

City of Santa Claus, Georgia
Regular Monthly Council Meeting

January 21, 2025

The regular meeting of the Santa Claus City Council was held January 21, 2025. Those present were Mayor Donita Bowen, Councilmembers Renee Wright, Monte Powell, Brenda Sells and secretary Sue Grisham. Matt Lynn was out of town on business but was listening on the phone to participate. The meeting began with the group reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Minutes of November 19, 2024, meeting were read. There was no meeting in December due to the busy schedule for Christmas. Brenda made a motion second by Monte to accept the minutes as read. Minutes were accepted as read.

Old Business: The financial reports were reviewed by the Council and discussed. Gardens: Brenda reported that the repairs and replacements of the lights in the Garden should be completed in about 2 weeks. The electrician will also check the chandelier at the Community Center that keeps blowing bulbs as they're replaced. Park: Monte stated the repairs have been completed at the Pavilion. Community Center: Porch ceiling panels still need to be replaced. Roads: Council discussed the washout at Salem ST and Reindeer ST on the dirt section. Donita stated she thinks she may be able get assistance on this repair. Council agreed that the repair needs to be completed before the streets are resurfaced. The resurfacing scheduled to begin on January 6, was delayed due to the weather and will begin as soon as weather permits. Donita stated that she will inquire with Attorney Tina Maddox on the next step to deal with Cliff Duerfeldt. Electrical poles and/or transformers downed by hurricane Helene still have not been picked up from the city. Darel Corley will give an estimate to have his crew replace the 24" X 24" STOP signs blown down by the hurricane.

The mayor has filed the necessary documents with FEMA Flood Plain for the city allowing any resident to be eligible to submit a claim if needed. She added that Republic Services has informed the city that their garbage pickup rates will be increased by 10% as of January 1, 2025. She suggested the resident rates be increased by \$1.00 per trash can to cover this increase. Monte made a motion second by Brenda for the \$1.00 increase for garbage pickup effective immediately. Matt has been registered for the state required training as a new councilmember. This will be at the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center on March 19-21, 2025. Motel reservations will be made closer to the training event.

New Business: Artiffany Stanley of GMA was scheduled to be at the meeting to present a Safety Grant check to the city but, due to the weather, this was rescheduled for the February meeting. Michael Carroll of Triton Fire & Safety installed 2 additional cameras at the Pavilion. He also received the remaining cameras and supplies ordered for the Safety Grant.

January 19, 2025 meeting -page 2- Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has approved the new comprehensive plan, 'One Toombs-Building one Collaboration'. The mayor accepted the plan allowing the city to retain the QLG status. Michelle Brown of Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission notified DCA of our adoption retaining our eligibility for state grants, loans and permits. Donita presented all data necessary to submit our Homestead Tax Relief Grant. This will be a grant of \$1.916.67 and we are awaiting the payment.

House Bill 581 was passed during the 2024 legislative session which will bring changes to Georgia's property and local sales tax systems. This was discussed with council agreeing to "opt out". Council discussed an increase the millage rate. Brenda made a motion second by Monte with all voting in favor in leaving the millage rate at 4%. Donita stated she has set up an account for Quarterly Tax and Wage Reports with Georgia Department of Labor allowing electronic payments . Donita informed the council of purchases she has made including a mailbox, key lock box, cash box for the Gift shop and a safe for the office. Slip strips have been installed on the steps at the Community Center.

Larry Sikes of Sikes Brothers met with the mayor and the 811 utility companies to discuss preparations for the resurfacing of the streets to begin as weather permits. This was discussed by the council. Donita met with Zac Moore of Parlor Media to discuss implementing a mass system for text and/or emails to residents. The cost for this would be \$100.00 per month plus 1 or 2 dollars per message. This was discussed. A list of issues incurred from Hurricane Helene was presented informing council we are still working with ER Assist, FEMA and GIRMA to resolve the issues.

The 2025 Operating Budget was reviewed, discussed and approved. A motion was made by Brenda second by Renee to accept the 2025 budget as presented. All council members approved unanimously including Matt who was listening via the phone.

After much review, the Council voted to raise the water and sewer rates immediately. For a minimum of 3,000 gallons, water will be \$30.00, sewage will be \$95.00, garbage pickup \$15.00 and fire protection remain at \$4.00 per month. Sue asked if she should send a letter to inform residents and Donita stated no that this was all made clear in the November 7, 2024 meeting held by Mr. Bill Powell at the Community Center.

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

Respectfully Submitted, Sue Grisham

Donita Bowen, Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donita Bowen", is written over a horizontal line.