

City of Santa Claus, Georgia

Regular Monthly Council Meeting

January 20, 2026

The regular meeting of the Santa Claus City Council was held January 20, 2026. Those present were Mayor Donita Bowen, Councilmembers Renee Wright and Matt Lynn, Secretary Sue Grisham, Eddie and Elaine Wright, Walter Wright and Donald Prestige. Monte Powell was not at the meeting due to surgery but was joining via his phone for the meeting. The meeting began with the group reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Minutes of November 18, 2025, meeting was read. Renee made a motion second by Matt to accept the minutes. Council agreed unanimously to accept the minutes as read.

Due to the untimely passing of Councilwoman & Mayor Pro-tem, Brenda Sells, after a brief illness, Matt Lynn will step up as Mayor Pro-tem. Brenda's seat will need to be filled. Marci Rogers has agreed to join the council in this position. As of this meeting, Renee Wright is stepping down from her council seat and Walter Wright has agreed to join the council to fill this position. Marci and Walter will be sworn in at the February meeting. Donita will check with Carrie Allgood for the proper procedures in the swearing in.

Old Business: The financial reports were reviewed by the Council and discussed. The Gardens: No issues to address. Park: Sue will contact Danielle David who cleans the Community Center and inquire if she will clean the bathrooms at the Pavilion as needed. Community Center: The facility is O.K. Roads: The STOP sign at Reindeer ST and Sleigh ST needs to be re-erected.

The Allgreen contract proposal for garbage pickup was discussed with the fee being \$15.00 per canister per month. After discussion, the council agreed to remain with the current service with Republic Services as the fee is less per canister at \$14.77 per canister per month and there are no complaints with their service. Renee made a motion with Matt second the motion to remain with Republic Services for garbage pickup. Council agreed unanimously.

The mayor added that we are still waiting for a check from FEMA/GEMA for reimbursement for ER Assist fees and for copies of documents from ER Assist but she has finalized some of the FEMA projects.

Michael Carroll of Triton Fire and Safety has completed the installation of the security system at the Community Center and a request has been submitted to LGRMS for a Safety Grant reimbursement for this. GMA informed Donita that they sent in a request for our reimbursement for the security system at the Community Center. The computer and monitor were placed in a closet so, due to the excess heat in the area as they run constantly, it was necessary for WADE Construction to install an air vent in the door to release the heat out of the closet as it was a fire hazard.

WADE has replaced the ceiling fans in the Gift Shop as apparently squirrels had damaged the wiring in the ceiling. He will also install new lights at the Memorial Wall.

New Business: The Cummins contract for service on the generator at the sump pump has been renewed as of 12/22/2025 at an increase of \$20.83 per year. Some residents have inquired if the city has a

burning ordinance which was discussed with the Council agreeing this should be addressed as needed **January 20, 2026, - page 2** -but all residents should be cautious due to the draught status.

All city property tax notices have been mailed out by Harris. Donita spoke with The Tillery Firm concerning the Cliff Duerfeldt issues but will be addressing this at a later meeting. They have drawn up an ordinance concerning this that the Council can review for possible adoption by the city. Luis Nino has submitted a price of \$1,700.00 to replace the 2 damaged trees in front of the Chapel. This includes removing and replacing the 2 trees with Crepe Myrtles.

Payment has been received for the damages at the north entrance gate on Reindeer ST torn down on October 12 when a car hit it while turning in on Reindeer ST. Lesley Taylor came in and discussed the 1099s with the mayor so that W9's may be given to all vendors required to file them. Quarterly returns have been submitted and the Gift Shop sales taxes have been paid. Stacie Avery is working on the 2025 Audit reports to be submitted to the state. Following a webinar on 12/29/25 for Georgia Ethics Commission: Ethics Reporting Requirements, Donita stated she will need to contact Carey Alligood, Toombs County Elections Supervisor for clarity on the city's circumstances.

The CDBG grant for the year is due in by April so the Council needs to decide on the Engineering Group & the Grant Writer to be used for the request. Hayes Hofstadter and Carol Southard came in January 9 to discuss & assist Donita with the goals for the project. After discussion, it was agreed that the city will have a representative for the city to periodically check on any projects being performed in the city for the city. Matt made a motion second by Renee to retain the Hofstadter Engineering group and Carol's Consulting & Grant Management for the upcoming water system project. Donald Prestige, Reidsville City Councilman who works on their grants and projects, stated that their city is working on the third project with Hofstadter & has had great success with each project.

The Council was presented a copy of the 2026 City Budget for review prior to the meeting. Donita asked if there were any questions or adjustments needed on it. A copy of the 2026 budget will be required by GIRMA, our insurance provider, after Council acceptance for them to determine insurance fee. Matt made a motion second by Renee to accept the 2026 Budget as presented by the mayor. Monty agreed and the budget passed unanimously.

Lance Sikes asked about the possibility of water bill rate reductions as he had understood this could be possible at an earlier meeting last year. Donita stated there is still a need for the present rates to remain due to the repairs or replacements needed to the old systems as some lines were installed in the 1960's. Discussion followed with it decided that the city should request a city map from Hofstadter marking the system for all water lines, cutoffs and outlets.

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

Respectfully Submitted, Sue Grisham

Donita Bowen, Mayor 