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City of Lake Park
Regular Council Meeting Minutes
March 04, 2025
6:00 pm

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

Staff Present: City Clerk Lisa Johnson, Police Chief Ed Yarbrough, Fire Chief Matt Ryan, Maintenance Supervisor Billy Jones, Maintenance Technician Eli Johnson

Mayor Jena Sandlin called the meeting to order.

Mayor Jena Sandlin led the invocation.

Mayor Jena Sandlin led the pledge.

Minutes: Mayor Sandlin called for the review and approval of the Minutes. Council Member Michelle Lane made a motion to approve the Minutes of the February 4, 2025 Regular Meeting, the February 11, February 13, February 20, 2025 Public Hearings and the Called Meeting of February 24, 2025. Council Member Carl Spano seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

Mayor Sandlin called for Citizens who have concerns they would like to bring to the Council's attention. She reminded residents that the time was limited to three minutes and asked them to state their name, address and concern at the podium.

CITIZENS' CONCERNS:

- Robin Cumbus – 400 S Broadway – addressed the Council regarding drainage problems on Broadway, stating that she wanted to remain involved in the issue, as it has been going on for about 20 years without resolution, and she wants to do her part to make sure the problem doesn't continue to get pushed around. She stated that she had spoken with the contractor's superintendent, Jeff Hill at the school about the drainage problem with water coming from the school, who told her that day that he has known about the problem for most of the eight years he has been in his position, but it is not the school board's problem. She went on to say that the plans for construction included a small retention pond with the overflow going directly to the easement ditch next to her home (leading to the wetlands behind the property). Her question for him had been why they didn't permit the wetlands on the school board property and build a bigger retention pond, and she believes that this question came down to wetlands permitting. She has also spoken to Mr. Futch and asked what needed to be done to solve the problem, and he responded that he was willing to speak to someone who would engage respectfully, stating that no one had spoken to him like that since Keith (Sandlin), but he is open to conversation. She continued that she would be

speaking to Georgia Department of Transportation, as all of the storm flow does end up there. She understands that the property with the beaver dams is private property, but feels that as a government entity, it is the City's responsibility to make sure that the water is getting to where it is supposed to go to protect homes, which is Enoch Creek. She stated that the City Clerk had kept in touch with her to let her know that there was progress being made, which she had requested, and she feels like there needs to be a commitment to fixing it rather than just letting it keep on and keep on. She and her husband have placed deterrents to try to solve the problem, and have spent almost \$4,000 to clear the grown up trees so the water would keep flowing, but she is afraid the problem will just be left until someone talks to Mr. Futch. Council Member Courson told Mrs. Cumbus that he had spoken with Mr. Futch and he was agreeable to hearing what the City's engineers came up with and explained that he also had an engineer that could offer input. Mrs. Cumbus said that she felt like if there was really a logical plan that Mr. Futch would work with the City, and if needed, she would be happy to help with negotiations. She explained that she believed that when the timber was originally cut through there was when the problem was caused, and it should be fairly simple to fix. Mrs. Cumbus noted that in her life she didn't think she had ever seen the ditches cut to grade and the City needed to put some attention to restoring the infrastructure. She feels that the City is being disrespected in ways that should not be tolerated, and is being bullied around. She is requesting that she be posted about the progress, explaining that she has too much invested to just get flooded.

Mayor Sandlin thanked Mrs. Cumbus for her concern and asked if there were other concerns. Hearing none, she moved on to Departmental Reports.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/DEPARTMENT HEADS:

Fire Department: Fire Chief Matt Ryan was not present

Police Department: Chief Ed Yarbrough

- Presented activity report.
- Stated that everything was going well in the department and asked if Council had any questions or concerns

