

**MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION CALLED MEETING
December 1, 2022**

A Called Meeting of the Cordele City Commission was held on December 1st, 4:00 p.m., Cordele City Hall Courtroom, 501 North 7th Street, Cordele, Georgia with the following present:

Joshua Deriso, Commission Chair – via telephone conference	
Royce Reeves, Sr. – Commission Vice Chair	Vesta Beal-Shephard, Commissioner
Wesley Rainey, Commissioner	Isaac Owens, Commissioner
Angela Redding, City Manager	Janice Mumphery, Recording Secretary
City Attorney Tommy Coleman	

Media present: Cordele Dispatch – Chris Lewis; South GA News – Deepayan Sinha.

Call to Order: Commission Chair Joshua Deriso called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Invocation: There was a silent moment of prayer.

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

Approval of Agenda – December 1, 2022: Commissioner Shephard moved to approve the Agenda for December 1st; seconded by Commission Vice Chair Reeves; the motion was approved by the Commission.

Roll Call: A quorum was established.

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

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consideration of the adoption of procedures for hearings concerning whether officers shall be removed from office pursuant to paragraph b (1) of section 5.16 of the City Charter of the City of Cordele. Commissioner Shephard moved to approve the adoption of procedures for hearings concerning whether officers shall be removed from office pursuant to paragraph b (1) of section 5.16 of the City Charter; seconded by Commissioner Rainey; the motion was approved with a 3/1 vote. Commissioner Shephard - aye; Commission Vice Chair Reeves – aye; Commissioner Rainey aye; Commissioner Owens – nay.

2. Consideration of the adoption of a resolution appointing David A. Forehand, Jr, Attorney at Law, as special counsel concerning the potential removal of Joshua Deriso as Chairman. Commissioner Rainey moved to adopt a resolution appointing David A. Foreman, Jr., Attorney at Law, as special counsel concerning the potential removal of Joshua Deriso as Chairman; seconded by Commissioner Shephard; the motion was approved with a 3/1 vote.

Commissioner Owens: “how did we decide on Mr. Forehand?”

City Attorney Tommy Coleman responded: “we consulted with Mr. Forehand in advance to see if he is willing to accept the position, he is here, so we prepared this resolution, so you can accept him.”

Commissioner Owens: “so we talk to him before we knew that we were going to have the meeting?”

City Attorney Tommy Coleman: “yes.”

Commission Chair Joshua Deriso: “I want to state for the record, I have no issue with Agenda item #1, but #2 is a clear and present collusion. The fact of the matter that this Attorney is the same Attorney that has seen all of my civil cases through. And for the Commissioners to have a prior conversation with an Attorney to prosecute me, that has an Agenda against me, showing through his freely accepting of any litigant or petitioner who wants to take action against me and the City would be involved in such collusion and mockery of a democratic process is beyond me. This is when we start to unroll the democratic process if any, if you do not like me, that’s fine, that is okay. But for this Commission body to choose an attorney that has freely shown, he has an issue against me, that has taken every other litigant, that is a problem and the City and Commissioners being the elected officials should not entertain. Pick any other attorney almost you want, but to have this form of collusion and air it so publicly, to show some desperation to undo an election. I am a shame that this body would go through the links of doing this. Commissioner Owens asked a specific and pointing question, about how this was decided. We do not make decisions in the dark and especially not like this and the public is aware that this is nothing more than a set-up.

The motion was approved to adopt a resolution appointing David A. Forehand, Jr., Attorney at Law as special counsel concerning the potential removal of Joshua Deriso as Chairman, with a 3/1 vote. Commission Vice Chair Royce Reeves, Sr. – aye, Commissioner Vesta Beal Shephard – aye, Commissioner Wesley Rainey – aye; Commissioner Isaac Owens – nay.

3. Consideration of a resolution appointing Larry Mims as Hearing Officer in the hearing conducted pursuant to section 5.16 of the City Charter to determine whether Joshua Deriso should be removed from his position as Chairman of the Cordele City Commission. Commissioner Rainey moved for a resolution appointing Larry Mims as Hearing Officer; seconded by Commissioner Shephard.

Commissioner Owens: “how did we go about choosing Mr. Mims for this purpose?”

City Attorney Tommy Coleman responded: “Mr. Mims is a retired state court judge and I called him and asked him to preside over the hearing. The decision is ultimately made by the City Commission and not by him.”

Commissioner Owens: “prior to scheduling the meeting?”

City Attorney Tommy Coleman: “oh yes.”

Commission Chair Joshua Deriso: “Again, I have no problem with Agenda item #1, that is the Charter duty and it is written in the Charter under Section 5.16. The issue I have again with Agenda item #3 is the same I have with #2, other than Mr. Mims having a personal vendetta or agenda against me. This was decided in the dark. While Section 5.16 make preparations for the Commissioners to go through to see how they want to go through an investigation is clearly as they would like. We don’t make decisions in the dark, we don’t put one name up. I’ve been criticized several times for putting names or something together on the Agenda that the

Commission had talked about and this is the same thing. But, again, if the majority want to do it, want to show the public, how they are running the democratic process, that is okay. Because in due time the people will see and the people will understand, exactly what this is, which is a hit job, which is collusion, which is the Cordele version of January 6th and if you guys want to go ahead and vote, it is on record.

The motion was approved for a resolution appointing Larry Mims as Hearing Officer; with a 3/1 vote. Commission Vice Chair Royce Reeves, Sr. – aye, Commissioner Vesta Beal Shephard – aye, Commissioner Wesley Rainey – aye; Commissioner Isaac Owens – nay.

- 4. ADJOURNMENT:** Commissioner Owens moved to adjourn at 4:12 p.m.; seconded by Commissioner Shephard; the motion was approved by the Commission.

APPROVED