CITY OF OGLETHORPE

OGLETHORPE CITY HALL

115 CHATHAM STREET

**EMERGENCY CALLED** COUNCIL MEETING

APRIL 29, 2022 5:30PM

Call to order 5:33PM by Mayor Hill

Council in attendance: Leisa Cross, Jill Harrison, Tommy Coogle, Michael Mahone, and Jimmy

Daniels

Business: Appoint an Interim Chief Of Police – The Mayor said if we don’t have an interim chief appointed by Monday we could be the ones at fault. CM Cross – They will close the police department. Mayor Hill – I don’t have a preference, but Leisa may have one. CM Cross – Let me bring everyone up to date on what’s going on. We all know that Chief Taylor resigned effective Monday and Marquis came in about 7:30PM last night (was due to be on duty at 7:00PM last night) and handed in his resignation to me. He came in asking for your Mayor Hill, but you weren’t here. So, I called Chief Finch and he called in an extra officer to cover us last night. We had one 911 call called in on Bivins street and he handled it. Officer Michael (Thomas) was due to be on duty at 7AM this morning and I called him at 8:30AM to make sure he was on duty and I woke him up. He was not on duty so we did not have an officer on duty. I asked him if he was coming in. He said no that he had given Chief Taylor his resignation as well. I asked if he was working this weekend? He said no. I said so are you resigning? He said yes, I have already given my resignation to Chief Taylor. I said ok so when are you turning your stuff in and he said Monday. Chief Taylor, Officer Sandifer, and Officer Thomas are all supposed to be turning their stuff in on Monday. So that leaves us with three part time officers. Keith Everett who works Montezuma full time. Earl Waller out of Twiggs Co. He is a campus safety police. And then Nicole Murillo who is a part time officer with us as well. Earl is the one who called yesterday during the meeting and wanting us to know that he was not resigning. When I get home after the meeting Thursday night I called him back and he said he would work every night 6pm-6am except Monday night because he works in Marshallville. He did tell me we had to appoint a chief by Monday when the Chief leaves or you can be shut down. Then Nicole told me the same thing. She can only do days because she is a single mother. She said she would do 6am to 6pm. She had already talked with Jimmy and myself about the duty belt and Melissa gave her a po number to go buy the duty belt and a uniform in Forsyth. This leaves them covering days and nights. Finch said when we are not covered, he will back us up. So basically, talking about interim…. Earl said he would take the title only, but did not want to be chief on a permanent basis and did not want extra pay. He just wants to keep the department going. Nicole said if you need an interim that she had had all of her classes. Earl is already a chief and he’s had all the classes. She has a degree. Anyway, I don’t know much more than that. If she needed to Interim she was interested. She’s also interested in chief one day. But she can only do days. Keith Everett, I haven’t even talked to because we only catch him occasionally. I did talk to Chief Finch and he said that if we needed our two officers to report to him on a temporary basis, they might could come up with some type of agreement for that as well, but they would have to go through council to have it approved. The other thing I kind of remembered is that Mickey Barfield is retired and that he had the experience. I didn’t know if he would even be interested, but I called him and advised that Anthony had resigned so that leaves us with 3 full time officers gone now, we have two now. Finch is covering when needed. I asked if he would be interested in part time or full time? He said he had to think about it and call me back. He did call me back and said that he would be interested in the challenge as Interim and get things cleaned up. We don’t have all the SOP’s and get some officers hired. He did make the offer to come in and help until we get things situated. He said he didn’t know what we were paying Anthony, but he would accept the same pay and i’ll come in and help. His son is having surgery this summer and he would need a few days to go up there to Kentucky. This is the options that I’ve come up with, so hoping you all have some. Mayor Hill – I haven’t come up with any options, but I do know that Mickey Barfield is sharp. He’s been in the business a very long time. He’s also very honest. I’ve known him all my life. CM Coogle – I agree we need to hire an Interim and then merge with Montezuma. Mayor Hill- I agree, but now is not the time for that. We just need an Interim. CM Coogle – We can just contract Montezuma. CM Cross – with the red cross we use a lot of contractors with us and the one thing I can say is that sometimes you lose your span of control. It’s definitely something we need to investigate. Chief Finch did ask me what our budget was how much we were spending because I guess they’re like give me the money, we’ll take it if you give me your budget. But we’re not to that point. We’re just trying to get through right now. CM Coogle - Some of us are going to have to sit down and look at what we’re spending and what we can pay. And maybe save a little money. It’s really not going to cost too much. Maybe an officer. They already have everything in place. CM Mahone – But right now we have to have somebody in that spot. Nicole can only work days? CM Cross – yes and Earl can only work nights. CM Mahone – He’s the one that reached out? CM Cross – yes. We can work something out with Montezuma on a temporary basis. To be quite honest I am not quite ready to go there with them yet. CM Daniels – We just need to appoint an Interim for now. Then we can start working on getting more officers. The interim could even help negotiate that. CM Cross – If we had some officers if there ever was a merger, it could be part of the plan. CM Cross – Earl is a Chief of a School. Resource Chief. He’s only available to us at night. CM Coogle – The logical thing is Mickey. I mean he’s here, he lives here. CM Cross – He lives in Montezuma. CM Daniels – Just say we do go with Mickey and the time comes up for hiring. Are we looking at hiring him, or is he just here to help. CM Cross – he said he would help us get more officers hired because we will need them. He will get the SOP’s written. When Nicole went to try to find stuff, she sent me pics and asked what is she supposed to do with it… I don’t know. I’m not saying there was any wrong doing at all, but I don’t know what to say. Mayor Hill – I think Cindy has done a great job. CM Cross – That’s another thing, Cindy will be going out for a surgery May 25th. I don’t know how long she will need to be out. She could be out just two weeks if done one way, but six if the other way. Mayor – Well for now we need to get an Interim appointed before Monday. CM Coogle – We have one that can only work days and only one that can only work nights. CM Mahone – How long would this individual hold the interim position? CM Cross – Until we can find a replacement. CM Coogle – Hopefully it will be short term. CM Cross – yes, Anthony was interim for 6 months. It could be a month, six, a year. Until we have other options. CM Daniels – Can we agree that whoever our interim is that they cannot apply for the chief job. CM Cross – we can. CM Daniels – the last time well. CM Cross – We can put that in as a stipulation and if we want to change that later, we could. I don’t think that he would want to be more than short term. I think Mickey is just trying to help us out and he has some other health issues as he has told us. He is retired and so is his wife. CM Daniels – It’s just a thought. CM Cross – We can do anything we want. If he wanted it, he