

REGULAR MEETING OF
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 9, 2021

PUBLIC HEARING

The public hearing regarding water rates was called to order by Mayor Cheek at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Cheek asked for comments for or against the proposed rate increase. Julie King, Homer citizen, asked about the rates going up and then back down, wanting to make sure that she understood the rates. Bill Powell, representative from Georgia Rural Water, discussed the potential change in the existing water rates. They are trying to make it fair and equitable for all water users. He explained the new rate table which will be ERU (equivalent residential units) based. There will be a base charge for zero consumption for availability of the water to the property. This includes debt service. Money will be pulled from the reserve account for the first year so the new rates would not have to be raised so high. The first year will be getting the methodology adopted. The new rate structure will put the Town of Homer in compliance with the 2010 Water Stewardship Act. The base charge will be set up on an ERU or demand charge. The Water Stewardship Act was set up to help with water conservation. Mr. Powell stated that the water rates in Georgia will not generate conservation. The more someone has to pay for water the more they will think about water conservation. Mayor Cheek stated that this is the fairest way to increase rates for every water customer. Everyone pays based on demand. Ms. King stated that she wasn't opposed to the rate increase she just wants to make sure that she understands the rate table. Mr. Powell suggested implementing the rate increase before spring because water consumption goes up then and it will not be good for the rates to go up during that time also. James Dumas questioned the ERU table for a restaurant. Mr. Powell stated an ERU is equal to 300 gallons per day. He stated that is peak demand which is 2 ½ times the average demand. Mr. Powell asked the Mayor and council to make sure they understand the ordinance that needs to be approved. He stated that the rates can be adopted now and the ordinance can be adopted later. Mayor Cheek closed the public hearing at 6:25 p.m.

The regular meeting of the Mayor and Council was called to order by Mayor Doug Cheek.

Present were Jerry Payne, James Dumas, Sandra Garrison, Cliff Hill, David Dunson (by zoom) AND David Syfan, Attorney

The invocation was given by Jerry Payne.

The pledge to the flag was led by Mayor Doug Cheek.

The minutes of the last meeting were approved. (5-0)

OLD BUSINESS

- **Mayor/Council salaries**

Attorney, David Syfan, stated that they need a motion to approve the first adoption of the ordinance. Jerry Payne made the motion to adopt the mayor and council salary home rule ordinance for reading number one. Motion was seconded by James Dumas and approved. (4-0) Mayor will receive \$150.00 per meeting for the monthly work session and regular meeting. Council members will receive \$100.00 per meeting for the monthly work session and regular meeting. Members who attend outside meetings will receive \$50.00 per meeting up to 12 meetings per year. Any additional meetings that are attended will have to be approved by the Mayor and council, either before or after, in order to be compensated for those meetings.

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- **Water Rates**

James Dumas made the motion to approve the new water rates to begin in March. This will be the bills that are read in March and due April 15th. Motion was seconded by Cliff Hill and approved. (5-0)
Bill Powell will come and set up the ERU's after February bills are complete.

- **Well update Evans St.**

Willard Ausburn stated that the Evans Street well is up and running. Reported that the damages from the lightning strike are being repaired. The transmitter which makes it automatic will be here tomorrow.
Mayor Cheek discussed the test well which will be on the same property. After a survey was done, the proposed site for the test well is approximately 50 feet over the property line. The geologist will come back and locate another test well site.

- **Tank Removal**

Mayor Cheek discussed removal of the fuel tanks at the shop. Motion was made by James Dumas to proceed with the project and accept the quote from Point to Point Environmental in the amount of \$25,555.00 to remove two 10,000 gallon in ground storage tanks. Motion was seconded by Jerry Payne and approved. (4-0)

- **Resolution Face Coverings in property owned or leased**

Tabled

- **Ordinance use of mask or face covering in public during covid-19 outbreak**

Tabled

- **Scales Creek Road Safety**

Julie King discussed moving forward with finding out which grants would be available through Georgia DOT in order to work on Scales Creek Road and the intersection at Highway 51 and Scales Creek Road. She stated that Brad Day is working on a grant for this project. He is also working on getting an appointment with GDOT and Representative Chris Erwin to discuss what needs to be done in order to move forward with the project. She stated that when this was discussed at the work session the mayor and council were supportive of the grant once submitted and reviewed. Ms. King stated that she did not know anymore regarding grants at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Items for next SPLOST funding**

Mayor Cheek informed the council to be thinking about a list of what needs to be funded for the next 5 years. James Dumas suggested fire, water/wastewater. He stated that he feels that these should be a priority for the future. TSPLOST will cover the road needs if renewed. Mayor Cheek stated that a new shop is needed. This will be discussed further at the work session.

- **Second Modification on GEFA Loan**

Mr. Syfan stated that the engineer (Turnipseed) requested extending the time of the GEFA loan in order to see what other water infrastructure projects the town needs to do. GEFA has agreed to the loan extension. The second modification is to extend the timeline of the loan in order for Turnipseed to come up with

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ways to improve the water infrastructure in the town using the GEFA money. Mayor Cheek stated that they have to figure out how to service the loan. Mr. Dumas suggested asking Willard Ausburn to look at water lines and proceed with the engineering. Motion was made by Sandra Garrison to approve the resolution approving the second modification to the GEFA loan. Motion was seconded by Jerry Payne and approved. (4-0)

OTHER BUSINESS

• **Old Well – Mack Garrison**

Mr. Garrison asked if any decision has been made regarding the old well (Yonah Homer). Mayor Cheek stated that they will know more after they find out if they can do another test well. Mr. Garrison stated that he will not allow the well to be filled up. Mr. Syfan stated that there are state and federal requirements that need to be met so they may have no choice. Mr. Garrison suggested capping the well off instead of filling it with concrete. Mr. Syfan stated that they will have to go by what the state and federal requirements are to close the existing well.

No decisions were made.

Jerry Payne made the motion to go into closed session for litigation at 7:05 p.m. Motion was seconded by Cliff Hill and approved. (4-0)

Roll call: Mayor Cheek, Sandra Garrison, James Dumas, Cliff Hill, and Jerry Payne.

Regular meeting opened 7:36 p.m.

No action taken.

REPORTS

John Pittard, Homer resident, is interested in serving on the Downtown Development Authority Board. DDA will discuss at the next meeting.

Fire Chief, Cliff Hill, stated that the Banks County Health Department is still considering using the Homer Fire Department for COVID vaccinations.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Next work session March 2, 2021

Respectfully submitted by Tracey King, Assistant Clerk

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