

**MINUTES**  
**WAYCROSS CITY COMMISSION PLANNING & INFORMATION SESSION**  
**MONDAY, MAY 20, 2024, 5:00 P.M.**  
**WAYCROSS CITY COMMISSION CHAMBERS**  
*(417 PENDLETON STREET, WAYCROSS, GA)*

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

The Planning and Information Session of the City of Waycross was called to order May 20, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. by Mayor Michael-Angelo James. The meeting was held in the Commission Chambers of City Hall. Present was Mayor James, Commissioners Katrena Felder, Sheinita Bennett and Diane Hopkins.

**A. Invocation:** Mayor Michael-Angelo James

Invocation was led by Mayor Michael-Angelo James

**B. Pledge of Allegiance**

**II. GUESTS:**

Ms. Alicia Ivey, 1005 Hill Street, Waycross Georgia, came to express her concerns about the process of the ARPA Grants that were given to the citizens.

Mr. Larry Lockey, 818 Sargent Street, Waycross Georgia, - came to announce the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Juneteenth Freedom Day being held on June 15, 2024, on Oak and Folk Street.

**III. TRAVEL/TRAINING SCHEDULE AND REQUESTS**

**IV. PLANNING & INFORMATION SESSION**

**A. Bids:** n/a

**B. Discussion Items:**

1. Georgia Department of Corrections Work Detail Agreement-James Smart

Mr. Smart, Public Works Director spoke about the work program through Department of Corrections and the annual agreement that needs to be signed tomorrow upon a consensus to renew.

2. Capital Gains Plan-Engineer

TREY SCOTT: Hello. Good evening. Good evening. Mayor. Commissioners. I'm really following up on a discussion or a presentation that Charlie Bridges gave from ESG engineering at the last meeting. I was just going to hit a couple of the high points. I do think you're trying to bring, -, the rate increase to a vote. So, I was going to reiterate some of that and then kind of walk you through some of our

calculations, -, with, -, in regard to the potential of Pierce County coming on as a water and wastewater purchaser. And so, we executed some calculations that would help the commission recognize the capital side of such a tie on and what that would look like to share in the responsibilities of our ratepayers as far as future capital and growth. -, how that pertains to my glasses right now. All right. Here we go. -, and sorry for the font. Everything changed when it got uploaded to this computer, but I think it'll. I think you can read it well enough. -, as you recall from several presentations through the years, those of you who were on the board and as of the last meeting, -, several years ago, before the inflationary increases that we've experienced in the last four years, we had taken off the capital improvement needs of your water and wastewater systems and decided that nearly \$20 million should be invested. Those dollars are going quite a bit, -, shorter as far as the length to which they can be applied. I would guesstimate, and we worked back through this, that we've had a 50% increase in many of these different costs, 25% increases across the board. But in many of these very technical equipment pieces and very technical labor that is required for these particular systems, we've seen upwards of 50%. I think Charlie hit on this. So why the reason for the increase, at least one of those is trying to fund a capital plan within water and wastewater. And if you might, would ask, well, isn't there work ongoing in the city right now? And for those of you that were here, you might remember, and those of you that were not, then I'll remind you or I'll tell you for the first time is the exercise that I utilize to be able to go out several years ago and pursue and get grant funding and loan funding to be able to support a little bit of capital work that we've done over the last three years was a trade of debt service coming off the books and reapplying that similar to a car loan, where you get a five year car loan and you pay right as you pay off the car, you go right back and go get a new car. That's kind of where we're at in our water and wastewater systems, but we're in about a 20-year plan rather than a five-year plan. So, a 20-year debt came off the books for the wastewater plant. The sewer plant expansion to be built 20 years ago, that came off the books. And then now we're worried about the old plant. Plus, things that have been have need to be replaced in the new part of the plant. So, the snowball and I've kind of educated the commission or discussed this with you in the past. That snowball continues to grow, and reinvestment is absolutely required to pause the snowball growth and potentially be able to melt some away as well. Recall that the debt that we have taken on is between 40 and \$0.60 on the dollar grant. So, about the best, -, the best money that we could possibly find is being applied to it. Yet that's been pretty well offset by the inflationary increases over the last five years.