would have applied last time we were hiring. I think they are ready for retirement. CM Harrison – Since this has to be such a quick turn around, can another interim chief be identified after we identify this one? CM Cross – I don’t think that would be nice… good business. CM Coogle – I feel like if we do something for a month, leave it. I don’t think it will be for that long. CM Mahone – I’m agreeing with what he’s saying. Ultimate goal is to look at the pros and cons. We can look at Montezuma or what we have with availability. Whoever is put in that position is going to need to be available at all times. Have to make sure that post is current and paperwork all up to date. CM Cross – I know that Mickey’s is. CM Mahone – The interim is going to be considered part time anyway. CM Cross – Temporary CM Mahone – because ultimate objective is to merge anyway. CM Coogle – I think that’s a win-win for both cities. CM Coogle – Tommy mentioned it to me Tuesday and when I talked with Finch, I said that I knew it had been talked about before and it may be talked about it again. I will say they have been awesome covering for us. Otherwise that 911 call last night, would have gone unanswered. I am thankful for that. CM Coogle – It’s just the smart thing to do, there’s no negative. We have some equipment they can use. CM Cross – Yes they don’t have a tag reader. I can get Mickey on the phone if ya’ll want to talk to him. Mayor Hill – I’ve seen his demeanor and this and that – even at council meetings. Remember when he was here and talking to us about the job. This way you wouldn’t be using one of our part time officers too much. Pulling them in too many different directions. CM Harrison – I think logistically our officers are right here. I’m not on board Tommy with consolidation. I don’t think we’re there yet. For short term it does make the most sense. They have the staff to cover us. I’m onboard for short term. CM Coogle – This is what has happened to the county in the last few years. The county only has 2 deputy sheriff’s to cover the whole county. We’re sitting here next to Montezuma who has 10-12 officers, I think they’re all deputized. CM Cross – They are and our officers are, too. CM Coogle – They are? But anyway. CM Daniels – So we have to (inaudible). Dot our “I”s and cross our “T”s. CM Cross – that’s why I want to buy us some time with an interim so that we can ensure that. So nothing’s cloudy. It’s easier to keep a line until we are ready to blend the paint. Mayor Hill – Even with this interim chief, we are going to do the MOU (Memo of Understanding). CM Cross – yes Montezuma is preparing it and I’ve already given it verbally over the phone. They are going to call for us to sign. CM Coogle – I think both police dept’s should have one. CM Cross – They did one with the Fire Dept I think, but I don’t know if it was ever signed. So that we could help each other. Even at the school they came over and helped yesterday. CM Harrison – so what I would like to do is go with Montezuma on a short time basis and then look for an interim. CM Cross – that’s the opposite of what I would like to see. I know that they are going to want money for it and I don’t know how much they are going to ask for. CM Coogle – What I’m saying does that satisfy what we are going to need to do. CM Cross – Finch thought it would, that’s why I wrote that the two officers would report to him, but they would have to get some paperwork done. That’s why I thought about Mickey to buy us some time to make sure things are in order. CM Coogle – Potentially join forces with them. I know you don’t like it, but it makes the most sense. We are a small town and we can’t afford a Chief of Police. I’m sure we would come out better. CM Cross – We just have to get through now. We can work on that next. CM Daniels – interim short term? Join together long term? CM Harrison – Is that what you want? Is that what you are in agreement with? CM Cross – I’m in agreement to investigate it. CM Daniels – We can take a look at it. But I want to see the paperwork. If Finch is running it, does the fine print on the paperwork show they report to him, time clock, etc. (inaudible) CM Cross – the only thing is the span of control. Despite there only being the river separating us, there is a big difference between Montezuma and Oglethorpe. CM Harrison – I agree. So if they report to him, they are patrolling only Oglethorpe? CM Cross – No, they would patrol everywhere. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. We are only trying to get an interim for now. We can discuss the other later. CM Harrison – That’s what I was saying. So if we go with the interim Montezuma, would the short term be that Chief Finch would be the interim? CM Cross – yes, out two officers would report to him. CM Harrison – but then our officers would patrol everywhere? CM Mahone – No, they would report to him but cover Oglethorpe only. CM Cross – Anthony said that Montezuma was divided into zones and each officer patrols a zone. CM Mahone – right. We only have one night and one day person. CM Cross – Long term would be one department if we went that route. I worry that if we don’t end up getting an agreement for interim, then we are going to get further behind. CM Daniels – If we appt whoever and they work on getting the city SOP’s together then it’s just a waste of time if we combine. CM Cross – We still have to have SOP’s until we make the decision. Supposedly Cindy has most of them done. CM Harrison – yes, I believe they do so that wouldn’t be a big deal. CM Cross – Someone needs to make a motion for interim. We have Murillo, Waller, or Barfield. CM Mahone – Question, who said we have to have an interim immediately? CM Cross – I did check. Finch and Barfield told me. We have to have a supervisor who is an administrator. I thought shoot can it be Melissa? (laughing) CM Harrison – Did you ask Jon? What did he say? (inaudible) CM Cross – You have to name someone and they have to be a certified police officer and an administrator. CM Harrison – I know Ms. Cindy doesn’t feel good, but could you ask her where we are with the SOP’s? CM Cross – she said that they were on her computer and they were close. CM Coogle – What’s an SOP? CM Cross & Harrison – Standard Operation Procedures. CM Cross – what that means is that they turn their body camera’s on, when to cut them off, when they can shoot, etc. CM Coogle – Let me say one more thing, we need to make sure that we get all of the stuff back from the officers that left. CM Cross – yes that’s part of the interims job, but Cindy has already talked with all of them. She has the check off sheet and she feels very comfortable taking care of that. She doesn’t feel threatened like she did with Rachael. She feels positive about handling it all. CM Harrison – It’s four returning stuff? CM Cross – Three. Keith is a Montezuma full time officer and helps us on occasion. I don’t have a preference of interim as far as the three we have spoken about. Just the availability. CM Coogle – so what is the general feeling? CM Harrison – I’m leaning towards Earl. CM Cross – I’m leaning towards Barfield. Mayor Hill- is there a motion. CM Coogle – I make the motion that we use Finch for the time being to see how it goes. MC Daniels – If we choose Finch, is he going to be over both departments at the same time. The Montezuma Council would have to agree to let him. CM Coogle – Can they do it by Monday? CM Harrison – so we have a motion on the floor. CM Coogle – We have to appoint someone. (inaudible) CM Cross – I can call Finch and we can all talk to him together. He said he was going to send me an agreement, but I have not received it. How about I call him then? He was working on it. CM Coogle – I don’t have any racism in me, but (inaudible).

