

CITY OF CORNELIA
MINUTES OF MEETING
OCTOBER 10, 2023

The Cornelia City Commission met in a Workshop Session on Tuesday, October 10, 2023, at 5:00 PM in the Cornelia Municipal Building Conference Room, 181 Larkin Street, Cornelia, GA. Mayor, John Borrow, called the meeting to order and the following Commissioners were present: Tony Cook, Janice Griggs, Mark Reed, and Don Bagwell. Also, present: City Attorney, Steve Campbell, City Manager, Donald Anderson, City Clerk, Debbie Turner, Finance Director, Melanie Chandler.

Mayor Borrow opened the meeting and stated that we need to amend the agenda to add two items. The city Manager, Donald Anderson said we need to amend the budget to purchase a new Patrol car for the Police Department and repair the Gates for the city shop. Mr. Anderson explained that one of our new officers had an accident and the insurance has totaled the car. The other item is new gates for the city shop, he explained that one of our gates had quit working earlier in the year and now the Elrod St. gate has quit working. He said we have over a million dollars' worth of equipment stored on the grounds and keeping that secure is of the utmost importance. Mr. Anderson also went over the Zoning Ordinance rewrite and explained that at the Sept. workshop you had asked him to go back and see if the cost could be lowered by changing the scope of the project. He went back to CPL and trimmed a lot of the items on the rewrite and has been able to cut the cost almost in half. He also went over the two ordinances having to do with grease traps.

Mayor Borrow introduced Joley Mixon, Mrs. Mixon explained that this being the first year they have performed the audit for the city it went very well. She thanked Dee, Melanie, and her staff for being so responsive in getting what she needed in a very short time frame. Mrs. Mixon said that the city is in very good financial shape, however the city was upfront about some things that they knew would need to be fixed. She said that she found some clean up that needed to be done such as getting rid of capital assets that was still on the books, but the city no longer has. Commissioner Reed asked why the items had not been found before now, have the rules changed? Mrs. Mixon said that the rules have not changed but this was Melanie's first year here in 2021 and that she understood what needed to be capitalized and what did not. Mrs. Mixon said that they did not want to mess the current year up, so they made a prior year adjustment. For the water sewer fund it was over \$1.2 million and governmental fund it is over \$1.8 million. She said that the

recording of property tax was not being properly accounted for, meaning the general fund was not getting updated through our current software. An adjustment was being made in the prior years. Mrs. Mixon said that Melanie had said that we were going to Tyler Software, and she is very familiar with them. She said that she thinks we will be very happy with them, they are very efficient, and she does not think going forward we will have problems with our receivables. Mr. Anderson said we knew there would be some findings and have already submitted our response. Mrs. Mixon went on to say that even with all the findings of about three million it is only about 5% worth of our net assets, she said the City is in very good financial shape. Mrs. Mixon said that she feels very good about giving us a clean audit. City Manager Anderson went over the remaining items on the agenda.

The workshop adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Debbie Turner, City Clerk

John Borrow, Mayor

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The Cornelia City Commission met in Regular Session on Tuesday, August 1, 2023, at 6:00 PM in the Cornelia Municipal Building Conference Room, 181 Larkin Street, Cornelia, GA. Mayor, John Borrow, called the meeting to order and the following Commissioners were present: Tony Cook, Janice Griggs, Mark Reed, and Don Bagwell. Also, present: City Attorney, Steve Campbell, City Manager, Donald Anderson, City Clerk, Debbie Turner.

Mayor Borrow gave the invocation and Commissioner Griggs led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Bagwell made the motion to Approve the Amended Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Cook. Approved 4 - 0

Commissioner Bagwell made the motion to approve the September 5th minutes as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