Maintenance/Public Works Department: Eli Johnson, Billy Jones

- Eli Johnson presented the activity report.
- Reported that Maintenance had been handling regular Maintenance and that the Cemetery was in good shape
- Noted that he had three work orders in his report that were incomplete as they did not have the materials
- Maintenance Needs include Highway Safety: the Department had purchased orange triangles for the mowers, as well as fire hydrants. The problem with the mowers is that they are not considered vehicles, and drivers do not have to move over a lane for them, even if there are flashing lights on them. Safety is his primary concern, always, and he felt that safety precautions need to be made clear. He recommended the City get a bush hog, as that is considered a vehicle and traffic would have to move over.
- Mayor Sandlin asked if the Council had any questions; Council Member Griffith asked when the area at the edge of Tom's Pond would be cut, noting that it was very high. Mr. Johnson responded that they had tried, but the mowers got stuck in the wet area, noting that this would be another area that the bush hog would be helpful to have as it is a bigger piece of equipment. Council Member Griffith stated that the longer the grass was allowed to grow there, the more water would be held and the harder the job would be, suggesting that weed eating would help alleviate the situation. Mr. Johnson stated that he would speak with Mr. Jones and see when they could schedule to attack that area.

- Council Member Spano expressed appreciation for the Work Order log attached to the report; Mr. Johnson noted that credit for the log was due to the ladies in the office, who kept it for tracking purposes.

Administration: City Clerk Lisa Johnson

- Presented the Administration report.
- Reported that they had gotten the response from the Insurance Company regarding demolishing and replacing the blue building, and after depreciation, the payout amount is about the same.
- Reported that the software for the electronic reading has begun having issues, and a support call has revealed that the equipment and software are about 16 years old; Consolidated Pipe and Master Meter have recommended updating both and are getting a price, but quotes have not yet been received.
- Reported that Deputy Clerk Colson has also resumed checking warranties for the meters and EIDs, and most of them are at or nearing the end of the warranty period. Those that are still in warranty can be replaced under warranty, but the new warranty will only be good for the life of the existing one.
- Brought to Council's attention to an application for Zoning Board appointment, which will come up later on the Agenda, noting that there are still two open seats on the Board
- Reported that she and Council Member Courson had met with the team from Carter and Sloope, the new engineers, felt that the conversation was positive, asking Council Member Courson if he would prefer to address this. With his permission, she continued, stating that the engineers were looking at short-term solutions to alleviate the immediate problems while a longer term solution and potential funding sources were explored. Short term solutions mentioned were addressing overdue maintenance, cleaning out culverts, possibly installing larger pipes, verifying the direction of flow and re-grading ditches. Carter and Sloope also has a division which can help identify funding sources, and has recommended submitting a GEFA pre-application to see what funding would be available through them and explore loan forgiveness options. There would be no commitment involved in submitting the pre-application and the answer would not be received until September or October, but given the time frames involved in many of the funding sources, they have suggested that this might give the City a head start on applications.
- Reminded Council that due to delays with completing the Lead Service Line Inventory she had not been sure if the GEFA funding would still accessible, and reported that she had received the answer and the deadline for drawdowns has been extended to December of 2025.
- Brought to Council's attention the information provided on upcoming training opportunities; the first is GMA's Small Cities Conference, which is in Tifton this year at a cost of \$150 for two days of training and is close enough to drive. The second is the GMA Convention in Savannah which will be held June 20 through 24; registration opens on March 26. Mrs. Johnson reminded Council that the classes fill up fast, as do the hotel rooms, and asked that anyone planning to attend please return the planning forms to her by March 21st. She has included everyone's training transcripts for easy reference when selecting this year's classes.
- Reported that staff had published Requests for Bid for damage to buildings and structures as a result of Hurricane Helene as a single request that covers all, as seeking individual quotes has not yielded results.
- Brought Council's attention to the Retreat Action Items that have been on the To Do list for some time, many of which have fallen off the radar with hurricanes in two consecutive years and staff turnover. She noted that some of the committees had people assigned to them that are no longer with the City, and asked Council to consider the priority of the goals and new assignments to be discussed at the April Council Meeting.
- Reported that the Comprehensive Plan Update is due this year and explained that the Short Term Work Goals and Accomplishments from the last update were included in the Council Packets. Mrs. Johnson explained that while the full Comprehensive Plan was too large to email, there is a copy in City Hall and she could send the link to a digital copy at DCA's website; the full Plan goes into more detail regarding

the visions and goals, plan elements, strengths and weaknesses, etc. for Lowndes County and Lake Park specifically. She has also included the SWOT analysis and Vision and Goals for the Council's review. The Comprehensive Plan is updated every 5 years, and should be considered when setting SPLOST goals, which will also be coming up on a referendum this year. Department Heads have been asked to consider what their Departments will need in the way of Capital Items, Projects and Improvements over the next 5 years.

