

# City of White, GA

## City Council Meeting

### May 1, 2023

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Powell at 7 p.m.

Present at the meeting were Mayor Curtis Powell, Councilmember Kim Billue, Councilmember Gary Crisp, Councilmember Stephanie Nicholson, City Attorney Brandon Bowen and City Clerk Robin Cochran. Councilmember Charles Buttrum was not present.

Mayor Powell led us in the saying of the Pledge.

Mayor Powell addressed Councilmember Crisp by asking if he did not resign. Crisp replied he did not. Powell continued to ask questions concerning a phone call on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Crisp made saying he did resign. Crisp repeated I just answered your question. Powell stated again that Crisp stated he resigned and that the City Clerk, Sherry Walker had resigned as well. Crisp stated I told you Sherry resigned and repeated that he had answered the questions and move on. The mayor stated that he accepted his resignation. Crisp stated that you were not the mayor at the present time I was just talking to a private citizen. Crisp repeated again that he did not resign. Mayor Powell moved on with the meeting stating he just wanted to get that out there. Crisp rebutted by saying no you wanted to put that out there. The other councilmembers voiced their opinion and asked questions of our city attorney. In the background Crisp repeatedly stated that he did not resign and ask for proof from the other members. Councilmember Billue stated that Crisp was not present for two meetings. Crisp stated again, move on and no more comments. Billue stated that you are not conducting this meeting our mayor is. Powell stated that Crisp had given his keys to the Police Chief Smith stating that you no longer needed them and to give them to Curtis. Crisp replied that is correct. Powell stated so you quit. Crisp stated no it was not because I quit. Billue stated well you walked out and left city hall. Crisp stated that he didn't ask for your opinion. Billue replied I don't care what you asked. Citizen Eddie Billue stated to Crisp that he needed to watch the way he talked to his wife. To which Crisp replied, I will talk anyway I want too. Chief Smith interrupted the actions that followed by stating that we are not going to do that and asked Mr. Billue to sit down and Billue asked Mr. Crisp to watch his mouth. Crisp stated that Councilmember Billue needed to watch her mouth. Mayor informed Councilmember Crisp that he can't talk to people any way you want too sir. Crisp replied nor they to me. Powell stated you need to represent the city. Crisp repeated again, move on. Mayor Powell stated again that he said what he had to say that he resigned. Crisp stated again he did not resign. Powell stated that Crisp was telling a story and that he knows what he told him on the phone and on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mayor Powell asked for approval of the Feb 6<sup>th</sup> council meeting minutes. Councilmember Billue asked if they had a quorum. The mayor asked the city attorney to which he replied yes, we had a quorum. Bowen went on to explain we had three councilmembers present. Citizen Tim Nicholson asked how that could be the case when one resigned to the mayor. Bowen stated there's no official resignation and remains an elected official and he remains in his seat as a councilmember. Councilmember Nicholson stated there was a discrepancy as to which minutes the mayor was referring to and we are not clear if they should be dated Feb or Mar. So, the Mayor asked for a motion to table those particular minutes. Councilmember Nicholson made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Billue. The vote was 3-0. The motion passed. Mayor asked for approval of the April 10<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. Councilmember Nicholson made the motion, Councilmember Billue seconded the motion. The vote was 2-1 with Councilmember Crisp voting against the motion. Crisp stated that he was not there at that meeting and was not sent any minutes. He further stated that they were not

on the website as well. City Clerk Robin Cochran stated minutes are not on the listed on the website until they are approved by the council.

Mayor Powell called on Jimmy Nichols to give the report for the water department. Jimmy Nichols reported for the water department stating the city had used 2,750,000 gallons of water in April. Nichols reported there were two leaks repaired in April, one on the main line and one service line. Nichols stated we are getting lots of questions about our sewer due to the rain/septic tank issues. He stated we have a company out of Rome, Carter's Environmental, that will be pumping our lift stations out. Councilmember Nichelson asked about the status of a pothole on Richards Rd. Nichols stated that it is sinking again but we are adding to it. He stated to fix it properly we would have to close the road. Councilmember Nichelson asked if we had a plate to put over the road. Nichols stated that we would continue to add cold patch to it and see if we keep it filled.

Powell then called on Chief Smith for the police department report. Smith stated that things were going good except for the one burglary. He stated that we did get a warrant for the person involved. Smith continued by stating he had a GBI Audit coming up and he wants to make sure we are prepared for that. He concluded by asking if the council had questions.

Mayor Powell gave the city hall report. He stated we are making some headway. Robin is getting things straightened out. Powell stated we found 99,000 dollars in checks that were never deposited and three of them were SPLOST checks. Robin has been able to get about 31,000 dollars of that reconciled which included checks from Bartow County and Ga Power. Powell stated that there was a lot of stuff that went unpaid and we're making some progress in understanding where our AP/AR stand we should be able to put forth some sort of budget proposal for 2023. Powell stated that we are still working off the previous budget. He stated that there was talk about the GEFA loan Richards Rd project and we took those funds from the wrong account to pay it off. The funds were removed from the SPLOST account and not the GEFA loan account. He stated that we need to correct those accounts. He spoke with the city attorney before the meeting and GEFA may be okay with putting those funds back where they are supposed to be. Powell stated that there were just a lot of issues that we have to get through. Robin has done a really good job. He stated that he would touch on the water/sewer later in the meeting.

Mayor Powell continued with the old business asking for a motion to pay the \$1000 deductible to repair the Durango. Councilmember Billue made a motion to approve, and Council member Nichelson seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0. Motion carried.