City Manager's Monthly Report: City Manager, Donald Anderson gave his monthly report stating that the BRAF was a huge success. He thanked our Main Street Manager, Noah, and all the employees for all their hard work. The next event is Downtown Trick or Treat. Mr. Anderson said we are still working with GMRC to finalize the Comprehensive Plan. A draft has been submitted to the DCA so they can review it while we are working on finalizing the plan, he said he should have it at the November Commission meeting for your review. Mr. Anderson stated that we have been selected to participate in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Program (GICH). It is a 3-year program that will provide insight and resources to help revitalize some of our existing neighborhoods. We were one of only five communities that were selected this year. Mr. Anderson said that we received notice that our application for funding through the Georgia Relief program was approved. The funds will be used to plant trees on our properties located at the corner of Moss and Wells St. The project will be completed in February as our annual Arbor Day project. Mr. Anderson said he has received some questions about the new E911 tower that the county is placing near our water tank on Grandview Circle. He explained that this is in the county, and we have no jurisdiction over

it. He said he has confirmed that the existing tower is 100 feet and the new one will be 105 feet. The old one will be removed when the new one is constructed. A copy of his report is made an integral part of the minutes.

Mayor Borrow stated that he had attended the BRAF and said it was very busy and guessed there was least 8 to 10 thousand people. He thanked all the workers and said it was a great event for the city.

Public Forum: Wade Hasty from Thomas Street said that the traffic counters were placed on Thomas & Berry and that it did slow traffic down but as soon as the counters were removed the speeding started again and something needs to be done.

Mrs. Ernestine Trimiar from 434 Farlinger Street came forward to complain about where her water meter is. Ms. Trimiar said that the city had installed a retaining wall and promised to keep it up, but it is deteriorating. She said as a tax payor she wants to see it fixed. Ms. Trimiar also commented that she has filled out a form three times and nothing has been done. Commissioner Reed asked her what her name was. Ms. Trimiar introduced herself. Mayor Borrow said they would look into it and thanked her for coming.

Ken Brookshire came forward from the corner of Grand Ave. and Sunrise to ask about Chenocetah Drive being open this year for Halloween. Last year it was closed and some of the residents were disappointed because they like to give candy away and see Trick or Treaters.

Old Business: None

Public Hearings:

Traffic Concerns on Thomas Street and Grand Avenue and Maple Street - City Manager, Donald Anderson said after hearing concerns about traffic concerns at the September meeting, traffic counters were placed. We placed the counter in the middle of the block of Thomas

Street for 1 week. Results were 224 cars, and the top speed was 35 mph. The Counter was placed on Grand Avenue near the intersection with Maple Street for 1 week and the results were 181 cars passed and the top speed was 32 mph. The average speed was 20.4.

David Holbrook from 385 Berry Street said he disagreed with the data from the traffic counters. He said he thinks it is inaccurate because the people just avoided the counters. He said he would prefer not to have a speedbump, but something needs to be done. Mr. Holbrook said they are just trying to enjoy their neighborhood. He thanked the mayor and commissioners for listening to their concerns.

Ken Brookshire came back to the podium to say that the speed breaker that is on Grand Avenue they just go around it. He said people do not even stop at the stop sign at the end of Grand Ave. and Sunrise. He said he is not sure what needs to be done.

Karen Shea from Grand Ave. said she really does not know the best way to address the speeders on Maple and Grand. Ms. Shea said that if there is a stop sign at Maple and Grand it might not solve the problem. She is afraid that someone is going to get rear ended if a stop sign is put up at Thomas and Berry, she said there is just not enough space at the triangle. Ms. Shea said this has been a problem for 30 years.

Sue Popham from 138 Grand Ave. said that just about where her property starts is where they start to accelerate going up the hill and flying back down the hill. She said her property backs up to Summit Street, and they are going even faster down that street. Ms. Popham said there are children that play in that yard and with the speeders she is afraid one of them is going to get hurt. Ms. Pollen said she has seen the Police presence, and it makes her feel much safer as an elderly person.

Steve Campbell from 183 Grand Ave., said he lives about midway from Thomas and Grand and has lived there for about 29 years. Mr. Campbell said he uses that street every day probably more than anyone else. He said there have always been people who accelerate up the hill and back down the hill and that nothing has happened but that is not to say it

could not happen. He said he is very concerned about a stop sign at Berry and Thomas only because he thinks if someone is stopped at the sign they are going to get hit from behind. Mr. Campbell said as a judge he is very familiar with traffic cases, he said he thinks it is about changing habits. Mr. Campbell said he thinks maybe a traffic engineer could look at it and come up with a plan.

