80
Total Calls for Service	1267

Departmental News

We currently hired one applicant, Brad Exum for a sergeant position. He will start on February 5, 2024. We have two more applicants in the hiring process.

Our department has been invited to Crisp County PreK to participate with Transportation Day on February 9th. An Officer with their Patrol Unit and Animal Control will be attending.

We are hosting a Valentine’s Day Bingo for the Woodvale residents on February 14th.

We are also hosting Coffee with a Cop on February 22nd, 8AM-9AM at Fast Stop.

Code Compliance Division – Reporting Period: December 27, 2023 – January 29, 2023

Type of Activity	Number of Incidents
Abandoned Vehicle	22
C & D (Construction & Demolition)	1
Certificate of Occupancy	3
Inspections	12
Keeping & Maintaining Disorderly Property	4
Tampering with Utility Property	1
Weeds, Junk, Etc., Prohibited	47

Departmental News

Contacting Waste Management in removing old trash bins. Working with Express Disposal in addressing customers that continue placing trash bins and trash in the alleyway.

Coordinating training for the Code Compliance Team in starting and continuing their education with G.A.C.E. (Georgia Association of Code Enforcement).

Commissioner Shephard requested an update on Peanut Mill on the corner of Joe Wright Drive, 6th, 7th, and 8th Avenues. Commissioner Shephard stated, she received complaints again, about the wind blowing the tin down. She stated that she has noticed that they have put up twelve boards up in the last eight years; she needs to know what is going with this building.

Chief Heard stated he will ask Codes to get her an update on this property.

City Attorney Tommy Coleman stated he thinks that the tin is down. City Attorney Coleman stated he thinks this case was erroneous dismissed in Municipal Court, so the case will have to be refiled.

Commissioner Shephard asked if the City needs to get another attorney to handle this case? This is her ninth year.

City Attorney Coleman stated this was not done by the attorney, it was done when the attorney was not present.

Commissioner Shephard asked City Attorney Coleman, if something happens to a citizen in this town or a visitor in this town, the tin blinds someone car, the car is a total loss and kill someone. Who would be responsible? The Gin or the City of Cordele.

City Attorney Tommy Coleman responded, "the Gin."

Commissioner Shephard stated something has been done. She wanted to know, who dismissed the case? Did the City Attorney authorize dismissal?

City Attorney Tommy Coleman responded "no" we did not. He stated that it was miscommunication where the Attorney was not there and he supposed to appear at 12:00 noon; Court had an early session for some reason and one of the staff addressed the Judge and the Judge dismissed it.

I do not want this to be another four (4) years. Commissioner Shephard stated something has been done, right away.

City Attorney Angela Redding stated, the issue with the staff member is being addressed, it was one of Codes Staff members.

8. Public Works – Koby Worley Reported.

Started back Saturday, February 3rd doing weekend work. Cemetery and Parks was in charge this past Saturday. They cleaned up 15 ½ alley between 6th and Owens; 14 ½ alley between 7th Street and Hickory.

Gas Department: The Gas Department has begun compiling information needed for the 7100 and EIA-176 reports at the first of the year.

Street Department: Assistance was given to the Gas Department in form of Backhoe Operator. The Street Department will assist with making sure all Waste Management garbage carts get to Express Disposal.

2023 LMIG work has been completed.

Gillespie Gardens is near completion and paving of the road on 12th Street will begin soon.

Commissioner Rainey inquired about Public Works keeping up with the roads being paved. He stated that he thinks the citizens would be satisfied with an entire street being paved, instead of, half of streets.

Kobey Worley stated, they ride the streets to look for the worst sections in town. There is only a certain amount of money per year from DOT (Department of Transportation) to use for LMIG Projects, so we try to pick out the worst streets; sometimes it is a block and sometimes it is two blocks.

Commissioner Rainey inquired about naming the alleys to allow us to get LMIG funds to maintain the alleys.

Kobey Worley stated the purpose for naming the alleys was to get additional monies.

9. Social Media/Marketing Report: Rick Smarr Reported.

In April 2023, this Commission entered into an Agreement with CGI Digital to produce a series of commercial videos. This particular company will write, produce, shoot footage, take care of everything that needs to be done to produce videos that the City chooses, such as, a welcome, healthy living, education, community organizations. There was an initial call with CGI on Monday, February 5th and there will be another call, to get more in depth tomorrow, February 7th at 3:00 PM. This project is getting up and going.

Chairman Deriso asked if a determination has been made as to who and what will be Highlighted.

Rick Smarr stated they suggested a welcome video, healthy living, education, community organization, those kinds of things. But it is definitely left up to the Commission.

10. UC&T – Debbie Wright Reported.

Water Treated	56,500,000 gallons
Wastewater Treated	100,000,000 gallons

Rainfall: 3.2' of rain in January

There has been a problem at the Treatment Plant. Debbie Wright stated she believes that someone dumped something toxic into the Sewer System, it killed all our bugs, it is an all natural process. We do not treat things with chemicals. So, the bugs are what treats the actual sewage. We were out of permit for ammonia, which we have never been for almost the thirty-eight years since I have been there.

