



CITY OF ST. MARYS, GEORGIA
August 24, 2009

CONSENT AGENDA MEETING
5:45 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING
6:00 p.m.

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. INVOCATION:** *City Manager Bill Shanahan*
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- IV. ROLL CALL** **QUORUM: YES__X__ NO__**
- V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** *August 10, 2009 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes*
August 19, 2009 Special Called City Council Meeting Minutes

PRESENTATION

CITIZEN RECOGNITION: *Eric Johnson*

LIBRARY BOARD VACANCY: *Appointment (Waskett)*

CAMDEN COUNTY BOE – SEX EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS REVIEW COMMITTEE TERM EXPIRATION: *Appointment (Norris)*

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY REPORT

FINANCE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

- VI. GRANTING AUDIENCE TO THE PUBLIC**

***CONSENT AGENDA**

- VII. OLD BUSINESS**

A. HOSPITAL AUTHORITY MOU (POSTPONED 7/13/09).....TAB “A”

To review a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of St. Marys and the Hospital Authority for repairs, renovations, and maintenance of the Senior Center

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. COUNTY TAX COLLECTION:.....TAB “B”**
To review and consider a proposal to contract with Camden County for the collection of city taxes

- B. ETHICS ORDINANCE AMENDMENT (POSTPONED 8/10/09).....TAB “C”**
To review and consider the Board of Ethics’ recommendations to amend the Ethics Ordinance

- C. CITY COUNCIL SALARIES: *Councilmember Johnson***
Consideration to reduce council salaries

- D. GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION RETIREMENT:.....TAB “D”**
Approval of funds to pay the GMA Retirement contribution

- E. WATER/SEWER SPUR 40 ANNEXED AREA: *Councilmember Weaver***
For discussion

IX. REPORT OF AUTHORITIES, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES:

- A. FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**
- B. AIRPORT RELOCATION REPORT**

X. REPORT OF MAYOR

XI. REPORT OF CITY MANAGER

XII. GRANTING AUDIENCE TO THE PUBLIC

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

CITY OF ST. MARYS, GEORGIA
CITYCOUNCIL MEETING
August 24, 2009
6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

The Mayor and City Council for the City of St. Marys, Georgia met for its regular City Council session on Monday, August 24, 2009 in the Council Chamber at City Hall.

PRESENT WERE:

Mayor Rowland Eskridge
Councilmember Greg Bird
Councilmember William DeLoughy
Councilmember Deborah Hase
Councilmember Larry Johnson
Councilmember Chuck Trader
Councilmember Gull Weaver

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

William Shanahan, City Manager
Tim Hatch, Police Chief
Bobby Marr, Public Works Director
Tom Lackner, Asst. Fire Chief
Jennifer Brown, Finance Director
Marsha Hershberger, Asst. Finance Director
Alyce Thornhill, Economic Dev. Director
Rick Riggle, Sergeant-At-Arms
Robert Godley, Sergeant-At-Arms

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Eskridge called the City Council Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. City Manager Bill Shanahan gave the invocation. Mayor Eskridge led the audience in the pledge of allegiance. Council roll call indicated a quorum of council members present for the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *August 10, 2009 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes*
Councilmember DeLoughy made a motion to approve the August 10, 2009 regular City Council meeting minutes. Councilmember Weaver seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *August 19, 2009 Special City Council Meeting Minutes*
Councilmember Weaver made a motion to approve the August 19, 2009 special City Council meeting minutes. Councilmember DeLoughy seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

PRESENTATION:

CITIZEN RECOGNITION: *Eric Johnson*

The Chief of Police presented Eric Johnson with a certificate of recognition for Outstanding Citizenship in the identification and quick notification to law enforcement which helped lead to the arrest of two home invasion burglary suspects.

LIBRARY BOARD VACANCY: *Appointment* (Waskett)

Mayor Eskridge stated there was one vacancy to fill with two candidates expressing an interest in the appointment. Voting was recorded as follows:

*James Caskey: Councilmember's Bird, DeLoughy, Hase, Johnson and Weaver
Maryann Meador: Councilmember Trader

CAMDEN COUNTY BOE – SEX EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS REVIEW

COMMITTEE TERM EXPIRATION: *Appointment* (Norris)

Mayor Eskridge stated the incumbent Arlene Norris was the only candidate interested in the appointment.

