



120 North Essa Street, Lake Park, Georgia 31636
City Hall 229-559-7470
Fax 229-559-7499

City of Lake Park
Regular Council Meeting Minutes
November 5, 2024
6:00 pm

Members present were Mayor Jena Sandlin, Council Member Oscar Griffith, Council Member Michelle Lane, Council Member Busby Courson, and Council Member Carl Spano

Staff Present: City Clerk Lisa Johnson, Court Clerk Melissa Morey, Fire Chief Matt Ryan, Police Chief Ed Yarbrough, Sergeant Isael Estrada, Maintenance Supervisor-In-Training Kaleb Rogers, Maintenance Technician Billy Jones,

Mayor Jena Sandlin called the meeting to order.

Mayor Jena Sandlin led the invocation.

Mayor Jena Sandlin led the pledge.

Mayor Jena Sandlin read a letter of apology to members of the community, attached.

Minutes: Mayor Sandlin called for the review and approval of the Minutes. Council Member Busby Courson made a motion to approve the Minutes. Council Member Michelle Lane asked for clarification that the motion was to approve the Minutes of October 1, October 21, and October 30; upon confirmation, Council Member Lane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Mayor Sandlin called for Citizens who have concerns they would like to bring to the Council's attention. She reminded residents that time is limited to three minutes and asked them to state their concerns during this portion of the meeting only, as Council has a lengthy agenda and would like to keep the meeting moving along.

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

- Susan Keckley – 415 4-H Club Rd – thanked the Mayor for her apology and stated that she understood that the citation in question was prior to the hurricane, which meant that the hurricane had nothing to do with it. The Mayor replied that it was after Hurricane Helene and the Police Chief confirmed. She expressed a concern regarding someone cutting trees on 4-H Club Rd and leaving them in people's yards. The Mayor responded that this might be the people clearing debris and if so, they would come back to pick them up. The Mayor further stated that there was some concern about lines tangled up in the trees. Mrs. Keckley stated that she had spoken to neighbors to ask more people to come to the Council meeting, and most of them stated that they would not come to the meetings

because the City of Lake Park never does anything; she felt that she should share that with the Council. Mrs. Keckley then asked about the millage rate, stating that she had received her tax bill and the millage rate shown was actually 2 mils higher than stated in Council. Council Member Spano responded that the City had not raised the rate, and there was a second line that showed the reduction. She notified the Council that she had reached out to the Carters, who had the neighboring property with the tree leaning over theirs, but had gotten no response as yet.

- Gloria Luke – 201 4-H Club Rd – thanked City for increased patrol at 4-H Club Rd. Mrs. Luke asked if the City’s Maintenance Crew had a working saw yet; she has been told that the trucks will not pick up in front of the mailbox until the hanging limbs in the trees are cut. Mayor Sandlin confirmed with Billy Jones that the City does have a working saw; it was noted that the City’s contract with AshBritt included “hangers”, or limbs that had been broken, but had not yet fallen, and she would call the contractor. Mrs. Luke expressed concern for the residents at Lake Park Apartments on Lane Dr., which is a subsidized apartment complex owned by Spray Properties; the owner has not yet done any cleanup following the storm and repairs have not been made. The number for the management has apparently been disconnected.
- Patricia Brown – 809 Main St – expressed concern about the Lake Park Apartments on Lane Dr as well; she stated that there are shingles everywhere out there and the owner does not keep the grounds up, which affects property values in the area. She stated that there is a tree that has been there since Idalia that has not been cleaned up. She stated that she believes the residents are afraid to complain because they don’t want to become a target. The Mayor asked the City Clerk to look into this, and if necessary, the City can have the Attorney send a letter. Mrs. Luke supported the fact that she also believes the residents are afraid to complain.
- *Linda Hogan – asked if there was an ordinance to address people on Marion who have junk piled in their front yards, and the properties are unkempt. The Mayor stated that there is an ordinance; Mrs. Hogan stated that the City looks really nasty coming in on 41. She went on to say, regarding the citation earlier addressed, that she had received a ticket when the light at Lakes Blvd was messed up a few months back when the red light was messed up and had called the Mayor to see if there was anything she could do and the Mayor told her there was nothing she could do. She stated she had no idea what had happened in this instance, but did know that the Mayor had declined to intervene regarding her own citation and referred her to the Police Chief.
- Mrs. Brown spoke again and stated that one of the residents at Lake Park Apartments has a pit bull, which is a rescue animal, which is aggressive towards other residents. Mayor Sandlin asked Police Chief Yarbrough if the police could handle those instances, and he confirmed that they could get Animal Control out to handle them.
- Arthur Keckley – 315 4-H Club Rd. – addressed the issue of the citation, stating that no one is above the law; the only people who have authority to amend a ticket are the officer who wrote it, a judge, or the recipient gets himself an attorney to take care of it. His other concern is regarding the trees that are being cut up and left for older residents to take care of, who cannot handle this on their own.
- Oscar Lee Griffith, Jr. - 824 Sand Crane Circle – stated he was addressing the Council as a citizen and not as a Council Member; noted that in her letter the Mayor had used the word “if”, indicating that she really doesn’t believe she has done anything. He stated that if he says to someone “IF I offended you” it means he really doesn’t believe he did anything wrong, but if he offended you, he’s sorry. He stated that her letter said all Council Members agreed she should present the letter, but she was wrong, because he didn’t agree. He stated that she had said she was upset about the storm, but she couldn’t have been too upset because she made the phone call. Mr. Griffith noted that another resident had called and asked her to do something, and her response was that she didn’t have time

