

REGULAR MEETING – CAIRO MAYOR & COUNCIL – JANUARY 22, 2024

The January 22, 2024, Regular Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers with Mayor Booker T. Gainor, IV presiding. Present were Councilmembers James H. Douglas, Timothy Gurley, Annette Higdon, and Charles Renaud. Councilman Demario Bryden was absent from the meeting. Staff Members in attendance were City Manager Julian Brown, City Clerk Dana W. Barfield, and City Attorney Tom Lehman. Cairo Messenger Editor Randy Wind was also in attendance.

INVOCATION: The Invocation was given by Mayor Booker T. Gainor, IV.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Motion to approve the agenda was made by Councilman Douglas, seconded by Councilwoman Higdon, and passed unanimously by all Council Members present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Regular Meeting – January 8, 2023. Motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilman Douglas, seconded by Councilwoman Higdon, and unanimously approved by all Council Members present.

DELEGATIONS:

SPECIAL EVENTS:

OLD BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

Consider FY2022-2023 Audit Presented by Nick Valenti of Valenti, Rackley & Associates, LLC. Mr. Valenti of 208 West Park Avenue, Valdosta, GA stated that he and his firm had just completed the city's audit for the budget that ended on June 30, 2023. Mr. Valenti explained that his firm conducted their audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States and standards that were applicable to financial audits contained in Governmental Auditing Standards. He went on to say that their responsibilities under those standards are described in the Auditor's Responsibilities For the Audit of the Financial Statements section of their report. He said that in their opinion, the financial statements present fairly in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities, the business-type activities, each major fund, the discretely presented component unit, and the aggregated remaining fund information of the City, as of June 30, 2023, and the respective changes in financial position, and, where applicable, cash flows thereof for the year then ended accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States. Mr. Valenti finished by stating that their obligation was also to express their opinion and financial findings of what violations were found such as:

- 2023-001 Accounting duties should be segregated between employees so that the responsibility for authorizing transactions, recording transactions, and maintaining custody of assets are assigned to different personnel, thereby strengthening internal controls.

This is due to certain accounting duties not being segregated such as authorization of disbursements and recording in general ledger, bank reconciliation preparations and recording in general ledger, deposit preparation and recording in general ledger. Due to the size of the City and budget constraints, it has not been financially feasible to hire sufficient staff to provide for optimum segregation of duties, a lot of small governments have this issue.

- 2023-002 A clear audit trail facilitates the timely detection of errors and fraud.

Interfund transfers are being recorded periodically as aggregated amounts when bank balances in the general ledger are adjusted to agree with amounts per bank reconciliations, as opposed to recording them on a transaction-by-transaction basis.

- 2023-003 Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) funds are restricted to transportation-related capital outlay expenditures.

At the year end for June 30, 2023, TSPLOST funds in the amount of \$428,968.82 were advanced to the Airport Fund for the purpose of funding certain capital project costs pending receipt of grants proceeds related to these costs. As of June 30, 2023, the funds had not yet been returned to the TSPLOST Fund (However, the entire amount was returned to the TSPLOST fund prior to the date of issuance of these financial statements).

- 2023-004 New Rules in the Uniform Guidance, Which Contains rules pertaining to federal awards, require that procurement policies be written and contain stipulated elements.

New rules in the Uniform Guidance, which contains rules pertaining to federal awards, require that procurement policies be written and contain stipulated elements. The City's procurement policies and

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procedures covering expenditures of federal awards are adequate and have been followed. However, procurement policies covering all of the Uniform Guidance requirements must now be in writing.

Mr. Valenti closed by adding that the audit was something they would like to happen in December and had spoken with Finance Director Faircloth about making this possible, however, he was aware that this was not the easiest task because the City did not have the easiest set of books to process, but that it was important for it to be completed by the end of January. Motion to approve the FY2022-2023 Audit was made by Councilman Douglas, seconded by Councilman Renaud, and unanimously approved by all Council Members present.

Consider Application for New Alcoholic Beverage License – Family Dollar #20422 – Beer and Wine Retail, 131 MLK Avenue SW – Tarnesha Lashae Herring – Applicant. Motion to approve the Alcohol License for Family Dollar was made by Councilman Douglas, seconded by Councilman Gurley, and unanimously approved by all Council Members present.