Wade Hasty came back to the podium and said he might have come up with a solution, just eliminate the little, short strip. Mayor Borrow asked him to show where it is on the map? Mr. Campbell said how he is supposed to get to Thomas Street.

Mayor Borrow ask about getting Professional Traffic Engineer to look at it, he said our Engineers might be able to come up with a solution to help with the problem. The mayor said that we take the concerns very seriously.

Mrs. Bell that lives at the corner of Grand and Maple said that the speeders coming down through there is terrible. Mrs. Bell said that what she has found is that most of the speeders are from the mountain. She said that they live in a neighborhood not a subdivision and people need to watch out for each other. Mrs. Bell also commented on the Hayride that she and her grandson had taken at the BRAF, the driver on the tractor was going too fast and hardly even stopping at the stop signs, she said she clocked his speed, and it was 23 mph up the mountain. Her solution to the speeders would be a speed bump she thinks because the speed limit is too high for the area.

Mayor Borrow ask about getting Professional engineers to look at it, The Mayor said he lives on Chenocetah and that at least of half the speeders live on the mountain and he thinks that changing the way we do things would help. Mayor Borrow said he does not know how to do that but maybe a professional would have a better idea.

Mr. Campbell said that one of the reasons people use Thomas St. is that it is faster than Summit Street.

Mr. Roy Bell said that he had spoken with Commissioner Reed about the tractors for the hayrides going too fast. As for as the speeders people need to watch out for other people.

Mayor Borrow closed the Public Hearing - Commissioner Reed made a motion to have a traffic engineer do a study, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

Draft Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 - Mayor Borrow opened the Public Hearing concerning the proposed 2024 Budget. City Manager Anderson introduced a draft of the 2024 Budget. Mr. Anderson stated that the General Fund Budget is down from \$6,024,906, in 2023 to \$5,864,686. Despite the reduction in expenses the General Fund is over the anticipated revenue of \$5,322,600. It is due in part to a reduction of \$609,000 in money transferred from other funds.

Mr. Anderson said that the Water & Sewer budget is larger than in 2023 by \$1,362,591. Even with the increase the Water & Sewer Budget only relies on \$398,960 of its fund balance. The capital projects in the Water & Sewer Budget in 2024 are the FY 22 CDBG Project \$1,730,000, and the Chenocetah Water Tank Rehab project \$500,000.

The ARPA fund includes \$130,000 for the purchase of a new pump for the Iron Ore Lift Station, \$120,000 for the Drinking Water Test Well Project, \$80,000 for a new Chipper Machine, and \$50,000 for new landscaping equipment for Public Works.

Hotel-Motel Tax Capital Improvement Fund includes: \$13,700 for Christmas in the Park, \$10,000 for Splash Pad & Park Maintenance, \$5,000 for annual maintenance fee for our website, \$25,000 for Tim Loves Tink Mural Project, \$10,000 to replace our downtown banners, and \$8,000 to replace signs at our Public Parks.

SPLOST projects planned include re-surfacing Cox Street and a portion of Hoyt St., \$344,000. Main Street crosswalk is \$50,000, Downtown Parking Lot on Front Street \$250,000, the city new software \$361,000 and 2 new computer servers is \$50,000. Stormwater Projects planned are the Pine Street Drainage Project \$398,000 and the 2022 CDBG project at \$150,000. These projects are funded through the Stormwater Utility

Fund. Also included in this fund are two new Sanitation employees included to assist with leaf and brush pick-up.

The budgets calls for two new Police Officers due to increased growth in residential areas that have happened over the past few years. Mr. Anderson said that is requesting a cost of living raise for all employees as well as a merit raise up to 2.5% based on employee evaluations. The General fund will rely on transfers from Hotel-Motel Tax funds \$127,500, and the Water & Sewer funds \$1,000,000.