Financial Reports- Council Member Carl Spano

- Reported financials are doing better than expected at this time of year. Noted that some revenues were actually higher than expected this year to date; one of those is Property Taxes. Because of the delayed season, which was interrupted by Helene, property tax bills went out later than normal and the due date was a little later than normal. Power Franchise Fees were a little more than expected, as were Municipal Insurance fees. Most of the increases are due to increased costs in the economy in general. Expenses are on track as budgeted.
- City Clerk noted that at the end of the Financial Reports were the listing of current accounts, as they have been combined. She reported that a software update the week before had caused a few issues that required a re-reconciliation, but it has been cleared up now.
- Council Member Spano made a motion to accept the Financials as stated. Council Member Michelle Lane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Old Business

- Storage: Council Member Courson stated that the shipping container plan had not been well received, and the next preferable option was a metal building, which will cost in the neighborhood of \$20-25,000. Council discussed Maintenance staff tearing down the blue building, and Council Member Courson stated that he didn't think that the City's backhoe was sufficient to the job. In response to a question from Council Member Lane, Mrs. Johnson explained that she had checked with the insurance company regarding the difference between repair and demolish and rebuild, as the original estimate from them was for repairing the building. In the end, once depreciation was calculated in, the amount would be about the same either way. Council Member Courson explained that with the Conex's, one would be permanent for storage and the other would be temporary for a Maintenance office but would still need to be modified. While the cost of two Conex containers would be approximately \$5,000, they would need ventilation added, as well as wiring and partitions, which would have an additional cost, loose estimate of \$3-4,000. Mayor Sandlin asked Council Member Courson if he had already checked on the additional costs, and Council Member Courson said that he had not, but could get them in a couple of days. Council Member Lane noted that if the amount was going to be about the same, she didn't see that the question necessarily needed to be revisited. Council Member Courson stated that his thought had been that any unused money could be used for a new tractor and bush hog. Council Member Spano stated that it wouldn't need to be wired immediately, and he and Council Member Courson agreed that the ventilation would be needed immediately. Council Member Griffith asked if they would be sitting on the ground or a concrete slab, and Council Member Courson answered that they would probably on the ground. Council discussed the possibility of putting them on blocks to prevent water from coming in. Maintenance Member Eli Johnson stated that one would need to be ventilated immediately, as they are already having problems with rubber seals cracking and allowing gasoline out. He noted that when the liquid from gasoline evaporates, it has a flashpoint of -45*, so the ventilation would be necessary. Council Member Courson said he would get prices.

- Drainage Concerns: Council Member Griffith reiterated that the area across from Mrs. Cumbus in the wetlands area is full of water, which is seeping from that area. Council discussed the need for a meeting with the contractors and Jeff Hill with the School Board.

