

MINUTES
City Council Meeting
Monday, November 6, 2017 – 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order: Mayor Bethune called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Opening: Pastor Ashely Randall, Garden City United Methodist Church gave the invocation and Mayor Bethune led City Council in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Roll Call:

Members: Mayor Bethune presided. Council Members: Mayor Pro-tem Campbell, Councilmember Cody, Marcia Daniel, Councilmember Kicklighter, Councilmember Ruiz and Councilmember Tice.

Staff: Ron Feldner, City Manager; Rhonda Ferrell-Bowles, Clerk of Council; James P. Gerard, City Attorney; David Lyons, Chief of Police; Ben Brengman, IT Director; Pam Franklin, HR Director; Benny Googe, Public Works Director; Cliff Ducey, Recreation Director; Jackie Jackson, Special Projects Coordinator and Major Gilbert Ballard, GCPD. *Absent:* Charles Draeger, Water Operations Director; Ron Alexander, Planning Director and Corbin Medeiros, Fire Chief.

Informal Public Comment: Mayor Bethune opened the floor to receive public comment from the audience and announced the procedures for speakers. He said we have a lot of residents here tonight to speak on the railroad. He asked for anyone to come forward who wished to address City Council that was not here to talk about the railroad.

Ms. Damia Alberry, 71 Nelson Avenue, asked City Council to look into having a stop light installed at the intersection of Highway 21 and Priscilla D. Thomas Way. She said there is a lot of pedestrians crossing Highway 21 at this intersection. She said pedestrians don't walk to the crossover at Mercer to cross the street, because it is too far down from the intersection. She said if money is an issue, the faculty and students at Groves High School are willing to do fund raisers to help. She said if possible may be the traffic signal could be put on a referendum ballot for the citizens to vote on.

Mayor Bethune said Highway 21 is a State highway and the State would make the decision on a stop light.

City Manager said the future entrance to the new Groves High School will have a light. He said I don't think GDOT would install a light at this time, because the light would have to be moved when the new Groves High School is completed.

Mayor Bethune read a statement regarding the railroad. He said the two large railroads in Garden City have been in operation over 100 years and have become very powerful. He said the City has very limited authority in regards to the railroad so we will have to work with them collaboratively. He said as a small local government we have already undertaken certain actions to try to resolve the issues. He said we have engaged the local media to help and we are looking for help from our State and local representatives. He said we expect to have a face to face meeting with the railroad in the near future. He said I had a meeting last week with some of the residents and this is a life safety issue. The trains are blocking the neighborhoods for up to two hours or more and we will do everything we can in our power to help get this resolved.

Ms. Natalyn Morris, 209 Priscilla D. Thomas Way, said there are two sets of railroad tracks on Priscilla D. Thomas Way. She said some residents are impacted by both sets of tracks, but only one affects me. She said we have been blocked by the train for over two hours. She said I have the dates of the blockages. She said we call the police and make a report. She said school kids get left by the bus because the train has the track blocked. Also, we have people that need to get to work and can't because the train has the track blocked. She said we need to get CSX to be good neighbors. She said I would like you all as elected officials to work with us.

City Manager asked Ms. Morris to send over the dates of the blockages.

Mr. Gary Monroe, 46 Hawkinsville Road, said this is a redundant issue. We understand that the railroad is an economy engine, but the workforce and children are stuck behind the railroad from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. He said what can we do to resolve this? He said the railroad used to cut the trains to allow traffic to go through. He said the issue was mentioned to the Congressman and he said it was not his problem. He said elected officials need to embrace this with the community.

Mr. Lingeela Johnson, 355 Hawkinsville Road, said we have two trains in our neighborhood. He said several times we can't get out and I have been at least three hours late getting to work. He said this is costing me time and wages. He said we have a lot of elderly residents in the neighborhood. He said several times I have wrote the railroad regarding the trains blocking the crossings. He said there is no access to get out of the neighborhood when the train is blocking the crossing. He said my cousin called the railroad and they told her that she needed to move.

Mr. Arron Van Gorp, 221 Water Oak Way, said I have lived there since February and the trains have been blocking the railroad a lot. He said the right thing needs to be done to provide a way out of the neighborhood. He said I have asked Norfolk if I could use their road and they said I would be fined. He said I feel there should be an access road. He said my family is a single income family and if I'm three hours late to work, they should have to pay for it.

State Representative Carl Gilliard said we have been working diligently on this matter trying to find resolution. He said as a legislature I'm able to amend laws. I know Garden City has done everything it can and I will propose local legislation on how the railroad is able to operate. He said I go to Atlanta this Friday to prepare the legislation for an amendment. He said I'm sure the local delegation will be in support. He said we need our local media to continue to put pressure on the railroad and we can do it if we stick together. He said we are with you and action speaks louder than words. He said it is up to you to write and get support from other representatives.

