

**MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
March 19, 2024**

The Regular Meeting of the Cordele City Commission was held on March 19th, 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	Janice Mumphery, Recording Secretary

Staff present: Maurice Hill – Community Advancement Director, Sonya Alexander – Staff Accountant, Fire Chief Todd Alligood, Irene Cantrell – HUA Director, David Wade – Human Resources Director, Jackie Walker – Chief Municipal Court Clerk, Police Chief Jalon Heard, Steve Fulford – Asst. City Manager/Public Works Director, Rick Smarr – Social Media Marketing Manager, Debbie Wright – UC&T Director.

Staff absent: Rusty Bridgers – Finance Director.

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 Shephard.

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	Late	✓
Wesley Rainey	Commissioner Ward 4		✓

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – March 19, 2024: Commission Vice Chair Reeves moved to Amend the Agenda to include the approval of bank signatories; seconded by Commissioner Shephard; the Amended Agenda was approved by the Commission.

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – March 5, 2024: Commissioner Shephard moved to approve the Minutes for March 5, 2024; seconded by Commissioner Rainey; the Minutes for March 5, 2024 were approved by the Commission.

APPROVAL OF CALLED MEETING MINUTES – March 6, 2024: Commission Vice Chair Reeves moved to approve the Called Meeting Minutes for March 6, 2024; seconded by Commissioner Shephard; the Called Meeting Minutes for March 6, 2024 were approved by the Commission.

SPEAKERS APPEARANCES: Speakers will have five (5) minutes:

Mr. McGarrick Butts: To Address the Food Truck Ordinance

Mr. McGarrick Butts, 708 West 23rd Avenue, Cordele, Georgia.

Mr. Butts wanted to establish jurisdiction over the City of Cordele Commission regarding Ordinances, specifically, The Mobile Food Vendor Ordinance.

The Appellant, as Mr. Butts stated, filed an appeal with the Municipal Court regarding the Mobile Food Vendor Ordinance; the concerns were \$1,000,000 liability insurance and Mr. Butts stated that the City of Cordele Commission has demanded 1.5 million for a license from the Appellant.

Chairman Joshua Deriso informed Mr. Butts that if he has a complaint against one of the elected officials, he can file an Ethics Complaint or Lawsuit. The City of Cordele Municipal Court handles misdemeanors, traffic tickets, etc. Chairman Deriso stated to Mr. Butts, if he feels that he has a matter that he is not pleased with, petitioning the City of Cordele Municipal Court will not help him in the matter. Chairman Deriso explained to Mr. Butts, if he is saying the City is violating the Ordinance, Municipal Court has no jurisdiction. The Municipal Court has jurisdiction when the actually citizens violate an Ordinance. He informed Mr. Butts, that he will have to go above the City Commission into a higher Court, if he is saying, the City is violating an Ordinance. Chairman Deriso informed Mr. Butts if he has questions regarding the Ordinance to speak with the City Clerk or City Manager.

Note: Commissioner Owens entered at 9:15 AM.

SPEAKERS ON A SPECIFIC AGENDA ITEM: Speaker will have three (3) minutes:

No Requests.

DEPARTMENT HEADS REPORTS:

1. Community Advancement Manager – Maurice Hill Reported.

GOAL #1: To identify blighted properties in the Gillespie area near the new apartment building and concentrate the initial renovation projects in that area for a high visibility impact on the Housing Initiatives.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Drove the Gillespie area, identified 20+ blighted properties and working to identify the current homeowners and establishing a program to work with them to renovate these properties.

Meeting with contractors and lenders to establish a vetting process so homeowners can engage their services for home renovations and finalizing with SWGU the Housing Summit for April 20th at the Community Clubhouse.

GOAL #2: Attend the GICH (Georgia Initiative for Community Housing) Conference in Tifton on April

To get information on the three-year program for collaboration and technical assistance related to housing and community development. The objective of the Initiative is to help communities create and launch a locally based plan to meet their housing needs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Registered to attend the conference in Tifton in April and contacting builders that can assist with new construction of single family, multifamily, town homes, etc. to meet our housing needs.

