CITY OF OGLETHORPE

OGLETHORPE CITY HALL

115 CHATHAM STREET

COUNCIL WORK SESSION AGENDA

NOVEMBER 30, 2023 – 6:00PM

Call to order:

Department Head Reports:

1. City Clerk, Melissa Jones – report emailed to council prior to meeting.
2. Police Dept – Cindy Kleckley / Interim Chief Finch – Chief Finch gave arrest report. (2 incidents). Update on Flock Cameras – all 11 have been put up now. Looking at pro-rated rate. Christmas in the Park Dec. 16, 2023. I donated today some coats on behalf of both police departments. We donated coloring books and crayons as well. We recently implemented a new data system and both departments have been trained on the system. Oglethorpe was represented at the funeral of former first lady Rosalyn Carter by manning the Plains Welcome Center and scanning people. CM Cross – From your last 2 reports, it seems like Carla Drive has become a problem area, what are we doing in that area? Finch – The problem was one person and he has been arrested. The owners have also talked to the family. CM Harrison – So it was just a random man that walked up to the one man that was bbq’ing? Finch – yes, the suspect just walked up to him and robbed him. He knows that we are looking for him and we have put the car that he normally travels in in the Flock system and he is being tracked. CM Cross- Didn’t we have something similar last month on Cuyler? Chief Finch – no, that was on Oliver. There were gunshots on Randolph area. CM Cross – Is there anything educational we can give the newspaper during this season to be proactive? Chief Finch- we are making our officers more visual. These were just some bad guys from the county that spilled over into the city. The key thing is is that the cases are being solved here. If you can’t solve cases then they going to feel like they can take over your town. Parades and Market are cancelled for this weekend.
3. Librarian, Glenda Rigby – report to be emailed at first of the month
4. Water/Sewer/Streets, HWR Jeff Harrison – Christmas decorations are up. Georgia Power needs to come work on a few of these poles that need some work done. We talked to them before and they said they were in the process of upgrading. Natalie said they reported them in 2019, the same poles, and there is still an issue. Jeff – one is rigged up with an extension cord and it’s been like that for the last few years. The sub-contractor said he would put out pine straw if the city would buy it. We painted the merry-go-round. There needs to be some wood work out there and some sprucing up. CM Harrison – I sent Cole to get it, but I think there was an issue with the right sizes not being available. CM Mahone – I know we talked one time about using railroad cross ties over there. Jeff – yes; however, you all want to do it, just let us know. I think Lowes has cross ties. CM Cross – Let me see if I can get Michael Cox’s number (he works for CSX) to see if we can get some. Jeff – I know the prison was going to come out and do it. We just need to know how many bales of pine straw we need to get and the lawn care guys will make it look good. CM Cross – We still have $39K in ARPA that can be used for that. CM Harrison - You can buy it from the local hardware store at $4.50 a bale. Jeff – I did meet with the power company and the engineering corp today at the waste water plant. Bringing power to the lift station and the bar screen area. The station between the two ponds will be gotten rid of completely. The other one will be inside and protected from the weather. You will have blowers outside in a blocked-in area to help with the noise and a lean-to on top of it. CM Harrison – how are you feeling about us meeting dates. Jeff – nervous, but keeping my fingers crossed that we are in construction phase by February. It’s been a long drawn out process. I am working on the lead copper inventory now and we have to do it on every customer here. CM Harrison – So what you did, they rejected? Jeff – No, I had it almost completed and they changed the format. I have to redo it in their new format. I tried to import over, but couldn’t. I have a couple of areas that we will have to dig. We will make sure there are no doubts, no guessing. You will see us out digging around the meter boxes. They want to know what is on the city side and the consumer side. CM Cross – I know that we are getting a lot of mud, but we are at the end of the line. Jeff – Just call and Melissa can have the guys go out and flush the hydrants. CM Harrison – How much money did we ask for and how much did we get? Jeff – I don’t know. I wasn’t part of that. CM Harrison – So you will have to do a lot of digging? Jeff – no not really. Hwy 26 has already been redone and everything out to the prison was done in 1991-1992 and since they lead ban was passed in 1990, they couldn’t use lead. Anything after that is already passed the lead ban. Up 49 here got done with the DOT project. So that’s obsolete. The only area I’m really worried about is right up in this area. CM Cross – How are you coming with Anna Drive? Jeff – meeting today to open bids. If ya’ll agree to a bid you got, then they will start the process. CM Cross- Has anyone heard anything about what has been come up with the insurance company? (no) Melissa can you get Jon Coogle to give us an update on where we are with filing with the insurance company? Jeff – I did have one contractor call me and say he needed a week to submit a bid, but if you are happy with the bids you got that’s fine, too. CM Harrison – I asked Tim about May Road also and he said he should have some specs for her next week. The emergency issue with Anna took precedence. Jeff – My excavator will be back up and running hopefully in a week or so. We had a track busted. CM Harrison – I have had one citizen tell me that there are about 4 trees at the cemetery that need to be taken down. Jeff – we have a local guy that did a good job doing that last time. CM Cross – Probably going to need to request bids if there are 5 of them because that is going to cost. CM Harrison – But there are no other complaints about the other things. Jeff – You billed out about $83K this month from the water bills which is an increase from $78K last month. The majority was from the prison. CM Cross – Those new meters are working. Jeff – next year we will have to drain a tank at the prison so they can install a new liner. It will be offline for about 3 months. We’ve tested it and it worked fine. The only pressure issue was one person when we started the tank back up.
5. Fire Department – report emailed monthly – Chief Childs - absent