Noteworthy Programs & Projects:

- Pine Street Drainage Project \$398,000
- Street Resurfacing \$344,000
- 2022 CDBG \$1,730,000
- Reservoir Intake Project \$1,100,000
- Chenocetah Water Tank Rehab \$500,000
- Old Level Grove Water Line Project \$2,900,000

The Proposed Budget is within the means of the city's finances. The proposed budget calls for a 3% increase in the Water & Sewer rates. We can manage without a millage rate increase; a 1 mill increase would reduce the General Fund prior fund balance from \$542,086 to \$292,000. Mr. Anderson said these projects and daily services provided by City's workforce will continue to keep Cornelia a great place to live.

Mayor Borrow asked if anyone had any questions for or against. No comments were heard. Mayor Borrow closed the Public Hearing.

Millage Rate - Mayor Borrow opened the Public Hearing, City Manager, Donalds Anderson explained that the city has not raised the millage rate in over 20 years, he said that in fact 20 years ago it was 12.5. The millage rate has been 8.5 since 2005. We have kept the same rate due to our ability to use Water & Sewer revenues and fund balance to balance the General Fund each year. Mr. Anderson said we have seen substantial growth, and the budget has been trimmed as much as possible. Even with that the General Fund will still require an interfund transfer of \$1 million as well as over \$500,000 in fund balance if we keep the millage rate at 8.5. Mr. Anderson went on to

say the net increase in our tax digest was \$25,306,698. If we keep the rate the same the revenue will increase by \$215,107. With a millage rate increase of 9.5 the revenue will increase by an additional \$250,000. The state is implementing a Homeowner Tax Relief Grant which will be a credit of \$171 for homeowners in Cornelia. He said that even with a millage rate increase most of our homeowners will see a reduction on their tax bill from last year.

Blake Foster came forward and said he had been a little confused, he thought the paper had stated that employees would be getting a mileage rate. He said after hearing Mr. Anderson speak; it clarified it for him. Mr. Foster said that working with some people that cannot afford to buy essentials and they are getting squeezed in every direction gives him pause. Mr. Foster thanked the Mayor and Commissioners for doing a great job.

David Oppenheimer came forward and thanked the Mayor and Commissioners for being good stewards of the taxpayer's money. He said he understands why the millage rate needs to go up.

Mayor Borrow said that it is the leadership of the City Manager and City Staff that helps do the daily work. Mayor Borrow closed the Public Hearing.

New Business:

Bid for Zoning Ordinance Re-write – City Manager Anderson reported that we received one bid from CPL out of Suwanee. This was discussed at the September workshop and the Mayor and Commission felt the bid was too high and asked the City Manager to go back and see if some cost could be trimmed. After meeting with them they will complete a review and analysis of our existing ordinance and draft changes based on theirs and staff's recommendations. They will present it to the public and deliver a finished product for adoption. The fee will be \$48,330 which is budgeted for 2024. Commissioner Cook made the motion to hire CPL at a cost of \$48,330, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 4 -0

Ordinance # 10-23-01, Amendment to Chapter 12 of the Municipal Code - This amendment is for Commercial Wastewater Pretreatment, specifically, Chapter 12-275 pertaining to Grease traps. The main change is the schedule for restaurants based on usage, two more tiers are being added to the schedule. The other major change is who will pump the grease traps, now the restaurant hires their own contractor. The city under this new ordinance will hire a contractor to pump all the grease traps and the charge will be added to their monthly utility bill. Also, car/truck washes will be required to install sand trap systems and they will be pumped a minimum of twice a year. Commissioner Reed made a motion to post the ordinance, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

Ordinance # 10-23-01, Amendment to Chapter 40 of the Municipal Code - This amendment is also pertaining to Commercial Wastewater Pretreatment. Chapter 12-275 and Chapter 40-89 have the same information pertaining to grease traps, this amendment will remove the duplicate information from Chapter 40-89. Commissioner Reed made the motion to post the ordinance, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

Adoption of DCA Language Action Plan - City Manager, Anderson explained that we were awarded the CDBG grant for FY 2023 we need to adopt a Language Action Plan. There have been no changes since it was adopted last year. Commissioner Cook made the motion to adopt the DCA Language Action Plan. Approved 4 - 0