Finch on the phone with the city council – CM Cross – Were you able to get Monetzuma City Council to agree to let you be our interim in Oglethorpe? Finch – they said they wanted to see what ya’ll came up with tonight in your meeting. I gave CM Hobbs your phone number so that he could get in touch with ya’ll to see what your plans are before we move forward. CM Cross – Do we have to appoint someone by Monday, otherwise they can close us down? Finch – I ain’t going to say they are going to close you down, but you are going to have to name someone as the interim if you are going to operate without a chief of police. CM Cross – Monday is his last day. Finch – I recommend you contact first thing Monday morning the Ga Chief of Police and talk to the executive director and he can give you guidance. For whatever you have you are going to have to have somebody that’s in charge. You can be the supervisor is you want, I can if my council approves it. CM Cross – I thought they had to be a certified officer. Finch – You just need somebody that can make the executive decisions of what’s going on. You can talk to the GA Chief’s Association and they will pretty much tell you that. The thing about it is - is that whatever you need for us to do, we are going to do it. I patrolled the city today during the day just to make sure everything is good over there. At night, I’m bringing in assistance for over there also. We took care of the one call ya’ll had over there last night. Mayor Hill – can you be an interim chief for the city of Oglethorpe? Finch – You will have to reach out to Montezuma council to ask? They make that decision. CM Cross – Any other questions? (none) Finch – I can forward my resume and qualifications if needed. CM Cross – We know that you are very well qualified, so not worried about that. Finch – I have already researched other cities that have consolidated. Mel will need to look at budget and everything. Already burning the oil to make things work. CM Cross – Thank you. (Call over)