TREY SCOTT: Consumer price index. -, you know, this is a 20% or so increase over the last five years. These are very real cons-er price indexes is how Social Security decides, you know, what increases how all of the different government programs and assistance programs determine their increases. And many of my clients have automatic rate increases year by year based on CPI alone, that if there's a in 2019, if there's a 1.8% increase to CPI, that water and sewer rates would automatically go up by that amount because we, as the city, are seeing all of those increases exactly as they appear to all of our customers. -, I kind of flagged this at the bottom, is that we can't go 20% in the hole with inflationary increases as

the city with no rate increases. It's a that's a broken model. We have to find we have to find and secure revenue to offset our expenses.

TREY SCOTT: So, I want to be very specific here because we've done two different studies, and they are funding very different parts of our water and sewer program. So, in every pipeline in the system, every p-p station, every wastewater plant, every water plant, -, what we have is, -, we have costs. We have the rate payers who have paid for all of those assets that are currently out in our system. Then we have growth as a separate as a separate silo. So, we have two different things working, working for us. We have all the assets we've bought, most of the capacity used but some capacity not used. We have growth in the city, which is good news for the first time in a while, we've got that issue kind of working us over and trying to figure out, for example, how would we deal with the new industry, what should they pay to pay into the system that our current ratepayers have paid into all these years? And then you think about Pierce County as an example, wanting to tie into our water water for their own growth. And how do we capitalize that situation to the betterment of our customers and to our city? And both of those I'm taking on with you today. -, the first one is talking about our current ratepayers and the rehabilitative needs specific to all of our assets that we own in water and wastewater. Well, this is awfully small, isn't it? -, this shows revenue versus usage. This is a chart that's meant to show that we have -, residential revenues at a certain mark. We have residential usage at a different mark. And as you can, I think the point of this graphic is to show the difference between revenue and usage in the two different categories.

TREY SCOTT: The rate increase is proposed. You saw all this two weeks ago. I understand is for commercial. It's based on meter size for commercial water. We are our rate study shows that this is very this is very specific to our rate. Study shows that to fund the capital program that we developed that these increases are required. Now you can choose not to fund the capital program, but the capital program is a is recommended to be funded in order to keep the snowball either from getting any bigger or shrunk down. We're looking at a 3% increase proposed for three years running. I noticed Blackshear did a five year, I believe, 3% per year increase in the early 2000. As an example, I found that in the literature, -, commercial rates. Here's the increase is 3%. For a standard two-inch meter, you're looking at a \$1.11 per month increase and then going up to \$1.13 \$1.18. As an example, for sewer rate adjustment, this is not just an increase, but an adjustment. Our rate, our rate study, which is not personally executed by me, but by an accountant who's this is all that he and his company do is rate studies. Their recommendation is that we have to make an adjustment to the sewer because commercial strangely was upside down from the rate study 20 years ago. That requires a 7% year-over-year increase. and that would be \$3.97 for just an example. On the two-inch meter, that would be around a \$4 increase, growing to a \$4.81 increase over the three year period. That's a monthly bill.

TREY SCOTT: Residential water rates were proposing a 3% year over year increase for three years. Total cost per month to a three quarter inch water meter size would be roughly \$2.14 over the three years. -, first year, \$0.69, \$0.71, \$0.74.