GOAL #3: Engagement with the School System and other Community based organizations to bring STEM Activities

Contact STEM providers and get information to schools and IT Job Training programs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Attended the Dr. Seuss Program at the PreK School and read books to several classes and sent STEM to PreK for students and SWGU for IT Job Training.

GOAL #4: Participating in the update to the City's Comprehensive Plan:
Plan to attend a series of six meetings to discuss the Comprehensive Plan.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Have attended three of the six meetings covering a variety of topics for the Comprehensive Plan.

GOAL #5: Engagement Downtown Development and Economic Development
Attend meetings and webinars for City Development

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Attended the USDA SECD/SECTI webinar for Community Project Funding on March 12th.
Attended the Main Street Meeting on March 13th.

2. Finance Department: Sonya Alexander Reported.

Goals:

- Increase in Business License for the Month of February is \$156,937.13
- Collected \$1,054,726.18 in Property Taxes

3. Fire Department Report: Fire Chief Todd Alligood Reported.

Goals:

- First Aid CPR/AED Class for City employees will be held on April 22nd and April 25th, in the Cordele Police Department Training Room.
- Needs assessment for 2025 budget.
- Provide best possible service to the citizens and visitors of Cordele.

Accomplishments:

- Attending Leadership Crisp. We were at the State Capitol Monday March 11th and met with our local State Representative and State Senator. We will be meeting again at Albany State Univ. (Cordele Campus) Thursday of this week.

- Had initial meeting with our City Manager about the upcoming budget on Tuesday March 12th.
- We will be attending the job fair at Crisp County High School Thursday March 28th.
- Jon Watson has completed the first couple weeks of rookie school at GPSTC. Currently working on his Haz-Mat Ops certification.
- Lt. Justin Cook earned his NIMS 300 certification. Multi-jurisdictional Incident Command System training to effectively manage large emergency scenes. The class was taught at the EOC.
- Jared Averill attended the flooding incident debriefing at the EOC March 12th. Looking for areas we can improve how we work with other local agencies to better serve the community.
- HAAS Alert Report from February:
 - a. Sixty-two (62) calls,
 - b. 1,1197 motorists were alerted that the Fire Department was approaching or on scene
 - c. Average response time – three (3) minutes.

4. Housing and Urban Development – Irene Cantrell Reported.

Goal: Cordele Historic Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation Commission Chairman is requesting a different meeting time for the Historic Preservation Commission, preferably at 6:00 PM.

The Historic Preservation Commission is asking the Cordele City Commission to consider the change of time, at their next Commission Meeting to approve the new time for the Board Members. This time is more convenient for the Board Members, CHPC Applicants, etc.

Goal: To appoint new members to the following Boards

The Board of Zoning and Appeals – one (1) member

The Cordele Planning and Zoning Commission – one (1) member

The Cordele Historic Preservation Commission – one (1) member

Mrs. Susan Barge has agreed to serve on the Cordele Historic Preservation Commission

Goal: CHIP 2024 - Housing Program Community Home Improvements

We are anticipating our Grant Application to be approved sometime in April 2024, and hopefully to start and complete the improvements on several homes.

Board of Zoning and Appeals Meeting, March 8, 2024

A Sign Request for Property Owner, Crisp Regional Hospital, Inc., located at 1701 East 16th Avenue, Cordele, Georgia, was submitted by 41 South Creative, per Jake Wallace. The property is zoned HC, Highway Commercial.

The BZA approved the request for a sign to be located at 1701 East 16th Avenue.

5. Human Resources – David Wade Reported.

Goals for 2024

Improve Recruitment and Retention

- Promoted a Sergeant to Training Officer in the Fire Department. Hired a Sergeant, and promoted a Patrolperson to Corporal in the Police Department. Hired an Equipment Operator in the Gas Department.
- Phase 2 of the Workforce Needs Assessment kicked off February 02, 2024. Marketing information including the City logo and brand standards have been forwarded to Mopdog. Surveys were distributed to all employees with a March 15, 2024 submittal deadline. Phone interviews are being scheduled with all department heads and members of the Workforce Needs Assessment Committee.

Chairman Deriso asked if he stated that the Workforce Needs Assessment will be wrapped up by the end of this month?

Mr. Wade answered, “yes.”