to do that, but she had time to make the phone call for the individual in question. He stated that this was not the first time the Mayor had had a ticket fixed, and the only way he found out about it was when he asked about it directly. He met with the Mayor, and he was a little disgruntled at the time, but the Mayor had stated that if the situation arises, she would do it again. He went on to remind the Mayor that she had stood at the podium in Council chambers and taken an oath; she had abused her power directly or indirectly by asking the Chief on more than one occasion to fix a ticket; she has not upheld the oath that she swore to. He asked that the record reflect that he did not agree with the action that the Council had taken on this matter, naming each, for the letter to issue a letter of apology and noted that there were a lot of things not stated in that letter. Mr. Griffith stated that he was there to represent the citizens of Lake Park, Georgia and he had sworn an oath to do that. He reminded the Mayor that she holds a public office and has conducted herself in a manner that adversely affects the administration of her office and adversely affects the rights and interests of the public. He went on to state that she, Mayor Jena Sandlin, has committed an act of malfeasance in office, has violated her oath of office and has committed an act of misconduct in her office. He is therefore asking her if she will resign. The Mayor stated that she did not believe that the way Mr. Griffith was presenting this was the way she meant it, that she believed that her letter explained it well, and she had told Mr. Griffith in her office that she felt that the circumstances had warranted mercy and togetherness and for that reason, she would not resign. Mr. Griffith stated that that meant that everyone who got a ticket after the storm should have had it dismissed, but he had known she wouldn't resign because she is not for the people but for herself. He finished by stating that he would not resign, but would stay on the Council and fight for all of the residents.

- Jeff Patterson – 503 Ricks St – asked if the Ethics Committee was still in place. When confirmed, he asked what would need to be done to convene the ethics committee. The Mayor stated that she thought the Council would need to convene them, and Mr. Patterson stated that he believed that residents could make the request and asked City Attorney Rob Plumb to verify. Mr. Plumb stated that residents could file a complaint and he believed it needed to be filed within 90 days of the time the resident learned of the violation.
- Susan Keckley – 415 4-H Club Rd – stated that she has researched all of this pertaining to ticket fixing, including Lowndes County and the Governor's office. **

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/DEPARTMENT HEADS:

Fire Department: Matt Ryan

- Presented a monthly call report
- Reported that the Department is starting their registered volunteer, to get two more volunteers prepared
- Reported that the spiders are back and stated that we need to get pest control on a regular basis. City Clerk Lisa Johnson stated that pest control is on a regular basis, and they get the key to spray at the station every month. Chief Ryan stated that according to the key log, they have not been going in. Mrs. Johnson stated that she would address this with the pest control company.
- Reported that Tanker One has been down for about a month due to a power issue; he replaced the battery and smoke came from under the hood. He cannot find anyone locally to come and look at it; he would like to talk to the County and see if one of the employees could come down and look at it "on the side". Mayor agreed that if one of the County employees could look at it and was willing, she couldn't see a reason not to allow it. Council Member Spano stated that the individual would need to follow the same steps as a business and submit an invoice for payment.