Resolution to Increase the Stormwater Utility Fee - City Engineer's, Carter and Sloope conducted a study last year, they recommended our stormwater fee should be \$5.96 per ERU. The Mayor and Commission decided that it would be too large of an increase at that time and decided on \$5.25. Based on Carter & Sloope's recommendation City Manager, Anderson is proposing that it be increased to \$5.96 per ERU in January. Commissioner Reed made the motion to deny the increase, seconded by Commissioner Bagwell. Approved 4 - 0

Quotes for Patrol Car - City Manager, Anderson said one of our Police Patrol cars was in an accident and the insurance totaled the car. The insurance company valued the vehicle at \$31,805. We received two

quotes from Jacky Jones Chrysler, \$43,903 and Hayes Chrysler, \$46,182. Both cars are on the lot and could be picked up immediately, but if we order one it is estimated to be a two-year wait. Mr. Anderson is recommending amending the budget to purchase the car from Jacky Jones. Commissioner Cook made the motion to amend the budget and purchase the vehicle from Jacky Jones, seconded by Commissioner Griggs. Approved 4 - 0

Quotes for City Shop Gate Repairs - Our gates at the city shop were installed 14 years ago and the second street gate has not been working for several months. We received a quote back in June to replace it for \$7,302.54, which we budgeted for next year. Now the Elrod Street Gate has quit working and there is about one million dollars' worth of equipment that needs to be protected. For security reasons, the City Manager suggests that the budget be amended so the gates can be replaced. He said he has two quotes to replace the gates and the lowest bidder is Franklin Fence for \$12,793.50. Commissioner Bagwell made the motion to purchase the gates from Franklin Fence, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 4 - 0

Executive Session for Real Estate Commissioner Bagwell made the motion to close the regular session and enter executive session, seconded by Commissioner Reed. Approved 4 - 0

Executive Session for Real Estate - Commissioner Cook made the motion to close the Executive Session, seconded by Commissioner Reed. No Action taken!

Commissioner Bagwell made the motion to go back into the Regular Session, seconded by Commissioner Cook. Approved 4 - 0

The homeless issue was discussed, everyone agrees it is a real problem and seems to be getting worse. City Attorney, Steve Campbell said you can put them in jail and when they get out (usually in 24 hours) they are right back in Cornelia. City Manager Anderson said he is getting a lot of complaints about the problem and the only thing we can do is

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tell them to move on. Mr. Anderson said he saw them sleeping in front of the post office that morning and called the Police. Attorney Campbell said he will look at the laws and see if anything else can be done.

Commissioner Reed made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM seconded by Commissioner Cook. Approved 4 - 0

Debbie Turner, City Clerk

John Borrow, Mayor

STATE OF GEORGIA, COUNTY HABERSHAM

CITY OF CORNELIA, GEORGIA

AFFIDAVIT OF PRESIDING OFFICIAL(S) FOR A CLOSED PUBLIC MEETING

While in Regular Session, the motion was made to enter an Executive Session to discuss certain matters in a closed session.

(x) To discuss with council pending and/or potential litigation, settlement claims, administrative proceedings, or other judicial actions, which is exempt from the Open Meetings Act pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 50-14-2(1).

() A meeting to discuss the purchase, disposal of, or lease of property; authorize the ordering of an appraisal related to the acquisition or disposal of real estate; enter into a contract to purchase, dispose of, or lease property subject to approval in a subsequent public vote; or enter into an option to purchase, dispose of, or lease real estate subject to approval in subsequent public vote, which is excluded from the Open Meetings Act pursuant to Section 50-14-3(b)(1)(C).

() A meeting discussing the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of a public officer or employee, which is excluded pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 50-14-3(b)(2).

() Discussion in Executive Session of Records that are otherwise protected from disclosure under the Open Records Act as pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 50-14-3- (b)(4).

X The subject matter of the Executive Session of the Regular Session was devoted to matters within the exceptions provided by law.

___ Because of events occurring during the closed session, I am unable to affirm the subject matter of the Executive Session of the Regular Session was devoted to only matters within the exceptions provided by law.

John Borrow, Mayor, City of Cornelia

Sworn to and subscribed before me this

Notary Public