Councilmember Weaver moved to appoint Arlene Norris. Councilmember DeLoughy seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY REPORT

Mr. Jim Lomis, Chairman presented the annual report on revitalization efforts consisting of four committees filled with volunteers and their grassroots efforts. Those four Committees were identified as Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Development. In the Organizational area, a Military Zone Designation award was created to aid businesses and downtown. The committee researched and updated the Global Positioning System (GPS) to provide directories to St. Marys for people traveling the highways. The Promotions area established "St. Marys Scoop", a weekly email publication about St. Marys' events to a 1600 member database and the Community Market bringing people downtown. In the Design area, the Beautification Project was completed and Architectural Design assistance was provided for three downtown businesses. In Economic Development, the SCORE chapter was established to provide expert advice to local business with 12 volunteer mentors with the budget donated by the Savannah chapter. Mr. Lomis commended Alyce Thornhill and Renee Coakley for an outstanding job they do in the department.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Finance Director presented the 1-month financial reports for General, Water/Sewer, Solid Waste, Tourism, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), Aquatic Center, and distributed a memo on the City's bank statement securities. A copy of the reports and memo are attached as part of the minutes.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Councilmember Weaver made a motion to approve the agenda and add “*Personnel*” to Executive Session. Councilmember DeLoughy seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

GRANTING AUDIENCE TO THE PUBLIC:

Rindy Howell, resident questioned whether Council had a plan for the new valuation on the property assessments and setting up a payment arrangement for those who cannot afford to pay on the increased valuation.

Mayor Eskridge recommended modifying the house bill to cover everyone because it neglected real property and vacant property. The county was already frozen but city homesteaders were not frozen to 2007 or 2008 for commercial property.

Councilmember Bird suggested freezing property effective when the county was frozen for all properties and approving an ordinance that it cannot be assessed for a maximum amount in one year.

Mayor Eskridge stated that Camden Watchdogs could present a proposal to Council for approval, and then it could be approved by the legislators.

Councilmember Trader stated that everything is fairly valued through the appeals process so they could pay for their fair share and tax collections will probably suffer this year.

Councilmember Weaver stated that the key is to get the assessments done correctly and all of us need to go to the county to appeal.

Councilmember Hase stated that the city cannot do anything until the final digest numbers were in.

Tom Cyphers, resident suggested using 2008 figures because tax collection for this year will suffer because of foreclosures.

Dave Schmitz, resident stated that assessments were increasing steadily over the last couple years. This year’s increase for dirt and waterfront property has increased Shadowlawn’s assessed value. Mr. Schmitz announced the last day to appeal county assessments was September 7th. He also stated that a Tax Allocation District (TAD) would be the same money being received today and the city would receive the real money in 40 years.

Mayor Eskridge stated that building and construction fees would be received but tax money would go to the builder until the TAD is paid.

John Morrissey, resident suggested setting a meeting to solve the assessment problem or discuss a plan.

Bob Nutter, resident stated that assessments should be consistent on lots and street frontage because actual land in St Marys had the same identical value since 2002-2003. He further stated that someone in the county did not perform their duties in eight years and the homeowners were the ones suffering.

Mayor Eskridge acknowledged the Boy Scouts in attendance.

***CONSENT AGENDA**

Councilmember Weaver made a motion to approve Item “D” under New Business as the consent agenda. Councilmember Trader seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. HOSPITAL AUTHORITY MOU (POSTPONED 7/13/09)

To review a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of St. Marys and the Hospital Authority for repairs, renovations, and maintenance of the Senior Center, which was forwarded to the Authority for approval.

Councilmember Bird made a motion to approve. Councilmember Weaver seconded the motion. Councilmember Bird stated that the Hospital Authority owns the property and the agreement allows them to work on projects associated with the property without coming back to Council. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. COUNTY TAX COLLECTION:

Council review and consideration of a proposal to contract with Camden County for the collection of City taxes.

Councilmember Hase moved to continue to research this matter and continue negotiations with the Tax Commissioner, and see if we can come to a viable solution by 2010. She further moved that this be referred back to the Finance Committee and they appoint two elected officials to continue negotiations with Tax Commissioner Beth Soles, who is also an elected official. Councilmember Johnson seconded the motion. Councilmember Trader stated that issues needed to be identified and discussed with the city controlling the cash and to be creative with the agreement. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

B. ETHICS ORDINANCE AMENDMENT (POSTPONED 8/10/09)

Council review and consideration of the Board of Ethics’ recommendations to amend the Ethics Ordinance.