TREY SCOTT: And then finally residential sewer, 3%. Again, no adjustment needed here, but just a just an attempt to increase to fund the capital program and keep up with the cost of living. We're looking at a \$1.15 increase per month on the first bill, and then ranging out to \$1.22 per month. I've spoken over the reasons and the conclusions. Let me jump into this. This is called a system development charge. It is a technical charge that requires quite a bit of computation. But I'll suffice to say that existing customers have paid for the existing water and wastewater infrastructure that we that we claim. -, the question is, how do customers who are coming in, new customers, new growth, -, how should they be? How should they be made to participate in our overall capital needs, not rehabilitative needs? Specifically, we cancel all that out. They are buying either capacity in the current systems that we own, or we are projecting capacities that will be required and what those might cost for this growth. And then they are broken down. Each of their usage, potential usage is broken down on an in an equitable manner for the amount of water or wastewater that they're going to use. Okay. So -, the SBA, this particular revenue concept and rate charge is -, is segregated somewhat like our stormwater utility. It can only be used for capital work. It cannot be used for O&M. It cannot be used for rehabilitative projects. It must be used for capital projects that increase, -, that increase capacities to our to our new users. Okay. -, stormwater utility. As you'll recall, the stormwater money has to be in the stormwater account has to be used by state law for stormwater. Okay. This doesn't replace a tap fee. What we do is that right now, you have some, -, Mr. Raiford was sharing with me before the meeting. You have tap fees that usually are nominalized, where someone just kind of said, here's about our costs for going and doing a tap of one size or another, and then maybe they round it up or who knows. I've seen all different things with different cities through my career. What we do under this idea is that you would develop the system development charge. It would become a charge to be utilized as commission would please should be it would need to be adopted. But either way the outcome is whereby we have a revenue source to deal with new growth and the impacts to our water and wastewater systems. Speaking specific to the six- and eight-inch range, we expect that the Pierce County water, -, water request will be in a 6 inch to 8-inch meter size for water. And that that kind of drives what the sewer charge would be as well. And so, in this case, for Pierce County, if they, for instance, asked for a six-inch meter that's equivalent to around 50 homes. Okay. To give you an idea of what that capacity request is. And for that dollar amount, we say that would be equivalent to a capital charge of around \$250,000. That is not part of their rate of pay. It's part of a one-time fee for connection to our system. In that capacity, they're requesting for us to hold that in perpetuity for them, if that makes sense. It's a complex idea, but -, this also sets a structure whereby, -, should the city choose to go in this direction and should we all agree about the cost of capacity and the needs for your capacity growth? This could be utilized for any growth that would ever come to the city. But as Mr. Rayford discussed, that's a conversation for another time, potentially. Pierce County right now is pushing, and we need to have some sort of way of executing with them what our belief is in the cost of that capacity to be allocated only to Pierce County.

Commissioner Bennett: And then, -, my next question, what will Blackshear be responsible for? And do you think it's sufficient? And then what happens? We have that onetime payment of you said \$200,000. So, what happens if something

happens will we be responsible for that as time goes on. What role will Blackshear play?

TREY SCOTT: So, we're still working some of the details of that agreement out. I would guess that what will happen is that, you know, you draw a line in the sand basically, and where that line ends up being is what we're discussing with Pierce County right now. It is Pierce County. Okay. -, Blackshear. Pierce County is that. We are. -, I would think that we are trying to draw it on this side of the bridge, you know, and try to say that, okay, here's our water meter that we would put in place, and then they would take on everything beyond that on the wastewater side of things. That is quite a bit up for discussion. Who owns and takes over the care of the lift station, for example, that sits over across the river? It's still something that's being figured out. Currently that area is served water and sewer by the city of Waycross to that area. Yet they are not annexed within the city. So currently what they're asking is can they buy more capacity to be able to build out that area of Pierce County? And we're still trying to understand exactly how much water and wastewater they will require. So yeah, we that's one of the reasons why we haven't finished this exercise, because we're still trying to understand exactly how much they want. Which gets you back to that. The meter breakdown that I have up there shows you kind of whatever they ask for. We're prepared to be able to say, well, that's what it'll cost from a capacity charge perspective. As far as -, as far as how to think about the fact that they're not part of our water system currently, and they want to kind of have their own thing. You know, what we're trying to do is find a good dividing line between us and them, and they take everything beyond that line, and we kind of just deliver water and take wastewater from that point. And we have not completed that negotiation with Pierce County, but that's forthcoming.

