

## City of Thomasville Council Meeting, November 8, 2021

The Council of the City of Thomasville met in a regular session with Mayor Greg Hobbs presiding and the following Councilmembers present: Mayor Pro Tem David Hufstetler and Councilmembers Jay Flowers, Todd Mobley and Wanda Warren. Also present were the City Manager, J. Alan Carson; City Attorney, Tim Sanders; and, other city staff. The meeting was held in Council Chambers at City Hall, located at 144 East, Jackson Street, Thomasville, Georgia.

This meeting was held in a manner that observed active Executive Orders and Health Advisories provided by Georgia Governor Kemp, Centers for Disease Control, Department of Health, and local health officials in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Seating was limited and additional safety measures were required such as, but not limited to, social distancing and the wearing of facial coverings, to ensure the health and safety of meeting participants and the citizens of Thomasville. Simultaneous access to the meeting was provided to those members of the press and citizens not present via the City of Thomasville's online live stream feed located at [www.thomasville.org](http://www.thomasville.org).

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Hobbs called the Council Meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

### **INVOCATION**

Councilmember Flowers gave the invocation.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Councilmember Flowers motioned to approve the October 25, 2021 City Council Meeting minutes as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler seconded. There was no further discussion. The motion passed 5-0, with the following votes recorded:

AYES: Mayor Hobbs, Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler and Councilmembers Flowers, Mobley and Warren.

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

Mayor Hobbs acknowledged the following Citizens to be Heard, as listed on the sign in sheet, and reminded those present to speak of the three-minute rule in which to address Council:

1. Lucinda Brown voiced her opinion that the African American communities of Thomasville are not receiving as many improvements or services as other areas in Thomasville. She also voiced concerns that in her opinion the preparations for the Park Assessment has reflected a low percentage of citizens living at or below the poverty level in Thomasville; she noted the percentage is actually much higher.
2. Candee Henderson requested Council to take action to adopt a resolution in support of a plan to move Thomasville and Thomas County to 100% renewable energy by 2035. She reviewed various ways to achieve this goal by reduce carbon emissions through the use of sustainable and alternative energy options.

### **ADOPT AGENDA**

Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler motioned to adopt the agenda as presented and with no exceptions. Councilmember Mobley seconded. There was no further discussion. The motion passed 5-0, with the following votes recorded:

AYES: Mayor Hobbs, Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler and Councilmembers Flowers, Mobley and Warren.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

There was no Old Business for Councilmembers to consider at this meeting.

## NEW BUSINESS

### **Resolution to accept FY2021 CBDG Grant Award and to Authorize Mayor Pro Tem to sign all necessary and related documents.**

Assistant City Manager, Chris White, reported the City of Thomasville has been awarded funding for its CBDG FY2021 application to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for funding under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended. The 2021 application is for water, sewer, and drainage infrastructure improvements in and around the Dewey City area for a grant in the amount of \$750,000 and a cash match of \$1,112,741.79, committed in the FY2022 Budget. The project will include road resurfacing after infrastructure improvements are complete. Mayor Hobbs publically declared a conflict of interest thereby recusing him of all discussion and action relating to the FY2021 CBDG process.

Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler motioned to approve the resolution as presented. Councilmember Flowers seconded. Councilmembers commended staff on their efforts in obtaining this grant. There was no further discussion. The motion passed 4-0, with the following votes recorded:

AYES: Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler and Councilmembers Flowers, Mobley and Warren.

ABSTAINED: Mayor Hobbs, due to conflict of interest.

The approved resolution follows.

### **Resolution**

A Resolution by the Council of the City of Thomasville, Georgia, to authorize acceptance of the FY 2021 Community Development Block Grant (CBDG) from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for funding under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended.

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Thomasville, Georgia, find that the program is necessary and desirable in order to improve the living conditions of low and moderate income persons living in the City of Thomasville, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Thomasville, Georgia, desire to accept the FY 2021 CBDG grant award from the Georgia DCA for funding under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended;

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Thomasville, Georgia, desires to commit funding in the FY2022 Budget in the amount of one million, one hundred thousand, seven hundred forty-one dollars and seventy-nine cents (\$1,112,741.79) to provide for the provision of the matching funds as a requirement of the CBDG Grant application; and,

WHEREAS, the Mayor of the City of Thomasville, Georgia, Greg Hobbs, declared a conflict of interest in relation to the FY 2021 CBDG Target Area, thereby being recused of all discussions and/or actions relating to the FY 2021 CBDG process; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Thomasville, Georgia, that:

The Mayor Pro Tem of the City of Thomasville, or his/her successor, is hereby authorized to accept the FY 2021 Community Development Block Grant and to sign such supporting and collateral material as shall be necessary.