Chairman Deriso asked if the Commission will be able to look at the Workforce Needs Assessment?

Mr. Wade stated, I will rephrase that; all the information gathered and compiled, should be done by the end of March and after that, it should be a couple of weeks, then it will be a final report.

6. Municipal Court: Jackie Walker Reported.

Goals For Cordele Municipal Court

- Report accurate and complete information for the court and public.
- Complete court docket for the judge in a timely manner.
- Purging old court dockets and excess paper files (copies of old court paperwork that’s already in digital form).

Accomplishments For Cordele Municipal Court

- All dockets and court dispositions were turned into the state on time.

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

Cordele Police Department

Goals & Accomplishments

- a. We will continue to provide professional law enforcement service through our hiring process, training, and self-accountability. **(Corporals and Sergeants have been participating in the interview process with new applicants. This has been well received. Giving front line supervisors a say in the hiring process has also has increased moral.)**
- b. Develop strategies to attract more experienced officers. **(Addressing staffing needs: Will be attending a job fair at Crisp High School on March 28.)**
- c. We will continue to connect with the community through community related events, increasing public contacts and through partnering with local groups and businesses.
- d. **Community Events**
 - SAM Shortline Easter Egg Express, March 30th. Anyone who would like to participate, call SAM Shortline.
 - Raffling off a customized fire pit – proceeds will go toward Community Events with the Police Department; deadline is April 5th.

- Autism Awareness Stroll – April 20th, 10:00 AM, Perry Busbee Walking Track, Crisp County Hospital.
- e. We will continue to make advancements towards becoming state certified. **(We would like to welcome cadet Dylan Peavy to the team. He will be starting on March 25. candidate is in our hiring process. Held assessments for patrol commander on March 13.)**

Code Compliance Division Report:
Goals & Accomplishments

- a. The Department will continue to engage the community with knowledge and enforcement to increase code compliance in all wards. This will provide more attractive and presentable neighborhoods for the current citizens, future citizens, workers and travelers. The ultimate plan is to attract new businesses, industry and potential residents to the city.
- b. The Department plans to continue training and certification for all officers through the ICC and the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement. Certification in Codes and multiple inspection categories is the goal.
- c. The Department will continue to address blighted commercial and residential properties through education, code enforcement, private funding, DCA grants and working relationships with reliable, certified contractors.
- d. The Department will continue to utilize social media to announce code issues and problems. To educate our citizens on our local city ordinances and state laws thru social media and local news outlets.

Commissioner Shephard asked if it would be feasible to put “No Dumping” signs in the alleys?

City Manager Angela Redding responded; we are working on those. I have Public Works putting together quotes.

8. Public Works – Steve Fulford Reported.

Express Disposal cleaned up from the North to 16th Avenue. They will clean up the rest of the City Thursday, March 28th and Friday, March 29th.

Chairman Deriso asked who was putting the stop signs out?

Mr. Fulford responded, SAP LMIG Safety. It was a special LMIG Program, we had about \$300,000. This company received the bids and all the stop signs will be replaced.

Yield Signs and Stop Signs have been changed out.

Chairman Deriso commented on the height of the signs.

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

Please see report submitted.

Chairman Deriso asked Mr. Smarr to highlight more of the City of Cordele businesses; so, when people are traveling, they can be seen. Promoting the small businesses, promoting changes that they might have. We want to drive the traffic to the businesses.

10. UC&T – Debbie Wright Reported.

The flash flood event on Saturday March 9th delivered another 6” of rain on already saturated ground. We have both ponds full of water and are treating everything we can run through the plant without violating any more permits. We are expecting more rain this weekend and praying it will not be as bad as last weekend!

We have some valves to change out in 3 clarifiers. But with the 3” of rain we got first of this week has halted that work. We had to put everything in service and are running over 6.0 MGD.

We really hope the ARPA Grant money will start improving our situation after a heavy rainfall event.

We really would like to see the UV Disinfection System put in place at the wastewater treatment plant. This is in the SPLOST list.

We completed the update of our Penia Water Lab QA/QC Manual and SOP Manual. This is required by EPD. It must stay up to date with all test procedures.

The Water Audit was submitted by March 1, 2024. This is required by the Water Stewardship Act. It takes a lot of data from different departments to compile the audit.