We sampled the second time for the UCMRS requirement. The last sample in July 2024 all Analytes came back Not Detected. This sampling was for the PFAS components and Lithium.

11. Human Resources: David Wade Reported.

January 01, 2024	The annual medical insurance open-enrollment period began and continued until the end of the month.
January 04, 2024	Completed and submitted 1094-1095 form details for the 2023 filing year.
January 10, 2024	Chris Ryan of Local Government Risk Management Services conducted a safety inspection of the Police, Fire, Public Works and U, C & T Departments. Recommendations have not been received as of this report.
January 16, 2024	Extended a conditional job offer to a Sergeant applicant in the Police Department. Anticipated start date is February 05, 2024.
January 23, 2024	Updated and submitted the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) testing rosters for Q1 2024.
January 29, 2024	Began accepting applications for the part-time Refuse Facility Attendant position. Re-posted the Corporal and Sergeant vacancies in the Police Department.

City Manager Angela Redding introduced the Community Advancement Manager, Maurice Hill.

Mr. Hill stated he is from Putnam County, originally from Washington, DC. He has been in Georgia since 2005. Mr. Hill retired from the School System with ten (10) years in Putnam, Georgia. But while in Putnam, he served with the Middle Regional Commission and what he

was able to see was a number of resources that are available to Communities. This is one thing he will try to do is work with some of the Commissions. He did work with Putnam to do there five-year Comprehensive Plan. Mr. King worked with the Emergency Management Team, Planning and Zoning, President for Habitat for Humanity, and served on the Performing Arts Board for Putman.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consider and Approve the Request for Items Listed from the Executive Department to be Declared Surplus and to Allow the City of Cordele to Dispose of the Surplus Items via GovDeals.com.
Commission Vice Chair Reeves moved to approve the Request for Items Listed from the Executive Department to be Declared Surplus; seconded by Commissioner Shephard. Commissioner Rainey voted aye; Commission Vice Chair Reeves voted aye; Commissioner Owens voted aye; Commissioner Shephard voted aye.
The Request for Items Listed from the Executive Department to be Declared Surplus was approved by the Commission.

2. **CITY MANAGER’S REPORT:** City Manager Angela Redding Reported.

Change in the trash collection schedule as follows:

Current Collection Day	New Collection Day
Monday	Monday
Tuesday	Tuesday
Wednesday	Wednesday
Thursday	Wednesday

(This includes 20th Avenue to 24th Avenue)

Friday	Thursday
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(This includes 25th Avenue going south)

This change in schedule will allow for trash service to continue uninterrupted when your service Day is moved back one day due to holidays.

REMINDER: Please place carts at the curbside the night before or no later than 7:00 AM on your scheduled pick-up day.

February is Black History Month

There are several programs that will be going on throughout the Community, we will make sure that we get that information to you.

Reminder – Occupation and Alcohol Renewals

Occupational Tax Certificate better known as Business License expired at the end of the year and become delinquent, if not paid by April 1, 2024. After April 1st there is a penalty that is imposed, we encourage all business owners to renew their Occupation Tax Certificate by April 1st.

Alcohol License expires at the end of the year, there is no grace period for Alcohol License Renewals.

Property Taxes are due February 12th.

Comprehensive Plan – Community Input Survey 2023

The Comprehensive Plan is very important in planning for the future of Cordele, as well as, future land growth and development. The deadline for input on the survey is February 9, 2024. The survey is on the City website, the County website and the City of Arabi. On the City’s website, if you are on the home page, go to the bottom right hand of the home page, the survey is there with a QR code, the information that is entered, is sent directly to River Valley.

Upcoming Meetings

Board Zoning of Appeals Meeting, March 8, 2024, 10:00 AM, at City Hall Courtroom.
Community Clubhouse Committee approved to install a new floor at the Community Clubhouse and that work is scheduled to be completed on Thursday, February 8, 2024.

Work Session

Information was sent out to schedule a Work Session, whenever the Commission is available. City Manager Angela Redding requested a Work Session for several items that need to be discussed.

President’s Day Holiday

The City will be closed on Monday, February 19, 2024, in observance of President’s Day. The offices will be closed and will reopen on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at 8:00 AM.

Commission Vice Chair Reeves stated that there has been a lot of questions regarding leaving the garbage cart out by the road or is Codes expecting the citizens to pull the garbage cart back?

City Manager Angela Reeding responded, “you supposed to pull them back up after your trash has been emptied.”

3. **CITY ATTORNEY’S REPORT:** No Report.
4. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** (For Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate): No Executive Session.
5. **ADJOURNMENT:** Commission Vice Chair Reeves moved to adjourn the Meeting at 10:10 AM; seconded by Commissioner Owens; the motion was approved by the Commission.