Police Department: Chief Ed Yarbrough

- Presented activity report.
- Stated that he has added quotes since the report was submitted, one for upgraded body armor. They currently have 2A armor, and need to upgrade to 3A, which will protect officers from multiple hits. This can be covered under the regular police budget, but the amount is high enough that it requires Council approval under the City's policy. Council Member Oscar Griffith made a motion to upgrade the Police Department's armor at a cost of \$2,191.19 from the Police Department's budget. Council Member Carl Spano seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.
- Explained that although the purchase of a new car has been approved, financing has been difficult to obtain, which he understands Council Member Spano will explain further later in the Agenda. The second quote he has added is for totally outfitting the new car with screen, lights, etc.; the current plan is to use whatever can be used from the old car, but in case there are items that cannot be used and will need to be replaced, he obtained the quote for approval so the work could be done without having to be delayed due to a need for approval.

Maintenance/Public Works Department: Kaleb Rogers

- Presented activity report.
- Stated that maintenance needs pine straw to replace what is in beds at City Hall
- Reported that the fountain at Tom's Pond will be repaired after the electrician comes to repair the electrical box
- Reported that there was damage to one headstone at the cemetery in the storm.
- Council Member Carl Spano stated that the City appreciates volunteers and appreciates volunteers that can help the maintenance department but needs to address the issue of volunteers riding with maintenance and recording readings when the employee reads them. If the volunteer inadvertently transposes numbers or otherwise writes them down incorrectly, and the City over charges the customer, that does not reflect well on the City. He stated that we need to ensure that when we have volunteers, we need to make the work appropriate and not have them riding in the truck, which is a liability. Council Member Oscar Griffith agreed that this is a problem, stating that if a volunteer is in the truck writing meter readings, the volunteer is doing Mr. Rogers job. He further addressed the question of the hole eroded in his yard by the flushing of hydrants that has not yet been addressed, and now his wife has fallen in the hole. He also stated that the hydrants at the end of the line need to be flushed more frequently, which has also been addressed previously, because without it he and other residents near the end of the line are paying for dirty water. He stated that he is mentioning these things not as a Member of Council, but as a resident, and there were other residents similarly affected. In answer to Mr. Griffith's question, Mr. Rogers stated that the department has a hose that will allow these hydrants to be flushed without washing the dirt away.

Administration: City Clerk Lisa Johnson

- Presented the Administration report
- Reported that the October Court date had been rescheduled to November 12, as the Court software could not be accessed until the City could get a static IP address, which wasn't possible with the normal internet provider out of service. The City has gotten a temporary connection through ViaSat, which provided the static IP address until Unified Communications was back online.
- Reported that the approved contractor for the lead service line inventory expected to begin the project this week.

- Reported that the Municode update is expected to take 4-6 months to complete, including 60 days allowed to the City to review and approve.
- Reported that the insurance company had been notified regarding damage to City properties and had sent an adjuster, and the Admin staff is working on obtaining quotes for repairs.
- Reported that she had received an update regarding the transition for debris cleanup that afternoon, and there would be further meetings in the coming days to facilitate the transition.
- Reported that she had had the Exploratory Call with FEMA and had a Recovery Scoping Meeting scheduled for the 15th for the next step in the process.
- Reminded Council that the deadline for obligating ARPA funds is December 31, 2024, which means that the contract has to be in place by that time, further stating that Mr. Spano would have more to add to this later.

