

City of Santa Claus, Georgia  
Regular Monthly Council Meeting

August 20, 2024

The regular meeting of the Santa Claus City Council was held August 20, 2024. Present were Mayor Donita Bowen, Councilmembers Renee Wright, Monte Powell, and Brenda Sells, Eddie & Elaine Wright, and Sue Grisham. Mike Heath was out due to illness. The meeting began with the group reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Minutes of June 18, 2024, meeting were read. There was no meeting on July 16. Brenda made a motion second by Renee to accept the June minutes as read and council agreed.

**Old Business:** The financial reports were reviewed by the Council.

**Gardens:** Brenda stated she has installed solar lights in the place of the ones not working in the Garden.  
**Park:** Monte asked that Altamaha E.M.C. replace the security light at the Pavilion as he cannot get the old one to stay on. Sue will call E.M.C. and request the replacement light. Also, Sue will contact Clarence Pittman to repair the swing on the Walking Trail blown down during the recent hurricane.  
**Community Center:** The ceiling panels on the porch at the Community Center still need to be reinstalled.  
**Roads:** During the hurricane rain and wind, someone called 911 to come out and clear the large tree blown down blocking the south end of Salem ST going to Dasher RD. Brenda was able to stop the crew and inform that the city is, at this time, leaving this natural blockage so as to possibly alleviate some traffic in the area. Donita has talked with John Jones and Lynn Moore concerning future damages in the city due to weather. Lynn, as the Toombs County Emergency Management Association Director, stated that there is no charge for his crew to come out and clear debris off the streets. Council discussed this.

The mayor has contacted Shea Hullender to step in for the city during the upcoming election if needed. The CGI Digital sent Donita an email informing her that, due to not enough advertisements, they will not be able to provide the street banners for the city. C.G.I. has provided free to the city the art work they have designed for the banners. Council agreed to table the banners for a future date. Brenda is still inquiring on getting an electrician for the electric at the new storage building and updates at the Gift Shop. Donita stated the tents and tables for the Tree Lighting have been received. She is still trying to get the book case ready for the Little Library. The certified letter to Cliff Duerfeldt has finally been returned to us and she waiting for contact by Cliff concerning the letter contents.

Mobley Well Drilling and Service cleaned out the water tank on June 25, 2024. This will not be required again for 3 years. A special thanks to Rusti Wright for his assistance with flushing the water line, switching to the Lyons water service line etc. during this time.

**New Business: August 20, 2024 meeting -page 2-** Thanks to Brenda for working with Sikes Paving and Eddie for overseeing the project in getting the parking lot at the Park paved. Eddie also patched the sink hole on Noel ST with excess asphalt from the parking lot.

The LMIG Grant for 2025 opened on July 1, 2024. Donita stated she will submit the proposal as soon as she has time. The GMA District 9 Fall Meeting will be held in Mt. Vernon Community Center on September 24, 2024 from 5:30 till 7:30 P.M. Reservations need to be turned to Mt. Vernon as soon as possible for a count for supper that evening.

Annual city RLG (Report of Local Government Finances) has been completed & submitted by Stacie Avery & Associates on August 5, 2024. A hard copy was delivered to the city on August 9. Due to Stacie Avery requiring an extension for the report, Donita will contact her in January, 2025, so as to have the new year reported without an extension. The city received an email from LGRMS approving the safety items Donita has submitted to them. Items will be purchased by the city & a proof of purchase document sent to LGRMS. Check should be received in 2 to 6 weeks following this. Items already received are LifVac kits (2); first aid kits (2) 3 non-slip mats and stair non-slip strips for the Community Center, Gift Shop & City Hall. Donita will contact Michael Carroll on pricing for additional security cameras.

Donita has inquired on a price for signs to post at the Park. One will be for Playground Rules at a price of \$54.26 and one for Park hours at a cost of \$61.05. The signs will have reflective lettering for nighttime. Two green baked enamel posts will also be needed to erect the signs. She also suggested the sign include "Bell Parking Lot" as Russ Bell donated the property where the parking lot is located. As the stripping would cost \$2,000.00, Eddie stated that he would contact Luis Nino and request his assistance in stripping the parking lot making sure there are 2 handicap spaces.

Rental for the Community Center has been slow this year. Residents are allowed the building for \$150.00 per use and are frequently renting the building. Due to increase in prices for operation and the \$100.00 cleaning fee per use, Sue and Donita suggested the price for residents be increased to \$200.00 per use. After discussion, Renee made a motion second by Brenda with council agreeing to raise the cost for residents' use to \$200.00 on 1/01/25.

The mayor contacted Hofstadter Engineering, the firm overseeing the original installation of the present sewer system. She then had a meeting with Dale Sapp of Hofstadter, Darel Corley and Vince Meadows to discuss a plan of action for the current issues with the saturation of rain water into the sewer system contributing to the excessive bills from the City of Lyons. Mr. Sapp suggested a smoke test in the lines as the camera in the lines did not help find the issue. Mr. Sapp volunteered to contact Charles McCann with Georgia Rural Water Association who said, since we are members of GMA, there would be no fee for the smoke test. The smoke test was scheduled for August 20, 2024. Sue sent out letters to all residents affected to inform them of the test. Also Mr. McCann informed Donita there is personnel to assist in a rate for water & sewer if needed.

**New Business- June 18, 2024 -page- 3-** Donita has collected information concerning the sewage charges by the City of Lyons and plans to request a meeting with Mayor Willis NeSmith, Jr., and possibly Jason Hall, to present all data and discuss with them the issue of the extreme bills. Also, she will suggest that she sit in on a workshop with Lyons so as to give them time to review all data before a decision is voted on concerning our issues.

On Thursday August 29 from 2:00 till 3:30 at the Vidalia Municipal Annex building, the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission has scheduled the final Steering Committee Review for the Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan. This will be to review the updated Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan draft and identify any changes needed to the final draft before it is submitted to the Department of Community Affairs (DCF) for review.

While reviewing GMA's "All Mayors Community" emails, Donita stated that one mayor was inquiring how to claim the city's 2023 Property Tax Relief Grant. This is referring to the law Gov. Brian Kemp signed into law, HB 18, in 2023. This would provide \$950 million in property tax relief to homeowners by reducing the assessed value of the state's qualified homesteaded properties up to \$18,000. She added that she will inquire on this further.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted, Sue Grisham

Donita Bowen, Mayor

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donita Bowen". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line that spans the width of the signature area.