John Wright filed his first SARA Title III Right-to-Know report. This year for the first time it had information needed for the state of Georgia. Up until now it was just for local EMA and Federal. I really appreciated his help on this!

Our next report on the agenda is the Water Quality Report for 2023, also called the CCR (Consumer Confidence Report).

Debbie Wright announced U, C, & T received a Gold Award for the City’s Water System.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consider and Approve New Alcoholic Beverage License (No Exceptions Noted):
Reviewed by Police Chief Heard 3.1.2024
Sonny’s Package Store
412 E 16th Ave. St. H
Cordele, GA 31015
Mr. Dipankumar P. Patel – Owner
Commission Vice Chair Reeves moved to approve the Alcoholic Beverage License for Sonny’s Package Store; seconded by Commissioner Shephard.
Commissioner Rainey voted aye; Commission Vice Chair Reeves voted aye; Commissioner Owens voted aye; Commissioner Shephard voted aye.

The Alcohol License for Sonny's Package Store was approved by the Commission

2. Consider and Approve New Board Appointment: Cordele Housing Authority Board
Mrs. Marlene Kimball to replace Mrs. Mary Joyce Parker
Unexpired term ending September 18, 2024
To continue to serve the following five-year term beginning September 18, 2024 – ending September 29, 2029.
Commissioner Shephard moved to approve the new board appointment on the Cordele Housing Authority Board, Mrs. Marlene Kimball; seconded by Commission Vice Chair Reeves.
Commissioner Owens voted aye; Commission Vice Chair Reeves voted aye; Commissioner Shephard voted aye; Commissioner Rainey voted aye.
The New Board appointment to the Cordele Housing Authority Board was approved by the Commission.
3. Consider and Approve the Second Reading of an Ordinance to amend and restate the Retirement Plan for the Employees of the City of Cordele, Georgia, in accordance with and subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the attached Adoption Agreement, any Addendum to the Adoption Agreement, the Georgia Municipal Employees Benefit System (GMEBS) Basic Plan Document, and the GMEBS Trust Agreement. When accepted by the authorized officers of the City and GMEBS, the foregoing shall constitute a contract between the City and GMEBS, all as authorized and provided by O.C.G.A. § 47-5-1 et seq.

Background Summary Information:

GMEBS recently received a favorable determination letter from the IRS for the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan. The Plan, as approved, incorporates required federal law updates, as well as administrative updates adopted by the Board of Trustees of GMEBS over the last several years. To ensure continued tax-qualified status for all GMEBS-member retirement plans, all participating employers must readopt their plans using the most recent IRS-approved Adoption Agreement.

Commissioner Shephard moved to approve the Second Reading of an Ordinance to amend and restate the Retirement Plan for the City Employees; seconded by Commission Vice Chair Reeves.

Commissioner Owens voted aye; Commission Vice Chair Reeves voted aye; Commissioner Shephard voted aye; Commissioner Rainey voted aye.

The Second Reading of an Ordinance to amend and restate the Retirement Plan for the Employees was approved by the Commission.

4. Discussion – Hazard Mitigation Grant for Generators.
Commission Vice Chair Reeves moved to discuss the Hazard Mitigation Grant for Generators; seconded by Commissioner Shephard.
City Manager Angela Redding stated that this Grant was applied for in 2019, four years ago. We are just receiving an award for the Grant; it is for four (4) generators at the Gum Creek Water Treatment Plant, Highway 90 Well, Omar Heights Lift Station and Penia Well. There is a local match of \$73,113.00. The total approved cost is \$487,419.00; the federal share is \$365,564.00; the state share is \$ 48,742.00; the local share is \$73,113.00.

City Manager Angela Redding stated, she wanted to make sure the Commission was aware of the local match, which will come from the General Fund and it is for four generators. City Manager Angela Redding asked the Commission for approval to move forward with the Grant. All expenses are due September 1st of this year.

City Manager Angela Redding asked if all the cost were going to be the same for all four (4) generators.

Debbie Wright stated that she will have to get it all quoted again because the price of generators is much higher since 2019. Mrs. Wright stated that she does not know if she can afford four (4) generators. The most important one is to get a generator at the City's Gum Creek Water Treatment Plant; the second one will be Hwy 90 Well.