Councilmember Weaver made a motion to approve the Ethics Ordinance pending legal approval. Councilmember DeLoughy seconded the motion. Councilmember Weaver acknowledged the Boards time and efforts in creating a viable ordinance and removing the anonymous complaint. Councilmember Trader stated that they worked hard on the ordinance and it is appreciated. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

C. CITY COUNCIL SALARIES: *Councilmember Johnson*
Council consideration to reduce council salaries

Councilmember Johnson moved that council members reduce their salary by 3% voluntarily. Councilmember Weaver seconded the motion for discussion. Councilmember Johnson stated the dollar amount would not impact the budget but serves as a principal for leadership that Council was participating in the reduction. It would also show solidarity with the employees that were affected by cutbacks either financially or had amenities taken away or by reductions in force.

Councilmember Bird spoke in support of the motion and commented that Council sets the tone even though the economy is not controlled by them, which is suffering greatly. Some entities are seriously impacted, very negatively. How could Council ask our various departments to keep within the budget and look for reductions unless Council sets the example.

Councilmember Trader commented that it has been over eleven years since the City Council had any increase. It could only be looked at every two years. Eleven years ago the City budget was small and the responsibilities of City Council were a lot less. The complexity of the City has changed. Council has taken on many roles with the committee system that takes up a good amount of time spent in meetings. There is also a great deal of personal expense. Originally, the increase was higher and Council cut it in half. Further cuts were made in the expenses incurred while traveling and attending conventions by offsetting additional costs by \$18,000. This Council has made significant strides by cutting close to \$3 million from the City budget, which he commended City management for doing so. The employees jobs were protected, increases were given and salary adjustments made for their level of responsibility. Our decisions today will affect future council members. It is expensive to be a council member and run for election. If everyone wants to give the money back they should.

Councilmember Hase spoke from another perspective. Why do elected officials receive a salary at all? It can cost several thousand dollars to run a successful campaign and this is a financial barrier for many qualified citizens in our community and yet self-funded candidates can recoup their expenses during their first year of receiving a salary. It takes a lot of time to be an effective and informed elected official, and many of the meetings and forums take place during normal working hours. For some people no salary would not make a difference in their life, but many qualified citizens cannot absorb the cost of lost wages associated with serving their community in this capacity. A modest salary helps provide diversification on the board, opening opportunities to people from all walks of life, which every community deserves. The proposed salary is to reimburse elected officials for their expenses and loss of

income. Let's continue to promote a system that makes it possible for people from all economic levels to participate in their government. Let's not have it that only the retired or the wealthy can run the city.

Councilmember Johnson stated a 20% reduction was not significant. Mayor Eskridge questioned whether the reduction was for the current salary or new salary starting in 2010. Councilmember Johnson replied both.

Councilmember Weaver stated in accordance to Georgia Code's Home Rules, Council cannot vote on salaries during an election year. Proper protocol is to advertise for three weeks, which cannot be done during qualifications and the end of the year.

Councilmember DeLoughy stated that it would also bind another council when it could be better handled in the future. Following much discussion, no official action was taken.

D. *GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION RETIREMENT:

Council approval of funds to pay the GMA Retirement contribution

Councilmember Weaver made a motion to approve the GMA Retirement contribution. Councilmember Trader seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

E. WATER/SEWER SPUR 40 ANNEXED AREA: *Councilmember Weaver*

For discussion;

Councilmember Weaver clarified after the last meeting that there were no funds available for the Spur 40 annexed area. Council has worked very hard to get everything in place in order to install water and sewer in the area. When it is ready, the City will have the ability to apply for the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA) loan to provide these services. She requests consensus that this was the intent.

Councilmember Bird moved to approve that that will be the first priority before doing any other annexing of property. The motion died for lack of second.

Mayor Eskridge requested another Sewer to Annexed Areas report next month from the Public Works Director on what has not been done, preferably with the easements.

REPORT OF AUTHORITIES, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES:

A. FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Councilmember DeLoughy reported on the Committee meeting held on August 19th to discuss the CD funds at Satilla Bank estimated at \$200,000. A memo was provided by the Finance Director from Southeast Central Bank with the collateral statement which meets more than is required from any of the banks. Councilmember Trader made a motion to further research to confirm funds were pledged to our account and that we are covered;

and check to insure all other accounts /funds with other banking institutions were covered. Councilmember Johnson seconded the motion and all were in favor.

B. AIRPORT RELOCATION REPORT

Councilmember DeLoughy reported on the Airport Relocation meeting held on August 17, 2009 to review the application. Mr. Scott Seritt, Federal Aviation Administration had questions about whether it would be a city or regional airport, funding changes to the City's letter, continued ownership of the property and appraisals. Once the details were finalized, a revised letter and request for funding would be forwarded to Washington for approximately \$5 million for the next several years. Another meeting was held with the FAA and Sea Island Corporation to discuss the land donation and any reversionary clause if the airport ceases to function.