Council/Committee Reports:

1. Mayor Hill – nothing to report
2. Human Resources/Finance – CM Coogle – nothing to report
3. Public Safety – CM Cross – nothing to report
4. Utilities/Streets/Cemetery – CM Harrison – We implemented the Inmate Fire Dept schedule for picking up other items not for pick up per the city yard policy. They used their own equipment/trailer. The key area was Mill St and they were able to get most of it. Some of the limbs were even too big for the trailer that they used. Chief Peters thinks she can borrow something bigger to get that pile up. They will do this once a month. We just fed them pizza and drinks. Approximately $150.00. CM Cross – I have concerns that our ladies in the office are buying their lunches out of their pockets. We need to have a budgeted amount to pay for their meals. (CORRECTION - The ladies do not pay for the inmate meals out of their pockets. Previously when clean up has been done for the police department, the meals were paid for out of the confiscated fund account). CM Mahone – They need some boots. They are going through those piles of stuff picking up stuff. That is all they are requesting and they sent me their sizes. Jeff – Send me that list. Are they lace up or what? CM Harrison – Just some steel-toes. CM Cross – I will be glad to put a motion for $150.00 in the budget per month to cover them doing this work for us. Melissa put that on the agenda for the inmates please for next week. CM Harrison – So I think the trash pick-up is going well. I just thought I would check back on the signage for the parks and all. CM Cross – Melissa can answer on that. CM Harrison – Thank you to all that came to the Veteran’s Day and volunteered. It was a great event. Thank you to Flint Energies for the sponsorship. When will be able to rent out the business center? CM Cross – It’s ready. CM Harrison – Can we replace those stained ceiling tiles? CM Cross – Cindy was working on that, but we will have to get the inmates to do that. CM Cross – My only concern was about the litter last week in front of the cemetery that looked like it came off the trash truck up and down both sides of the road. I assume Cole and them picked it up just in time for the Carter visitors coming through. CM Harrison – It was terrible. Melissa could you have a conversation with GFL about the trash flying off the trucks and causing a mess. CM Mahone – They’re not using the automatic dumps anymore, so if there are winds it blows over cans and blows it everywhere. There

Is the same issue on Asbury. They now have an individual getting out of the truck. CM Coogle – What they are talking about came off of the back of the actual dump truck, it wasn’t cans. They should have seen that happening and taken care of it. CM Cross – Laziness there. CM Harrison – That happened before and our previous chief pulled them over and warned them. CM Cross – Maybe Chief Finch could have the guys over this way on trash day and pull them over if it happens.