Chief Eddins;

I want to strongly caution the commission on this as they stand out there right now in Bodmin Road. Some of the businesses I don't want to call them names may not have met what they needed to meet as far as sprinkler systems, things like that, that can be a negative to us. Right now, we're not held accountable for what's out there, even though city water is out there and sewage the fire department or the city when ISO comes in. If that's not in our picture, that's right. So, if we're going to make some kind of agreement, I would strongly suggest that we make it water only and sewer and not provide services past that because that can come back on us. So, ISO is a a a compilation of the entire city, what we cover. So, any one section that is not in that scope can actually impact the entire city. So, it's not going to be that section may have a higher ISO rating of the city will have a higher ISO.

Chief Eddins: Are lower than what we are currently at now with an ISO class two. So, to expand or to bring that back in may not be a positive for us. So, I would just when the water side, the fire side, I would say let's do water and sewer and not take a gamble because ultimately I can tell you real quick you're going to put a fire station out there. If you're going to keep a class two rating on this water thing.

Okay. But I'm just telling you, if we if we go beyond that scope of what we're talking about. Now, -, you better be putting a fire station to cover this.

Duke;

Thank you. Just to bring it back, Mr. Mayor. What I'm saying is we're trying to get the water study done first to get a correct measurement of our water usage. That's the purpose of being tonight and the last meeting. So, we get a cost of that associated with that. We're giving you information right now on what could potentially happen with Pierce County. No decision has been made. However, there are about 15 conversations going on amongst everybody. I'm simply trying to prep for those conversations by getting the water study done, which Mead is, and the capacity needed at that point. All the other decisions will come later for negotiations. We are not there yet. Right now, we're trying to get the water study right sided, commercial wise versus the first process. Pierce County will be commercial property. They have said anything about rezone yet. So, once we do that, we'll come back and circle back to all these other conversations. That was the whole goal of tonight to get a vote on the rate increases.

TREY SCOTT:

Well, we've run all the numbers on the study. We're building out the actual report. And so, we're presenting the findings of the study as we build it out. So, the report, that the findings of the study are ready. The actual building up the back background of the whole report is coming, so it'll be soon. A couple of weeks is my guess.

3. Finance Update-Greg

This is just a few bullet points I have here. -, the engineers asked me to do a little bit of research on, -, historic data, and I did, and turned it into them. I used prior year audits. It's. And what I found was that, you know, we haven't had any major increases in, in the, in the jobs we did for the, -, or capital improvements in over 20 years. -, in 2016, we spent 1.6 million replacing water meters. But the last really big project we did was when we were trying to get. Claxton Poultry to come here. We went ahead and, -, increased the, -, the water sewer department thinking that was going to happen. As you know, they did not end up coming here. But the benefit was that we did make improvements that would, -, would help the city with other, other items. So. So it's been over 20 years since we've had major improvements to operating expenses, you know, just continually to increase as all expenses do. I put our program ends into this calendar year. The reason I put in that is because we have been getting funds to help with the water sewer, like for example, the software we you know, we're right now we're in the process of installing new software and hopefully that'll help us with efficiencies to increase our revenue a little bit there. And plus, we just needed, needed to do it. Our software was so outdated. But again, the reason I put it in there is because it is related to the water and sewer, the billing part of it. The last one is the water. Sewer rates, -, have increased since 2016. I did the same research that trade

engineer did as far as the consumer price index over the years. And -, and, you know, with the virus hitting us, you know, the inflation went crazy, and the consumer price index went up 22. It was 8%. The good news is it went down to 4% in 2023. But you know, even before the virus it was always had a of increase of probably 1%. And you know, we're not we're not back to that yet. Hopefully we will. But of course, it's what the point is. It's not 0%. You know, everything goes up a little bit each year. That's all I have. Anybody have any questions?