Mayor Powell continued with old business stating he proposed COLA raise for the employees. Powell explained that he gave each member a packet to review. He explained that he did the calculations for 3% and 5% increases COLA. He asked if there was any discussion. Councilmember Nichelson stated there was some wasteful spending happening at city hall and she is sure with Robin here now that will stop. Councilmember Nichelson made a motion to approve the 3% COLA raise for employees and the motion was seconded by Councilmember Billue. The vote was 3-0. Motion carried.

Mayor Powell continued old business with information on the ballfield. He stated that we have had interest in teams wanting to rent the field for practices. Councilmember Nichelson stated she did research and suggested \$10/per day for a two-hour practice. She even stated teams could pay monthly and pay in advance to hold their spot. She continued by stating that if teams did if for a whole year they could get a discount like 5%. Nichelson stated there needs to be a contract that lists the rules and cleaning expectations. She stated that all payments will be in advance. Powell stated this makes more sense with teams renting it for practices other than just renting it for the day. Councilmember Crisp asked what do other places charge for field rental. Powell stated that Euharlee charges \$25 per practice and they have lighting. He stated that we don't have lighting. Crisp asked if

we have lighting? No was the reply by all. He continued by stating there's cost involved in keeping up the field. Nichelson stated we have to clean and maintain the field anyway and \$10/day is better than no dollars. Citizen Tiffany Powell stated that if people see the field being used, then they might ask about using it as well and it would be used more often despite the lack of lighting. Crisp stated once more he understood, and he feels like it needs to be used but not cost the city money to clean it up. Powell stated that the contract will cover the cleaning expectation. Crisp stated they should have to pay if they leave a mess. Powell asked for a motion to rent the ballfield for \$10/day for a two-hour practice. Crisp stated again that was not enough. Citizen Tim Nichelson stated that if it was dirty, he would clean it up for free. Councilmember Nichelson stated again it will be in their contract that they are expected to clean it up. Councilmember Nichelson made the motion to charge \$10/day for a two hour practice on the ballfield, must pay in advance, discount involved if you pay upfront and there will be a contract involved which will list cleaning expectation. Councilmember Billue seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0. Motion carried.

The mayor continued by bringing up the matter of the Mayor Pro Tem stating we didn't know where this stood. Councilmember Billue made a motion to nominate Councilmember Stephanie Nichelson to be Mayor Pro Tem. Councilmember Nichelson seconded the motion. The vote was 2-1 with Councilmember Gary Crisp voting against.

Powell continued with new business stating we now have a new city clerk. He stated we needed to make her the municipal court clerk and municipal elections superintendent. Councilmember Billue made the motion to make our city clerk, Robin Cochran, the municipal court clerk and municipal elections superintendent. Councilmember Nichelson seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0. Motion carried.

Powell moved on with new business stating that the city clerk should be a signer on all bank accounts. Councilmember Billue made the motion and Councilmember Nichelson seconded the motion. The vote was 2-1 with Councilmember Gary Crisp voting against. Crisp continued by stating to the mayor we needed to discuss that later.

The mayor gave an update on the water/sewer/sanitation billing. He stated when he took office on April 3, stuff was not on the computers that should have been, and our IT people worked a whole day on getting things straightened out. The mayor stated the computer in his office no longer has an operating system. Powell apologized that the water bills had taken way too long. He continued by stating all the meters were read today and the billing is being sorted out. Powell stated that the first of next week you should get a bill and there will be no late charges. Powell stated that we have a hardship form for those that need it.

Mayor Powell thanked Jean Swank for her help at city hall. He stated that the city owes her a pat as well as Councilmember Billue and Councilmember Nichelson. Nichelson continued by stating that we took an oath of office, and we have to take care of our city. She stated asked the audience to stand and give Ms. Jean a round of applause.

Citizen Tiffany Powell asked permission from the council to do a movie in the park, the second Saturday of the month. No cost to the city as all equipment was purchased by Ms. Powell and clean up will be done by her. A motion was made to allow Ms. Powell to host a movie night in the park the second Saturday of each month at no cost to her by Councilmember Nichelson. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Billue. The vote was 3-0. Motion carried.

Citizen Jean Swank wanted to thank all the citizens that came to the office about their water bill and for their kindness/understanding. She wants to thank them all and how much she appreciated them.

Citizen Eddie Billue addressed the council. He spoke on the Richards Rd project as how he gave easement to the city to put that pipe in the ditch. He stated the city prematurely paid for the job that was not completed and the city is negligent in not having the damage to his property repaired. He stated the area is just rocks and holds water, there are pictures. He stated the area now holds water and has become a mosquito breeding ground. Mr. Billue stated that no one has addressed this issue except him. He stated he expected his property to have been restored to how it was before the easement was given. Mr. Billue stated that he did expect the right thing to be done to get his property done back to its previous state before the work was done. He continued by saying the city created the problem and they should fix the problem. Mr. Billue stated that he is still out the \$2800 he paid in attorney's fees concerning the disqualification issue of his wife running for council. The mayor asked if we had a copy of this invoice. Mr. Billue replied I will send you one. The mayor and Councilmember Nicholson assured Mr. Billue they would reach out to the engineer to see what can be done and ask for guidance. Nicholson and Powell concurred the issue is a real and to get started on a solution. Councilmember Crisp stated to the mayor, speak to me about this issue later.

Councilmember Crisp made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Billue seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0. Motion carried. The meeting concluded at 7:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Robin Cochran  
City Clerk

Approved:



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Curtis Powell, Mayor