Mayor Bethune said we will be working to see what can be done.

City Attorney said we do have on the ordinance that the railroad has to have a brakeman there to cut the train if it is going to block the crossing for more than ten minutes. He said we have cited the railroad before and it has had no effect. He said the railroad can't stay stopped more than ten minutes. He said I do think we do need to have the ability to cut the trains if it is life or death.

There being no further comments from the audience, Mayor Bethune closed the informal comment portion of the meeting.

Public Hearings:

Alcoholic Beverage License Application (Mini Mart Hwy. 80): Mayor Bethune opened the public hearing to receive public comment on an alcoholic beverage license application made by William Vaiekeh to sell wines, beer and/or malt beverages at Mini Mart (Shiv Sai 1912 LLC), 403-M U.S. Highway 80, Garden City, Georgia.

Mayor Bethune asked if there was anyone who wished to speak in favor or against the application. There being no comments, Mayor Bethune closed the public hearing.

Alcoholic Beverage Manager's License Application (Mini Mart Hwy. 80) Mayor Bethune opened the public hearing to receive public comment on an alcoholic beverage manager's license application made by Vikram Shah to sell wines, beer and/or malt beverages at Mini Mart (Shiv Sai 1912 LLC), 403-M U.S. Highway 80, Garden City, Georgia

Mayor Bethune asked if there was anyone who wished to speak in favor or against the application. There being no comments, Mayor Bethune closed the public hearing.

City Council Minutes: upon motion by Councilmember Campbell, seconded by Councilmember Cody, City Council voted unanimously to approve the city council minutes dated 10/16/17 and the workshop synopsis dated 10/23/17.

Staff Reports:

HR Director gave the Human Resources Department's report for the month of October.

IT Director gave the Information Technology Department's report for the month of October.

Public Works Director gave the Public Works Department's report for the month of October.

Parks & Recreation Director gave the Parks & Recreation Department's report for the month of October.

City Manager's Updates & Announcements: City Manager said the asphalt in front of Grainger Honda is going down.

Items for Consideration:

Alcoholic Beverage License Application (Mini Mart Hwy. 80): Clerk of Council said we have for consideration an alcoholic beverage license application made by William Vaiekeh to sell wines, beer and/or malt beverages at Mini Mart (Shiv Sai 1912 LLC), 403-M U.S. Highway 80, Garden City, Georgia.

Upon motion by Councilmember Kicklighter, seconded by Councilmember Tice, City Council voted unanimously to approve the alcoholic beverage license application.

Alcoholic Beverage Manager's License Application (Mini Mart Hwy. 80): Clerk of Council said we have for consideration of an alcoholic beverage manager's license application made by Vikram Shah to sell wines, beer and/or malt beverages at Mini Mart (Shiv Sai 1912 LLC), 403-M U.S. Highway 80, Garden City, Georgia.

Upon motion by Councilmember Tice, seconded by Councilmember Daniel, City Council voted unanimously to approve the alcoholic beverage manager's license application.

Alcohol Beverage License Renewals for 2018: Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution by the Mayor and Council of Garden City, Georgia, authorizing the renewal of Garden City alcohol licenses for the 2018 calendar year; to provide for review and limited investigation of said license holders; and for other purposes.

Upon motion by Councilmember Ruiz, seconded by Councilmember Kicklighter, City Council voted unanimously to adopt the resolution.

Resolution, Longevity Pay Benefit: Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution by the Mayor and Council of Garden City, Georgia, establishing a longevity pay benefit for permanent full-time employees of the City of Garden City, Georgia, based on the length of continuous years of service with the City.

Upon motion by Councilmember Tice, seconded by Councilmember Campbell, City Council voted unanimously to adopt the resolution.

Resolution, Chief of Police Employment Agreement: Clerk of Council read the heading of a resolution by the Mayor and Council of Garden City, Georgia authorizing the City Manager to execute the employment agreement between the City and Gilbert Ballard setting forth the terms of Mr. Ballard's employment by the City as the City's Chief of Police.

City Manager said over the last several weeks we have been working on a transition plan with Chief Lyons' retirement. He said the resolution authorizes myself and Major Ballard to execute the agreement with the Clerk of Council's attestation.

Upon motion by Councilmember Tice, seconded Councilmember Kicklighter, City Council voted unanimously to adopt the resolution.

Mayor Bethune said we are pleased to have someone in the organization and that the officers are excited about. He said we hate to lose Chief Lyons.

Councilmember Kicklighter said it has been a pleasure working with Chief Lyons and he will be missed.

Adjournment: Upon motion by Councilmember Campbell, seconded by Councilmember Tice, City Council adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

*Transcribed and submitted by: Clerk of Council
Accepted and approved by: City Council 11-20-17*