CM Mahone – We have to reach out to their council Monday. CM Cross – Michael could you be the interim and we have our two officers working. If they hit a problem, they could call you. We could let these two work and Finch would still back us up. It would give us a non-bias. It would be no pay. CM Harrison – He wouldn’t have to step down? CM Cross – no because it’s unpaid, just volunteering. CM Mahone – I can’t. I suggest just reaching out to Montezuma leadership to use Finch as interim. The goal is to possibly merge. That would be the best thing. At this point now…… he’s doing it anyway. But we have to get permission from their council. CM Harrison – but if we choose not to merge, will his perception be negative on his part. I don’t want any issues, but I’ve already put it out there that I don’t agree with merging. CM Daniels – What issues would there be? CM Harrison – We’re saying there’s a possibility of long term a merge, but he knows this is just temporary for now. We are just need temporary. We’re doing this to make the situation seamless, although it’s an emergency situation. That’s what I’m saying. We have less than 48 hours in and he’s already doing it. We are exploring all of the options. If we need to get him back on the phone just to say – do you understand that this is just temporary? CM Coogle – he’s already doing it. CM Cross – Can we have a back up in case they can’t vote on it Monday? I don’t care who, but have something in place so we don’t have to have another emergency meeting. CM Harrison – The reason I said Earl is because he is already in a chief position even though it’s a school situation. CM Daniels – Could they be CO-Chief Interims since their schedules are like they are? Back each other up? CM Cross – I won’t know until I call the GA Police Chief’s Association on Monday. I just don’t want to keep having meetings. I’ll be honest, my other job has suffered with all that we’ve had going on this past week. CM Daniels – I can’t do it with my job either. CM Cross – We can appoint Bruce… Mayor – shaking head no. CM Cross – Tommy? Jill? (Both said nope). Why can’t we appoint Melissa on paper until we can get this worked out? If she has an issue, she can call Finch. CM Harrison – I say Nicole, she’s on days. Do the scheduling, do the paperwork. She has Cindy with her. CM Cross – Just a band-aid. CM Harrison – I said Earl because he doesn’t want the position, he just wants to keep the department going. CM Cross – If we have to appoint Nicole, she will need to understand that there isn’t more money. CM Harrison – I don’t want to build up her hopes because she has already said she might want to be chief. That worry’s me. Earl said he doesn’t want the job permanently and doesn’t want more money. CM Cross – and I’ll tell her we are looking at consolidation. Honestly, she does a lot of FB posts and I’ve already told her it needs to stop. CM Daniels – Go with Earl since he’s already mentioned he doesn’t want it full time. CM Cross – Then you might not end up with someone on shift, but you never know. This is just bull crap. CM Harrison – This is really basically scheduling right? CM Cross – There’s no one to schedule. One is on days and the other is on nights. Cindy does the actual scheduling. CM Harrison – It’s just really a title. We’re in a pinch anyway and Finch has us covered. CM Cross – Melissa if we gave you a little bit of extra money or a bonus could you temporarily be an interim supervisor for the police dept just with scheduling? And if they had an issue all you had to do was pick up the phone and call Finch in Montezuma? Melissa – I would just have to make sure someone is scheduled? CM Cross – And Cindy already does that. You would just call Finch when we didn’t have someone on shift here until we can figure out our next step. We have to do something by Monday. Would you be willing to do that? Melissa – yes. CM Cross – How much more money would you want? CM Melissa – I will do what you need me to do for now to keep Oglethorpe open. CM Harrison – We are just exploring options for now. So I’m totally grateful that Melissa would step up to do it, but I think for optics from constinuents looking at stuff, that we have the clerk deemed as the interim police chief? CM Cross – She would be the interim supervisor. She would be the interim acting agent. CM Mahone – The other officer Earl know what’s going on right? CM Cross – yes and I’m ok with that. He’s the one that called and said that the chief called him and said that all of them were quitting, but he wanted us to know that he was not walking out. CM Mahone – (inaudible).