4. Tia II Update

DUKE: Mr. mayor, next to move on to the T update. It's not really an update. -, we did have some questions on the, -, just on the actual road selected to the T update, and I'll begin the presentation. So, I just want to remind the commission that, -, -, how that was done, and we cannot manipulate the list as is, -, it goes to vote this week or it's on the vote. We take it for this for this month. -, we cannot make adjustment to that list. It's been some questions about that. I want to make sure everybody knows on record we cannot make adjustments to that current list as is not. Stand by for questions.

5. Ethics Board Update

DUKE: Thank you, Mister Mayor. Next, we move into the ethics board update. As you know, we received an ethics inquiry last meeting. -, I had 15 days. 15 days as the city manager to respond to the ethics board. The ethics request. -, so right now, this is being day, -, 14. -, and I'll let the city attorney speak on this in a little bit. -, what we have determined is you should have updated the actual board in January from the January calendar year. So, we made these updates, meaning updates. Each commissioner can select two personnel to sit the ethics board, and once you select those personnel, then you get those things to watch tonight. The city clerk will call those individuals tomorrow to make sure they want to do it. I will then run. We run a background check to the police station to ensure they pass the background checks. And then from that point, I think we have 90 days to address the ethics complaint. So, they have to put the board together, set the president all those things. And once they do that, -, we actually get the board and come back to the commission. -, I think with the findings of the board. Am I correct on that?

Huey: Well, no. 90 days, Mr. Mayor and commissioners, is the period of time within which a complaint must be filed. -, after the alleged conduct that resulted in someone believing that a complaint should be filed. Okay. -, the ethics board has to be constituted within 15 days after the complaint has been received. And since it was received on, I believe, May the 7th, May the 22nd would be the 15th day. And -, as the city manager was saying, -, each of you commissioners, can select two citizens to serve on this board and including the mayor, so you'll end up with eight people. Normally it would be five commissioners if we had a full commission selecting two apiece plus the mayor. So, you would have 12 people. But since we only have three commissioners, then it's going to be eight people. The three of you selected to the mayor's selection to would be eight people. That is

the pool for selecting the actual ethics board. And the way it works is, -, at a public meeting, -, the clerk puts all of the names in a receptacle, a basket, some kind of receptacle, and pulls the first five names. The first five names from that pool constitute the ethics board, then the. The clerk also has to pull two additional names, and they are the alternates in case if something happens to one of the five. Now, once the board has been selected and it should be selected within 15 days and the background check should have been done just as the manager said. -, the board has 30 days from that point to review the complaint, and within that 30 days, the board has to determine whether or not the complaint has merit or whether or not the complaint should be dismissed, and whether to have a whole of public hearing and the public hearing has to be held within 60 days after the board has been formed. That is 60 days from the initial 15 days. You have to the board has to hold a public hearing. So, -, where we are now is, -, this commission needs to form the ethics board by selecting the pool, which is going to be eight individuals. And that needs to be done by tomorrow. -, to stay in keeping with the 15-day requirement from the time that the complaint was received. -, and then the clerk, as I indicated, will pull five names, and then you have your ethics board, and then the board has to undergo training, -, within the first 30 days. The training on the actual ordinance in terms of what their responsibilities are, and they also have to select a chairperson among the five of them, and the chairperson undergoes additional training about how to conduct a hearing. Huey: You know, it should the board decide that a hearing is necessary, and that hearing has to occur within 60 days of the board being constituted and assuming the board has a hearing and the hearing procedures are outlined in the, in the in the code. -, there is a right to appeal to the Commission if the respondent is not satisfied with the decision of the Ethics Board, and that has to be done within ten days of the decision of the Ethics Board, and if it is appealed to the City Commission, then the City Commission takes up the matter at the next regular work session, and you have up to 4 to 5 days to conduct a hearing. And -, in the event the respondent is still not satisfied with the decision of the commission, there is another appeal to the Superior Court. It's a discretionary appeal, -, which means that the Superior Court can decide that it may or may not want to hear it, but that has to be done within 30 days of the Commission's decision. So that's an overview of the time deadlines. And so, -, once again, you're at the point now of having to constitute the pool of persons from which you will select seven, well, five for the board and two alternates. And that that should actually be done, -, tomorrow. But Wednesday at the absolute latest, you'd have to have a call meeting if you don't do it tomorrow.