Read, Approved and Adopted by the Council of the City of Thomasville, Georgia on a motion made by Mayor Pro Tem David Hufstetler, seconded by Councilmember Jay Flowers, and adopted on this 8th day of November, 2021.



**Motion to approve renewal of FY2022 Group Health Coverage Plan.**

Human Resources, Benefits and Wellness Manager, Tara Pearson, reported Council had requested to review the 2022 renewal information before making a final decision regarding the 2022 group health insurance coverage plan. The current group benefits and insurance broker, J. Smith Lanier/Marsh & McLennan published a request for proposal for the 2022 Group Health Plan renewal rates and presented the staff with the best renewal options. It was noted that upon approval of Council, employees would be notified immediately of the changes. The 2022 renewal recommendations were presented as follows.

Medical, Dental, and Vision:	Renew with Cigna- no change in administrative costs
Reinsurance:	Renew with Cigna- Increase limit from \$200k - \$225k and cost remains the same
Pharmacy:	Renew with RxBenefits - with additional projected savings
Life & Disability:	Renew with Lincoln Financial- no change in administrative costs
Supplemental Products:	Change to Lincoln Financial- with lower employee premiums

Councilmember Flowers motioned to approve the renewal of FY2022 Group Health Coverage Plan, as presented. Councilmember Warren seconded. There was no further discussion. The motion passed 5-0, with the following votes recorded:

AYES: Mayor Hobbs, Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler and Councilmembers Flowers, Mobley and Warren.

**Motion to approve Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) agreement and to authorize the Mayor to sign all necessary and related documents to execute the agreement.**

Director of Customer Service, Melissa Donaldson, reported The Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) has initiated a Low-Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) that will benefit citizens of Thomasville by providing monetary assistance with water charges. This program will function similar to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program that is currently in place to assist customers with electric and gas charges. The City of Thomasville is currently in an agreement with DFCS to provide low-income families with monetary assistance to pay for energy services, provided by the City of Thomasville. This program is called the Low-Income Home Energy Program (LIHEAP). The Neighborhood Service Center is the liaison that fields all applications, as well as the disbursement of funds from DFCS to the City of Thomasville. A new program has been created, Low-Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). This program will provide monetary assistance to low-income families to assist with payment for water services rendered by the City of Thomasville. This program will also be managed by the local Neighborhood Service Center. In 2019 and 2020, residents of the City of Thomasville received almost \$400,000/yr. in funding from the LIHEAP program. As of October 2021, we have received \$119,000. The program opened on November 1, 2021 and the program is expected to offer applicants \$500 instead of the normal \$400. They will also be awarding participates with an extra \$500 for the LIHEAP CARES program. This program has been a huge benefit to the Thomasville community. The LIHWAP program will only add to this benefit by offering residents more assistance towards their monthly utility statements. It was noted that residents wishing to apply for this program would contact the Neighborhood Service Center and that there are three phases of the LIHWAP program. Director Donaldson reviewed the requirements of each phase and noted they are detailed in the application.

Councilmember Warren motioned to approve the Low-Income Home Water Assistance Program Agreement between the City of Thomasville and Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services and to authorize the mayor to sign the agreement and related documents, as presented. Councilmember Mobley seconded. There was no further discussion. The motion passed 5-0, with the following votes recorded:

AYES: Mayor Hobbs, Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler and Councilmembers Flowers, Mobley and Warren.

**Bids and Award for the purchase of Municipal Auditorium Stage Counterweight Removal and Reinstallation with Counterweight Rope Replacement.**

Tourism and Event Venue Manager, Bonnie Hayes, reported The Municipal Auditorium stage floor is being replaced. To complete the project properly, the counterweight rigging system must be removed from the stage floor then reinstalled following the installation of the new flooring. The current counterweight rope is very old, and will not be

safe after the reinstallation and must be replaced. It was noted that time was of the essence with this project as several rental opportunities would be affected by completing the project in late February or March of 2022. A summary of bids received follows.