New Business

- Council discussed a nuisance complaint at 214 Harris Trail received from neighbors. Mayor Sandlin reported that she had spoken with the residents at 214, and the majority of the problem is due to Hurricane Helene. The resident explained that they have had some issues dealing with a contentious insurance company, as well as some serious illnesses in the household which have held up the cleanup. Janet Tieman, the resident, explained to the Council that they had had delays in getting their debris to the roadside due to the right-of-way in front of their home having been basically a “staging area” for debris in the neighborhood. She stated that the vehicles in the driveway are all registered and the insurance is current. They have two boats, on trailers, as do most residents in the neighborhood, and the plugs are out to allow water to drain. In addition, they have two jet skis, both on trailers, and a sailboat which is turned upside down. One of the boats was severely damaged, and it did hold water for a time, and the paddle boat had had water, but they have drained it. From the audience, Linda Hogan asked Ms. Tieman if the residents had plans for cleaning up the back yard, which is not related to the hurricane. She asked City Clerk Lisa Johnson if there was a time frame required for action. Mrs. Johnson responded that typically, a letter is sent asking for remedy within 30 days and then a citation is issued; however, Council is recognizing that there has been a major hurricane that will take a while for everyone to get cleaned up from and put behind them and they are trying to work with residents as best they can. Ms. Tieman stated that she felt that she and Mr. Foster were addressing the issues from the complaint, including pressure washing the house, but that it would take them some time. Mayor Sandlin stated that the residents are working on the problem, and Council will continue to monitor. Council Member Oscar Griffith asked about the status of a similar complaint on Pine Circle; Mayor Sandlin stated that a church in the area had helped clean it up and she had had no further complaints.
- Fourth of July - Justin Sandlin reported that the fireworks for the Fourth have been ordered, and the committee would like to sell flags that could be placed in the median with the sponsor’s name or business name, similar to the Christmas cards sold at Christmas. Following a brief discussion, it was decided that payment would come through City Hall, via check, cash or money order made payable to City of Lake Park. Fire Chief Matt Ryan reported that the cost of the fireworks was about \$5,000; Council Member Carl Spano made a motion to approve the purchase of fireworks not to exceed \$5,500. Council Member Michelle Lane asked if there would still be room for entertainment, and Council Member Spano explained that the budget for both Christmas and Fourth of July had been rolled into one Events line item, and that the sales of the flags for the median and donations would help to alleviate the cost. Mayor Sandlin called for a second to the motion. Council Member Michelle Lane seconded the motion to approve the purchase of fireworks at a cost not to exceed \$5,500. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.
- Zoning Appointment – Council Member Carl Spano made a motion to approve the appointment of Maria Burkholder to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Mayor Sandlin called for discussion. There being none, she called for a second. Council Member Michelle Lane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.
- Mayor Sandlin reminded Council that information pertaining to available training is included in their packets. Council Member Michelle Lane asked if there was training planned for Deputy Clerk Christian Colson. City Clerk Lisa Johnson explained that it is currently planned for Mrs. Colson to attend the Clerks Conference in Athens in September, and that she and Mrs. Colson are also exploring training opportunities at other times, including the upcoming training in Savannah.

Fire Chief Matt Ryan came forward and apologized for being late and requested the opportunity to present the Fire Report. He then presented the Fire Report for the month of February.

- Requested that the pest control company be contacted, as the Fire Station is still having a problem with spiders and ants. Council discussed changing pest control. City Clerk Lisa Johnson asked when the Fire Chief would be available for her to come to the station so she could relay specifics to Naylor. Council Member Griffith stated that he could come to the station the following day and meet with the Fire Chief and possibly apply a spray that he has.
- Reported that he had applied for and received a grant for AEDs which had been ordered and three of them are in service.
- Council Member Busby Courson asked the Fire Chief if the volunteers could help with blowing out culverts on the 15th, and the Chief answered that they should be able to.
- Reported that there had been eight more lights on the trucks tgo out; the PO Request has been submitted.

Council Member Carl Spano made a motion to adjourn. Council Member Michelle Lane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0. Council entered into Executive Session at 7:19 pm.

Council reentered Regular Session at 7:59 pm. Council Member Carl Spano made a motion to offer Simon Davis the position of Maintenance Technician with 90 days' probation, starting at a salary of \$17 per hour. Council Member Oscar Griffith seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-1, with Council Member Courson casting a No vote.

Council Member Carl Spano made a motion to adjourn. Council Member Busby Courson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The next regular meeting will be on April 1, 2025, at 6:00 pm.


Jena Sandlin, Mayor

4-1-25
Date


Lisa Johnson, City Clerk

April 1, 2025
Date

Seal