CM Cross – I will make the motion. CM Daniels – If he asks for more money? CM Coogle – This won’t be long term. CM Mahone – He’s just not wanting to lose the money he’s making now. That takes a lot of nerve to call in and advise that his supervisor called him. CM Cross - You making the motion CM Mahone? CM Mahone – That’s the motion. CM Daniels – I 2nd.

This is a contingency if we cannot get Monetzuma’s council to agree on Monday. CM Harrison – Do we want to do that? CM Cross – That’s Mr. Mahone’s motion. Doesn’t mean it will pass. CM Harrison – Can we discuss? CM Cross – yes. CM Harrison – Since Montezuma is doing everything to back us up already, do we want to go through that convaluded process of waiting to see if they have to call an emergency meeting and going through all that? Couldn’t we just make Earl the interim temporarily and then we don’t have the added stress of the other steps. CM Daniels – so you’re saying to make Earl interim, he reports to Chief Finch CM Cross – He wouldn’t report to Finch. CM Harrison -Go in overdrive to find officers… CM Cross – the question to that is how could this interim only him and Nicole can hold out for so long working 12 hour shifts, 7 days a week. CM Harrison – That’s what I was saying that we would have to go into overdrive to identify more officers. CM Cross – I hear you and I identify with what you’ve said with Earl and his integrity, but how can he interview people during the day when he’s in Twiggs County? CM Harrison – That’s where we would have to step up to help. You as the lead on the committee. CM Daniels – I would help you. CM Cross – And maybe he could join virtually. CM Harrison – I say go with Earl at this point. We are just in discussion at this point. CM Cross – What he’s saying is if Montezuma can’t take us on Monday, to appoint Earl. What Jill is saying is appoint Earl and not go to Montezuma period. Two different motions. CM Harrison – Michael is saying to appoint Montezuma first. CM Coogle – If you get Montezuma, you have all that help is what I’m saying. CM Harrison – But they’re not going to pull the help out if we appoint Earl are they? CM Cross – I don’t know… they are just getting us through a hard time. If we have an agreement with them and they come in, then they will share their officers with us like they have been. We don’t have anyone on right now. CM Harrison – so we have the motion. CM Cross – And Tommy 2nd it. And we’ve had discussion. Mayor – It’s time for a vote. AIF (all in favor) Motion passes.

CM Cross – I will await a call from CM Hobbs in Montezuma.

Adjourn – Motion made by CM Coogle 6:45PM