Council Member Spano presented the Financial reports, stating that the budget was performing better than expected, with Insurance Premium Taxes coming in higher than expected, and Court and citation payments showing an increase as well. Expenses are running less than expected, which is good. Mayor Sandlin asked if there were questions or discussions, and there being none, called for a motion. Council Member Spano made a motion to approve the unaudited financial reports. Council Member Lane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Police Car: Council Member Spano reported that the only financing that could be found for the approved police car was available only for fleets of vehicles, which is basically 12. However, it has been found that ARPA funds can be used for this purpose, and there is almost enough there for the full amount needed. The remainder can be covered by increased revenues. He stated that the uses allowed for ARPA funds were very specific, and he knew that there were other projects needing attention and if there were no objections from Council he would like to volunteer to lead some of those efforts and with the Clerk, but they are not eligible uses for ARPA. Regarding the Police Car, however, the City could use the \$33,993.64 in ARPA and allocate another \$17,000 from the General Funds to eliminate the potential need for the Police Chief to come back and request for additional funds. This amount should give the police department everything needed to purchase and outfit the car. Police Chief Yarbrough reiterated that the full amount may not be needed, as equipment that could be transferred from the old car would be; he explained that the old car would then be put up for auction, which would also recover some of the cost. Council Member Spano made a motion to purchase the new police car and outfit it at an expense not to exceed \$50,000, using the remaining ARPA funds matched with increased Fines and Forfeitures revenues. Council Member Griffith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Gordon Street Quote: Mayor Sandlin explained that there was an issue on Gordon Street in which it was discovered that a water line scheduled for tap was actually under the road, rather than on the shoulder and the Council had committed to make a decision at this meeting. The two bids received were from Killeen Construction in the amount of \$28,500 and RPI Underground, Inc. in the amount of \$26,670. City Clerk Lisa Johnson stated that her main concern with the second quote was that the bidder could not do the work until the 18th which could present a problem for the builder; she further stated that Billy Jones, in Maintenance, had spoken to Mr. Killeen and the job could be done less expensively if the City's Maintenance crew could dig the trench. Mayor Sandlin noted that Killeen had done work with the City for years and had always done well. Mayor Sandlin called for a vote, reminding Council that the builder is losing money every day. Council Member Spano asked when Killeen could get to the job, and Mrs. Johnson stated her understanding was this week. Council Member Lane noted that rain is coming at the end of the week and may delay Killeen's start date, Council Member Spano adding that the time difference would then be only a little over a week. Mayor Sandlin called for a vote. Council Member Courson noted that without knowing the cost difference for

comparison that the City could not know how much savings there could be if the City's crew dug the trench. Council Member Lane made a motion to approve RPI Underground to complete the Gordon Street project at a cost of \$26,670. Council Member Spano seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Christmas Event: Mayor Sandlin stated that the Christmas Event would be the first Saturday in December, beginning at 1:00, and the City would have the Lowndes High School Band this year for the parade. She stated that golf carts entered into the parade would be required to be decorated, and floats could enter as well. Mrs. Keckley asked if anyone in the community was conducting a Toy Drive or anything for the children in the community. Mayor Sandlin stated that some of the churches collected for the Shoeboxes, and Mrs. Keckley clarified that she was actually thinking of the children here in Lake Park. Police Chief Yarbrough explained that the police department had partnered in 2023 with Lowndes County to work with the Toys for Tots program, and getting involved was not difficult. Mrs. Keckley stated that Toys for Tots contributes only to people who are on public assistance, and there are many families in Lake Park who need the help but are not on public assistance and she would like to help. She asked how she would go about spearheading such a toy drive for local children. She will speak with the Police Chief after the meeting on this.

Motorola Quote: Mayor Sandlin asked City Clerk Lisa Johnson to speak on the Motorola quote; Mrs. Johnson stated that Council approved in October to research the cost of a radio for the Police Department Chaplain, and that quote was in the packet. Chief Yarbrough was recognized and stated that he had spoken with the Fire Chief, and the City could actually reactivate the radio that was previously used by the Chaplain for less money than purchasing a new one. This radio is currently not in use, and could be made available more quickly as well. Council Member Michell Lane made a motion to approve reactivating the existing radio currently not in use for the use of the Chaplain. Council Member Spano seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

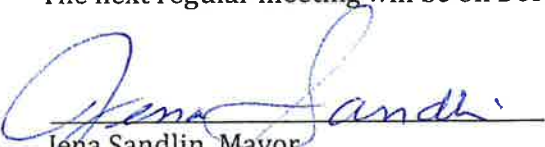
Council Member Michelle Lane made a motion to enter Executive Session to review the Minutes of previous Executive Sessions and to discuss personnel. Council Member Carl Spano seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0. Council entered Executive Session at 7:04pm.

Council Member Michelle Lane made a motion to reconvene Regular Session. Council Member Busby Courson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0. Council reconvened Regular Session at 7:49 pm.


Council Member Carl Spano made a motion to approve the Executive Session Minutes from October 1, 2024, October 21, 2024, and October 30, 2024, with corrections as noted. Council Member Michelle Lane seconded the motion. The motion carried, 3-0, with Council Member Oscar Griffith opposed.

Council Member Busby Courson made a motion to adjourn. Council Member Michelle Lane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

The next regular meeting will be on December 3, 2024 at 6:00 pm.


Jena Sandlin, Mayor

12-3-2024
Date


Lisa Johnson, City Clerk

December 3, 2024
Date

Seal