Commission Vice Chair Reeves moved to get the local match of \$73,113.00 from general fund for the generators; seconded by Commissioner Rainey.

5. A Resolution to change Williams Field to Williams-Bartee Field (after Commissioner Bartee who served the City of Cordele for decades and sought to develop the field). A motion was not made on this item.
6. Name the 50+ years of employee's services award after Mrs. Irene Cantrell who has unwaveringly served the City of Cordele for 52 years. A motion was not made on this item.
7. Consider and Approve Bank Signatories: Removing – Russell Bridgers, Finance Director; adding Sonya Alexander – Staff Accountant. Commission Vice Chair Reeves moved to approve the removal and adding of bank signatories; seconded by Commissioner Rainey. The Commission approved Sonya Alexander to be added to the Bank Signatories.
8. **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:** City Manager Angela Redding Reported.
Deadline for Occupation Tax

Occupation Tax (Business License) Renewal

Occupation license (Business license) expire at the end of the year and become delinquent if not paid by April 1st. A penalty is imposed for occupation licenses not renewed prior to April 1st. The penalty is ten (10) percent of the regulatory and administrative fee and occupational tax determined to be due. The delinquency will accrue interest at the rate of one (1) percent for each month or partial month of such delinquency.

There is no grace period after April 1st. Businesses operating without an occupation license will receive a summons to appear in Municipal Court for nonpayment.

Important Service Update For Our Valued Customers

Please make sure your Express Disposal carts are placed wheels-to-the-curb, with their lids – not the cart handles – facing the street.

This enables all contents to empty into the truck when the hydraulic arm lifts and tilts the carts.

Also, please remember to keep the carts three (3) feet from mailboxes, cars and each other.

City Manager Angela Redding reminded everyone that everything is picked up at the curb-trash, yard debris and two bulk items on their scheduled pick-up day.

Comprehensive Plan Update: Planning Meeting

There will be a Comprehensive Plan Update Planning Meeting on Thursday, March 21st, 5:30 PM, at the Community Clubhouse. Please plan to attend. The City is required to submit a draft in April and the final plan is due in June. Again, we appreciate all participation.

Announcements

LMIG additional funds set aside in the State Amended Fiscal Year 2024 Budget has been approved, requiring no match from the City. The amount for the City of Cordele \$275,979.36. Applications are due, no later than June 15th. This is additional funding the Governor and the Legislature set aside in the Amended Fiscal Year 2024 Budget.

Cemetery Guidelines: The City of Cordele is having a lot of problems in our cemeteries with solar lights, big rocks, etc. When citizens come in to purchase a plot from the City Clerk, they are handed the Ordinance that include the guidelines for cemeteries. A maximum of two flowers or items per grave, the items are listed in the Ordinance, such as, artificial flowers, silk flowers, any type of small memory items for your loved ones. We will make an announcement, and an ad will be placed in the newspaper. We want to make our citizens aware of these requirements that are in place and we want to give the citizens the opportunity to go and remove these items. If the items are not removed, it states in the Ordinance, that the City can remove those items.

Goals

We are continuing to build on Employee Interest Groups, Increased collection of delinquent property taxes, and finalizing the Housing Forum – April 20, 2024.

Good Friday Holiday

City Offices will be closed on Friday, March 29, 2024 in observance of Good Friday. We will reopen on Monday, April 1, 2024.

City Manager Angela Redding reminded the Commission of the request from the HPC to meet at 6:00 PM instead of 4:00 PM.

Motion:

Commissioner Owens moved to approve the time change of the Historic Preservation Committee from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM; seconded by Commissioner Shephard.

Commissioner Rainey voted aye; Commissioner Shephard voted aye; Commissioner Owens voted aye; Commission Vice Chair Reeves voted aye.

The time change for the Historic Preservation Committee to 6:00 PM was approved by the Commission.

9. CITY ATTORNEY’S REPORT: No Report.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION: (For Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate):

11. ADJOURNMENT: Commissioner Owens moved to adjourn the Meeting at 10:24 AM; seconded by Commission Vice Chair Reeves; the motion was approved by the Commission.