



CITY OF LAVONIA COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING – MINUTES

AUGUST 5, 2024

5:30 PM

- Present:** Mayor Courtney Umbehant
Councilman - Eddie Floyd
Councilman - Michael Schulman
Councilman - Jeremy Madden
Councilman - Andrew Murphy
- Media:** Charlie Eavenson – Franklin County Citizen
M.J. Kneiser – WLHR
- Staff:** City Manager - Charles Cawthon
Asst. City Manager – Daniel Carson
City Clerk – Angela V. Greer
City Attorney - Jay Doss
Police Chief – Shane Edmisten
DDA – Barbara Busby
Mainstreet - Ashley Rose Dodd
- Attendance:** Robert Wilkerson, Ricky Whitworth, Gene Williams, Martha Harden, Joe Harden, Ron Stockton, Randell Young, Sarah Young, Patricia Elliott, Vic Therou, Shannon Nichols, Jason Nichols, Susan Blakely, Kevin Segars, Eddie and Helen Bowman, and Officer Jonathan Merck.
- Item 1. Call to Order**
Mayor Courtney Umbehant called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.
- Item 2. Invocation and Pledge of Alliance to the American flag:** led by Councilman Andrew Murphy.
- Item 3. Consent Agenda Items & Approval of Minutes:**
Motion by Michael Schulman, seconded by Andrew Murphy to approve the Consent Agenda items as follows. Motion carried.
- a) Confirmation of Quorum.
 - b) Approval of June Agenda as presented.
 - c) Approval of Minutes: July 1, 2024 - Regular Council Meeting and the July 23, 2024 - Work Session as presented.
 - d) Approval of the July 2024 Financial Report as presented.

Item 4. 2024 Millage Rate Hearing and Adoption

Mayor Umbehant called for a Public Hearing at 5:32 P.M to hear public comments on the 2024 Millage Rate. The recommended rollback and rate would be 8.533. Mayor Umbehant asked for public comments in favor of or opposition to the tax rate. There were no public comments. Mayor Umbehant adjourned the meeting at 5:33 P.M.

Motion by Eddie Floyd, seconded by Eddie Madden to approve and adopt the 2024 Millage Rate of 8.533. Motion carried.

Item 5. GMRC Contract for Cemetery Mapping:

Motion by Michael Schulman, seconded by Eddie Floyd to approve signing the contract with Georgia Mountain Regional Commission for mapping out the cemetery that would be listed on the City Website. One half will be paid out of the 2024 budget and the other half will be taken out of the 2025 budget. Motion approved.

Item 6. Patricia McCallister – Poultry Ordinance Issue:

Ms. McCallister was not in attendance. Mr. Cawthon stated that she was going to address the Mayor and Council about her chickens. Mr. Cawthon advised the Mayor and Council that the poultry ordinance is vague and needs to be updated. The Mayor and Council agreed. Mr. Cawthon advised it will be discussed at the next work session. Councilman Murphy said he would agree if hobby farming is exempt.

Item 7. Food Truck Application:

Motion by Andrew Murphy, seconded by Eddie Floyd to approve the Food Truck application for Matt Nokos contingent upon proper paperwork is filled out with Health Department. Motion carried.

Item 8. Purple Heart City Resolution:

The City of Lavonia proudly renews its commitment to being a Purple Heart City, a designation that honors the brave men and women who have been wounded or killed in combat while serving in the U.S. military. This renewal symbolizes our unwavering support and gratitude for the sacrifices made by these courageous individuals. By maintaining this status, we aim to foster a community that recognizes and respects the valor and dedication of our nation's heroes.

As a Purple Heart City, Lavonia will continue to provide visible and meaningful reminders of our appreciation. This includes displaying signs and memorials that honor Purple Heart recipients, ensuring their contributions are never forgotten. We would like to showcase the new Purple Heart City signs that will be displayed on Hwy 17. In reaffirming our status as a Purple Heart City, Lavonia not only honors the legacy of our veterans but also sets an example for future generations. It is our collective duty to remember and celebrate the bravery of those who have served and sacrificed. Through our continued efforts, we hope to inspire a deeper understanding and respect for the Purple Heart and the extraordinary individuals who have earned it.

Thank you to Lavonia VFW for their commitment to veterans and their efforts in helping with the Purple Heart Signs. Please help me welcome Navy retired veteran and Lavonia Post Commander Vic Therou Army Veteran and Northeast Georgia District Two Commander Jason Nichols Our very own Lavonia Police Officer, Purple Heart Recipient, and Army Master Sergeant Johnathan Merck.

Item 9. Alcohol License Application – Circa 1918 @ Southern Oaks:

Motion by Michael Shulman, seconded by Andrew Murphy to approve the Alcohol License for Cicra 1918 @ Southern Oaks – 30 Baker St. for Beer & Wine Consumption on premises contingent upon clear background check. Motion carried.

Item 10. Legal : Updated Burning Ordinance:

Motion by Jeremy Madden, seconded by Michael Schulman to approve consideration and first read on the updated burning ordinance. See copy attached.

Item 11. Mayor's Report:

TAX EQUALIZATION: Last year, I was asked to represent all 27 elected officials from Franklin County's five cities, to urge the Board of Commissioners to stop imposing higher tax rates on Lavonia, Canon, Carnesville, Franklin Springs, and Royston residents compared to those in unincorporated areas. When the advertisements of the intended millage rates came out with equalization, I made calls to our commissioners to remind them of their pledge to do it. After some back and forth, I am pleased to say for the first time in more than three decades the Board of Commissioners voted to treat the city property owners the same as our unincorporated neighbors. I extend my gratitude to our commissioners for committing to a fair and ethical approach in taxing city residents by aligning the millage rate. Thank you to Jeff Jacques, Robert Franklin, Kyle Foster, Josh Smith, and Elizabeth Busby for your commitment to keep your word.

MUSIC ON MAIN: Prepare to step back in time with Lavonia concluding its summer Music on Main series! The season's final event will take place on Friday, August 16th, featuring a 60's music festival that promises to be unforgettable. This leads into Saturday, August 17th, where Lavonia will host its third annual Hippie Fest, a lively celebration from 10 AM to 2 PM in downtown Lavonia.

KINDNESS INITIATIVE: The month of August's Kindness Initiative is focusing on animals. Watch our social media posts for events. We'll be spotlighting animal shelters in need, Join us in making a difference and spreading kindness to our furry, feathered, and finned friends.

Item 12. City Manager Report:

Mr. Cawthon did not have a report and asked the Mayor and Council had any questions.

Item 13. Final Comments:

Mayor Umbehant asked for any comments from the Council. There were no comments.

Item 14. Adjourn:

Mayor Umbehant adjourned the meeting at 5:50 P.M.

Upcoming Meetings:

August 22, 2024 – Work Session @ 6:00 P.M.

August 26, 2024 - Planning & Zoning @ 5:30 P.M.

September 3, 2024 – City of Lavonia Regular Council Meeting @ 5:30 PM

Courtney Umbehant, Mayor

Angela V. Greer, City Clerk