<u>BIDDER</u>	<u>BID AMOUNT</u>
S & L Integrated, Thomasville, Georgia	\$20,911.99 Uninstall/Reinstall \$10,648.76 Rope Replacement
Power Tech, Tallahassee, Florida	\$21,500.00 Uninstall/Reinstall \$11,500.00 Rope Replacement
ZIO Connects, Winter Park, Florida	\$23,395.01 Uninstall/Reinstall \$11,310.01 Rope Replacement

Councilmember Flowers motioned to award the bid for the purchase of Municipal Auditorium Stage Counterweight Removal and Reinstallation with Counterweight Rope Replacement to S & L Integrated, Thomasville, Georgia, as presented. Councilmember Warren seconded. There was no further discussion. The motion passed 5-0, with the following votes recorded:

AYES: Mayor Hobbs, Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler and Councilmembers Flowers, Mobley and Warren.

**Bids and award for the purchase of 2021 Laurel Hills Cemetery Paving.**

City Engineer, Todd Powell reported proposals for the Laurel Hill Cemetery Paving Project includes furnishing all labor and equipment to perform all work required to complete various street improvements that include roadway patching, spreading tack coats, resurfacing, paving, striping, and other necessary and appurtenant work on two roads, and the parking lot of the Laurel Hill Cemetery. The two roads within the cemetery include both 13th Street and Main Street. This project was sent to five local contractors for quotes within three weeks. Work is to be completed within 30 consecutive calendar days of the Notice to Proceed. A summary of bids received follows.

<u>BIDDER</u>	<u>BID AMOUNT</u>
H & H Paving, Quitman, Georgia	\$49,702.00
Green's Backhoe, Inc., Thomasville, Georgia	\$89,899.85
Scoggins Dozer, Thomasville, Georgia	\$69,719.00
CMI, Inc., Cairo, Georgia	\$57,210.85

Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler motioned to award the bid for the purchase of 2021 Laurel Hills Cemetery Paving to H & H Paving of Quitman, Georgia, as presented. Councilmember Mobley seconded. There was no further discussion. The motion passed 5-0, with the following votes recorded:

AYES: Mayor Hobbs, Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler and Councilmembers Flowers, Mobley and Warren.

**Consideration of Settlement Agreement with Howell Ferguson, Geoffrey Young, and Kevin Fuchs regarding Civil Action No. 18-CV-0835 and authorization of a Councilmember to execute the Settlement Agreement on behalf of the City.**

Mayor Hobbs and Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler declared conflicts of interests as being named in the Civil Action suit, thereby recusing themselves from the discussion and vote on this matter. Councilmember Flowers assumed the position of Chairman and presided over this portion of the meeting. City Attorney Sanders reviewed the revised document distributed to Councilmembers Flowers, Mobley and Warren in advance of this meeting. It was noted the settlement agreement provides for: 1) City of Thomasville's acknowledgment that all documents responsive to the Open Records Requests related to this lawsuit were not produced or timely produced; 2) the establishment of a new Open Records Policy for the City of Thomasville; and, 3) provide payment by the City of Thomasville to the Plaintiffs in the amount of \$110,000. Providing the City of Thomasville agrees to the settlement as presented; the Plaintiffs would release the City of Thomasville, Mayor Hobbs and Councilman Hufstetler and any former, present, and future affiliated and subsidiary connections as listed in the agreement, of and from any and all past, present and future claims, debts, demands, damages, and actions as listed in the agreement. Attorney Sanders reported the deadline for this agreement to be accepted and approved in a public meeting is no later than November 8, 2021.



Councilmember Flowers motioned to approve the settlement agreement as presented and to authorize Councilmember Flowers to sign the agreement on behalf of the City of Thomasville. Councilmember Mobley Seconded. Councilmember Flowers reported that due to the declared conflicts of interest of Mayor Hobbs and Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler, the passage of this motion requires the affirmative vote of the remaining three Councilmembers (Flowers, Mobley and Warren) as a majority of Council. There was no further discussion. The motion failed to pass 2-1, with the following votes recorded:

AYES: Councilmembers Flowers and Mobley.

NAY: Councilmember Warren.

ABSTAINED: Mayor Hobbs and Mayor Pro Tem Hufstetler, due to conflict of interest.

It shall be noted that Mayor Hobbs presided over the remainder of the meeting at this point.

### **REPORTS**

City Manager Carson encouraged Council to join him and staff in congratulating City Clerk Brannen for becoming a "MeeMaw" with the upcoming birth of her first grandchild.

Councilmembers collectively encouraged the Thomasville community in thanking all Veterans for their service to our nation and for the freedoms provided to citizens by their service.

Mayor Hobbs congratulated Candidate Elect Scott Chastain and Candidate Elect Terry Scott on their recent elections as members of the Council for the City of Thomasville.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Having no further business to discuss, the Thomasville City Council Meeting was adjourned at 6:25 PM.

  
Mayor, Greg Hobbs

  
ATTEST: City Clerk

