

City of Santa Claus, Georgia  
Regular Monthly Council Meeting

February 18, 2025

The regular meeting of the Santa Claus City Council was held February 18, 2025. Those present were Mayor Donita Bowen, Councilmembers Renee Wright, Monte Powell, Brenda Sells, Matt Lynn, Secretary Sue Grisham and a host of residents. The meeting began with the group reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Minutes of January 21, 2025, meeting were read. Mayor Bowen stated that a correction should be made explaining that Eddie Wright reviewed the rates for the lowest increase possible to cover expenses for the system. The rate increase in sewage should be a minimum of \$65.00 per month not \$95.00 as she had quoted in January. Brenda made a motion second by Monte to accept the minutes after the correction. Council agreed unanimously to accept the minutes after correction.

Due to the large number attending, Donita stated that she assumed the water bill increase was the issue to address first. She explained that, due to the rates the city is charged by Lyons for the Sewage lift station, the rate increase was necessary. The water and sewer account must have income enough to cover all expenses for the systems. This was discussed at length with possible solutions. The original contract of 2010 between the city and Lyons reads that the City of Santa Claus residents are to be charged the same amount as the residents in Lyons. Donita was asked to meet with Attorney Tina Maddox with the original contract requesting that she act on behalf of the city and seek an answer to why Santa Claus is charged more than Lyons residents. She stated that she would check with Ms. Maddox and meet with her.

**Old Business:** The financial reports were reviewed by the Council and discussed. The Gardens: W.A.D.E. Construction has replaced all the lights around The Gardens and several other electrical projects for us. Park: No issues in the Park. Community Center: The panels on the porch ceiling have been replaced and the chandelier lights have been repaired. Roads: The STOP signs have been ordered and will be replaced as soon as possible. Street signs will be addressed, also. Wayne Ward asked if anyone could identify the man on a backhoe working on Rudolph Way. Wayne informed the man he did not want the backhoe digging on his property. It was determined that the worker was preparing for the upcoming resurfacing of the city streets.

Matt is registered for the state required training as a new councilmember at the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center on March 19-21, 2025. Motel reservations will be made closer to the training event. After hiring a detective, Cliff Durefeldt has been located and received the papers sent certified to him late last year requesting the delinquent taxes and cleanup of his property on Holly ST & Reindeer ST. Also, a waiver for Rubicon, a volunteer group, to enter his property for tree removal and yard cleanup if time permits.

**February 18, 2025 meeting -page 2-** The 2025 budget was passed in January and water, sewage and trash rates have been increased. Artiffany Stanley of GMA came by earlier in the day to present a Safety Grant check to the city in the amount of \$2,600.00. Michael Carroll of Triton Fire & Safety will present an estimate on the completion of the security system to be presented for the Safety Grant this year. Gov. Brian Kemp and Commissioner Christopher Nunn sent a letter to the city to congratulate us on completing the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) the new comprehensive plan, 'One Toombs-Building one Collaboration'.

House Bill 581, Homestead Tax Relief Grant, was passed during the 2024 legislative session. Council agreed to "opt out" on this plan. This must be presented in 3 open forum meetings for the residents and advertised in the Advance to notify them. Dates set for this are 3/18, 4/15, and 4/22 at 7:00 P.M. All invoices and estimates for Hurricane Helene repairs have been submitted to ER Assist. The mayor presented an update of all progress on the Helene related repairs for Council information. Council agreed to the "Pledge for Civility in the City of Santa Claus" for 2025 which is promoted through GMA. Council signed the agreement.

Brenda has met with Larry Sikes and received an estimate of \$6,000.00 to replace the walkway going to the Gift Shop as it is worn badly. Renee made a motion second by Matt for Larry Sikes to replace the walkway for \$6,000.00 with Council voting unanimously in favor. Also, there are 3 bids for topsoil and planting grass seeds at the Reindeer Trail to stop the erosion. Council agreed this should be done as soon as possible. Also, Larry Sike has begun resurfacing the streets. As this has begun, Donita will close the Roads Bank Account and finalize the LMIG Grant.

Donita said that Eddie Wright suggested that, since the rights-of-ways have been cut this year, we should plan to contact Bobby and Ben Akins for an estimate to spray weed killer on them before May of 2026.

G.I.R.M.A., our insurance carrier, has reimbursed the city for the damaged small storage building on Noel ST.

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

Respectfully Submitted, Sue Grisham

Donita Bowen, Mayor 