Consider Updates to the Grady Cultural Center Contract. City Manager Brown explained that he had spoken with Mainstreet Director Shelly Searcy, and she had some suggestions for updates to the Grady Cultural Contract. She is requesting you to change the hours of operations on Sunday - Thursday to 11:00 pm with everyone cleared out by midnight and on Friday and Saturday to midnight with everyone out by 1:00 am. She also would like to give the renters the option of having a cleaning fee taken out of their security deposit. This would allow renters to have a private company hired by the city to come in and clean the facility, however, this would need to be planned a month in advanced in order to schedule Newmon's All Pro or they could hire whoever they would like to come in and clean. This would be optional so the renter could choose to clean the facility themselves and receive their full deposit back. City Manager Brown ended by saying that it was also discussed about adding a holiday pay. Mainstreet Director Searcy said it was more of a Holiday rate, where she then explained that most event venues charge holiday rates for federal holidays. She said that we had quite a few people that request to rent the center on Thanksgiving, New Years Eve, Christmas, etc. and that means that when we do that if something happens, or our staff has to go out then our they have to be paid at a holiday rate or time and a half. Therefore, we need to recover that cost and that is why we came up with the cost of \$250 for those days. Mayor Gainor asked what staff would we have to send out on the holidays. City Manager Brown answered that if we had to call the water crew out or possibly Mills Heating and Air, they would be charging a holiday rate. Councilwoman Higdon asked why the renter would be responsible for covering that cost if it was a problem with the Cultural Center. She said she felt that if there was a problem with the maintenance of the building it should not be charged to the renter. Mainstreet Director Searcy said there were also instances where employees had to meet renters at the building to do walk throughs with the building or dropping off the key. Mayor Gainor asked if we could put in a key box with a pin pad with code so that renters could pick up a key that way, rather than someone having to meet the renter at the building. Director Searcy said that she did not agree with that because this venue was mainly rented for weddings, banquets, and quinceañeras, that was their biggest bookings. Most wedding venues you have someone on site that is going to help you and walk you through the entire site. For us to just put a key out in a key box, she said she felt we were inviting people to come in and vandalize the property. Mayor Gainor then asked about the change in event hours for Friday and Saturday, stating that when they rent the building they are usually renting for the whole weekend and felt the hours should be left as they were because they have the building the next day as well. Director Searcy said the event hour change she and Chief Santos had discussed and a lot of the problems that happen at the cultural center happen after 1:00 am and people wanting to keep the police officers longer than what the paid for them. Therefore, to cut back on the drunkenness and having the police officers have to ask the renters how much longer they will be at the venue or asking them to leave. This will make it a little safer, it is a city building, whereas most City owned venues do not stay open until 2:00 am and other venues close at 12:00 am. She went on to add that ultimately it was the council's decision, but she had been doing the bookings for the cultural center for three years and most of the problems had happened after 1:00 am. Mayor Gainor asked if it was possible to put a calendar online of the bookings for the cultural center. Director Searcy said that we would have to look into to it but that it was possible with an upcharge for the website. Councilman Renaud asked if we could look at updating the acoustics in the building and putting funds aside to possibly put bullets speakers and a couple of screens in that it would greatly enhance the entire facility. Director Searcy said that was something that she planned to focus more on in the future for the center and any other recommendations the council would like to give she would be glad to hear. She added that they would be receiving some donated furniture in the near future for the bride and groom rooms and there were some other updates that were planned for those rooms. Councilman Renaud asked if the back of the center was still being rented, Director Searcy responded yes. Councilwoman Higdon stated that we probably could make more with the building if we had use of that area. Mayor Gainor then asked if we had a contract for the rental of that area, Director Searcy responded that it was just a month-to-month agreement. Councilman Douglas said based on the discuss he made a motion to defer the holiday rate of \$250, but approve the change in the facility hours and giving renters the ability to take the cleaning fee out of their deposit if they choose to do so, seconded by Councilman Renaud, and unanimously approved by all Council Members present.

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Consider FY2022 CDBG Contract Award. City Manager Brown explained that there was a bid opening on January 18th for the FY 2022 CDBG Sewer Rehab Project. He, Public Works Director Darin Todd, and representatives from Watkins and Associates attended the bid opening. The city received a \$1,000,000 community block grant for this project and the city's match is \$115,000. He went on to say that the city received two bids, one from Southeast Pipe Survey Inc. in the amount of \$1,361,994.63 and the second was from Inliner Solutions for \$1,999,999.00. It was his recommendation to award the contract to the low bidder, Southeast Pipe Survey Inc. in the amount of \$1,361,994.63 and authorize the mayor to sign the agreement for the FY2022 CDBG Sewer Rehab Project. Motion to approve the FY2022 CDBG Sewer Rehab Project to Southeast Pipe Survey Inc. in the amount of \$1,361,994.63 was made by Councilman Gurley, seconded by Councilwoman Higdon, and unanimously approved by all Council Members present.