the last time we did this, we all were selected to, as you say, I am selected to. And then we had an option and then we had to share somewhere along the way. We still have some of those appointees, like my appointees, and we didn't put them in a could it put them in from the first five or the first day? And the reason why. Because each district needs to be represented. So, if they pulled five out of my district, they wouldn't get any representation. And I thought, and I don't remember this, but I thought the charter says we had to have all five commissioners to select two of these.

Remember that that is what the charter says that all five commissioners are, are entitled to select two persons each. But of course, we're down to commissioners. And the board really is supposed to be, -, appointed in January of each year or



1. Fuji Yama Inc. dba Fuji Bar and Grill, T. Cavagnaro, 2201 Memorial Drive, Waycross Georgia 31503, Beer Wine and Liquor, Consumption on Premise.

**E. Proposed Ordinances:**

1. An Ordinance of the Waycross City Commission to Amend the Zoning Map of the City of Waycross, Georgia; To Re-Zone the Property Described Herein Located at 615 Morton Avenue From RM-75 Residential Manufactured Housing to C-2 Highway Commercial; To Set an Effective Date; To Repeal Conflicting Ordinances; and for Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on Tuesday agenda.

2. An Ordinance of the Waycross City Commission to Amend the Zoning Map of the City of Waycross, Georgia; To Re-Zone the Property Described Herein Located at 817 ½ Glenmore Avenue From R-50 Residential to C-1 Neighborhood Commercial; To Set and Effective Date; To Repeal Conflicting Ordinances; and for Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on Tuesday agenda

**F. Proposed Resolutions:**

1. A Resolution of the City of Waycross, Georgia To Declare and Emergency for Repairs Needed to the City's Infrastructure and Utility Systems; To Authorize Emergency Repairs to the City Infrastructure at Certain Vulnerable Locations; To Approve Expenditures Needed for Repairs from the City's Water and Sewer Funds; and for Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on Tuesday agenda.

2. A Resolution to Approve Work Detail Agreement Between the Georgia Department of Corrections and the City of Waycross; and for Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on Tuesday agenda.

3. A Resolution of the Waycross City Commission in Support of the Waycross-Ware County Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Committee; and for Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on Tuesday agenda

**G. City Attorney Report:**

**H. City Managers Report:**

For my report. I have not emailed you the report currently. I am trying to add some additional information that I need to clear up with the city attorney. As you well know, citizens are concerned about our code enforcement currently it's not visible to them. So, I was trying to make it visible to them. So, we will be working on doing that so it can be

visible to the citizens to see what all the code department does every day. Additionally, I'm going to add some updated stats from the police force. And I need to make this statement. I know we had a few DUIs just this weekend I guess five. Yeah, we had five DUIs this weekend. And Chief Cox reached out for some help on just safety in general. I want to make that statement not just about the DUI, but the fact that he's brought in some additional support.

**I. Last Call;**

Commissioner Bennett- thank everyone for coming.

Commissioner Felder- thank everyone for coming.

Commissioner Hopkins- thanked everyone for coming.

Mayor James- he reminded everyone about The State of the City Address that will be on May 29, 2024.

**J. Adjourn to Executive Session**

**K. Adjournment**

There was a motion made by Commissioner Bennett to adjourn seconded by Commissioner Felder. All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

**CITY OF WAYCROSS**

BY:.

*+ Michael Angelo James*  
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MICHAEL-ANGELO JAMES, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

*Jacqueline Powell*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JACQUALINE POWELL, City Clerk