Councilmember Bird questioned the letter revisions not coming back to council for review and what those changes were. Councilmember DeLoughy responded no, it was not required, they were minor changes that did not change the overall policy and authority.

Mayor Eskridge stated some information was left out of the first letter that needed to be added before forwarding it to Washington. He also questioned the outcome of the land donation meeting. The City Manager stated that Sea Island was moving forward with the donation.

REPORT OF MAYOR:

August 11, 2009 – Downtown Merchants meeting regarding the Tourism Department
August 12, 2009 – Coastal Regional Commission (CRC) meeting in Richmond Hill
August 17, 2009 – St. Simons meeting with the FAA regarding the Airport
August 19, 2009 – Special City Council Meeting
August 20, 2009 – Presentation to the St. Marys Masonic Lodge

Mayor Eskridge read the calendar of events, activities and meetings for the next two weeks.

REPORT OF CITY MANAGER:

- Continuing work on Mickler Drive bridge project, Point Peter Waste Water Treatment Plant and Kings Bay Road/Pro 3's Parkway Traffic Signal
- Continued cleaning of storm drains on Spinnaker Drive
- Three culverts on Bowen Street were replaced.
- Working with St. Marys Elementary School concerning an emergency evacuation route for the students and construction of the sidewalk that is being taken out
- Human Resource Department is currently entering additional employee data in the HR and Payroll modules. This is an ongoing project, which will streamline some of the processes that were currently being completed manually.
- Downtown Development Authority has nominated the SCORE project for Economic Development for the Georgia Downtown Association Awards Nominations

Councilmember Weaver questioned the hold on the traffic signal at the Colerain Road and Winding Road intersection. The Public Works Director responded it was being advertised for bid.

Councilmember Johnson expressed concerns about the traffic signal that was to be installed at Martha Drive and Osborne. The Public Works Director responded the Department of Transportation (DOT) and engineers met on site last week to come up with a way to fit everything so the Georgia Power transmission lines do not need to be moved.

Councilmember Weaver thanked the Public Works Director for getting the turning lane lights installed at the hospital.

GRANTING AUDIENCE TO THE PUBLIC:

John Morrissey, resident requested clarification for the funding on the \$2.6 million Sewer Project.

Councilmember Trader responded it would be categorized as a capital project expense to the budget and revenue would come from bonds. Then interest costs and debt services would become part of expenditures. The City Manager responded that some of SPLOST VI could be used for the Water/Sewer Plan when growth and construction fees were received.

Roger Rillo, resident complemented Mr. Morrissey for analyzing the increase in taxes on Camden Watchdog's website. Mr. Rillo also expressed concerns about not discussing in the budget the properties that were annexed in 2000.

Sidney Howell, resident questioned whether something could be done with the foreclosed properties that were not being mowed and if anything could be done about storm water in his garage.

Councilmember Weaver responded the foreclosed property issue came to the Property Committee but private property cannot be mowed by the City because of the cost and expense associated with the work. The City Manager responded that it is actually against the law for the City to be on private property.

Our City Marshall, Police Chief and Planning Director were trying to contact property owners. Councilmember Hase stated there was a nuisance ordinance that addresses the issue and many citizens want it cleaned up. The question that remains is can we or are we willing to pay for it at the tax payer's expense.

Dave Schmitz, resident questioned who would know if LandMar was bankrupted.

Sidney Howell, resident questioned Councilmember DeLoughy on whether the City would be responsible for mowing the airport if it moved.

Councilmember DeLoughy responded yes, or a contract or an agreement could be worked out. All possibilities would be explored about making it a regional airport if it would best serve the community.

Mayor Eskridge stated that it was discussed at the relocation meeting whether it would be a city or regional airport. The reason for leaving it as St. Marys' Airport was because of the paperwork.

Councilmember Bird moved to hold a Council Tax Work Session on September 16th at 4:00 p.m. Councilmember Trader seconded the motion for discussion. Following much discussion, Councilmember Bird amended the motion to hold the Work Session on the 14th. Councilmember Trader seconded the amended motion. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Councilmember DeLoughy made a motion to adjourn to executive session to discuss a personnel issue. Councilmember Trader seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

The Mayor and Council adjourned to executive session at 7:41 p.m., returning at 7:56 p.m. with Mayor Eskridge calling the Council meeting back to order.

PERSONNEL:

No official action was taken at this time.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilmember Bird made a motion for adjournment. Councilmember Trader seconded the motion. Mayor Eskridge declared the meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene M. Roellig, City Clerk