REPORTS:

REPORTS FROM CITY MANAGER:

- The GMA City Summit will be this weekend in Atlanta, GA.
- The Cairo Fire Department hired the first ever female firefighter, Kistal Addison.

REPORTS FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL:

- Councilman Renaud stated that last Monday the MLK Collaboration Program went fine, but the event that happened afterwards was not, nor was the morning after. He said he drove through the event to see for himself what was going on and the morning after there was trash everywhere. He went on to say that the more he talked with people in the community he had learned that most of the people at the evening event that was out of hand were people from out of town that were causing the issues. He felt that next year the MLK Collaborative should be able to do their program as usual and once it was over shut the park down. He said if this continued to happen there were going to be lawyers involved and people were going to get hurt. He asked if there was some sort of economic benefit from having this big of a group that he was missing.
- Councilman Gurley added that he was also at the event on Monday celebrating MLK Day and most of the people there were from out of town. He said that we have to make it so that we can all celebrate. He said that he did not have a problem with where he was located, but there were some things going on in other areas that needed attention. He went on to say that we as a city did not want to be known for this and did not want our police to look like they do not police. He added that we needed to come together and have a better strategy for next year.
- Councilman Gurley said on 10th Avenue SE with there being a lot of rain the road was washing out at the end.
- Councilwoman Higdon said on 5th Avenue NW and 4th Terrace NW the road looked like it was closed but needs extreme repairs from where the rain has washed it out.
- Councilwoman Higdon added that MLK Day went extremely well during the day. She said she felt what needed to be done was have more of a police presence, once the police left that evening the door was open for everyone to come and do whatever. The police are going to have to be there to disperse the crowd, if we do not want them past a certain time the police are going to have to disperse them because they are going to stay and party because that is what they have been doing for quite a while. She went on to say that Cairo as a whole gets the bad wrap, but it is out of town people coming in and she felt the out of towners took the rest of the event over after 6:00 pm.
- Chief Santos said there were two different ways the police department could respond to the event, proactively or reactively. The Juneteenth celebration last year the police department reacted proactively. We had officers where we knew we had issues, and we had no problems whatsoever. Chief Santos went on to say that after Juneteenth the event was brought up at a council meeting and he was not going to say the police department was accused of being heavy handed, but it was mentioned that the public did not feel comfortable going down there because the police were there and kept everyone away. The only way to get this done is for the council to reach a consensus on what they are willing to back the police department in doing. He went on to say that they could have handled the situation Monday night, but they were not going to be the ones getting the calls the council were. The council and city were the ones that were going to be taking the heat. He said that one thing that could be done was that once the event was over that afternoon suspend all parking on MLK Avenue; the people that do not live in the area do not have anywhere to park or nowhere to get out. The night of the event we only had four officers and then we had a shift rotation in the middle of the event and once officers returned to the event people had taken advantage of that. Councilwoman Higdon asked about getting state troopers to come in and help with the events. Chief Santos said we may be able to get one or two but usually the larger jurisdictions have access to the troopers. However, he did agree that it would be a

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benefit, he felt that being proactive would go a long way. Councilwoman Higdon said she understood there would be pushback, but it was safety over pushback. Chief Santos said that there would have to be a consensus amongst everybody because if MLK Avenue was shut down there were going to be complaints.

- Mayor Gainor thanked the CPD, Grady County SO, and the Grady County Resource Officers for their help with MLK Day. He went on to explain that when he was a kid, he would present in the 4-H show and it was always on MLK Day, so when it was over, they would go down to Holder Park afterwards in the evening because that was the only time they could get down there to really celebrate. He said he felt that there was a solution to the issue, but everyone needed to work together in order to find what that solution was.

ADJOURN: There being no further business, a motion was made at 7:23 pm by Councilman Douglas and seconded by Councilman Renaud to adjourn the meeting.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

BOOKER T. GAINOR, IV

DANA W. BARFIELD, CITY CLERK