1. Planning & Recreation – CM Mahone – Gym. I’ve been there looking at the doors and seeing how we can implement those push bars. Once again reaching out to resources from the fire team for the installs without having to do any fabrication. Probably next week or two and get a card from Melissa to purchase those items to put those doors up. There will need to be some painting. I say while we have the resources to assist maybe paint the inside of the business center, also. Down the hallway to the classrooms, too. Need to come up with ways to utilize those classrooms. Especially the room on the end. There are different avenues we could do. Also, the other building down by the park. CM Harrison – So you want to paint the gym and the business center? And refinishing the floors? CM Mahone – yes. CM Cross – Maybe we could advertise with the newspaper that the building is ready for rent. CM Mahone – We need to replace those tiles and all first. Maybe freshen up the restrooms. CM Cross – I’ve been in the restrooms and they are fine. Natalie Bradley – talked about a grant (couldn’t really understand). She will ask Flint Energies about it. CM Mahone – I know it’s short notice, but since the parade was cancelled, we might could have had a Christmas Carol Night or something. Get some choirs to come in. Hot chocolate or something. CM Harrison – I looked into getting a fake skating rink or something, but it was so expensive. CM Mahone – With the floor in the gym, they could use roller blades. CM Harrison – I do like the idea of the community choir, though. Natalie – We used to do that. CM Harrison – Good ideas for next year.

New Business:

1) Jake break ordinance – citizens have called to complain about big trucks coming through on Hwy 49 into town and jake breaking. Signs can also be put up once an ordinance has been written and approved.

CM Beckum – Melissa and I talked about finding an ordinance book and I remembered that we had adopted something back when I was here. I found the book today in the safe. I called Gerald Mixon with River Valley.

The company that they worked with automatically update these ordinances and he was going to send me the website. I’m also looking at the last minutes from about 1990 until now. So, I want to do more research prior to

the next meeting to see what we actually have and/or what we need to update. I will also bring the information to the other cities/county to make sure we are all updated. I will check the state law also because they

override the city’s ordinances. Once we have the current information, I think each one of us should spend the time reviewing them and then making any updates that are needed so that we can approve them. Then we can

start enforcement. You can make all the laws and ordinances that you want to, but unless our police officers and law enforcement people can enforce it, then it doesn’t mean anything. For example, some houses in our

area, they need to go. But unless the ordinance is there and enforced, nothing will happen. Then land bank may also be able to help with that. CM Harrison – Are you saying the penalties are also in there? CM Beckum –

Yes, but we may need to review them and make sure the amounts are good. CM Harrison – And the court system knows about it, too? It seems like the missing link is that if we write the citation, then the city court needs

the information also. Chief Finch – I know what Mr. Gerald is saying. You have ordinances, but no enforcement mechanism like the leash law. That’s why we had to go in and change that law. The question is can it be

enforceable? Like with these abandoned houses. Montezuma, we have this same issue. I can cite them, but if they don’t do anything then the city has to go do the clean- up. You can put the charge on their tax bill, but

they don’t care. Some of these houses have asbestos and you can spend up to $50K abating it and the city will never recoup that money. CM Beckum – And that’s why I said we need to review the ordinances and decide

what we need and don’t need. Chief Finch – My thing is let’s use common sense. Like with the leash law. We used to have animal control part time. We wanted to have county wide and everybody help pay for it, but we

don’t have anywhere to take these animals. But Mr. Gerald we are on the same page, we just need to really look at these ordinances. Just giving my expert opinion on it. Natalie Bradley – There are resources out there to

help with some of these things as far as the clean-up of properties and all. You have to get creative with getting the help that is needed. CM Harrison – Well thank you Mr. Gerald for taking on that huge project..

Old Business:

1) BRACE Grant Update – CM Cross we did receive the $5K dollars and we have to spend by April. We have to turn in all of the receipts in return. I put in money for the tarp on the fence, signage, camera system, and extra dumpsters to come in. I thought about March, but a lot of people like to clean in January. So, should we bring the dumpsters in in January? I can go ahead and order the camera system, but you guys will have to finish this as I will be gone. I’ve given Melissa a copy of everything. The city will have to use money for prizes for the children from donors to cover the winners of the poster contest at the Elementary School. CM Harrison – Maybe we can partner with the Chamber or the Kiwanis for the prizes. CM Cross – I was thinking maybe some corporate donors… CM Beckum – I was thinking that, too. Before Covid we had a pretty good county wide clean up. We still have those banners and we can distribute them around. The chamber will help try to coordinate if the other cities want to participate also. CM Cross – I allotted for extra dumpsters for the different neighborhoods so people wouldn’t have so far to go. I thought there was also some greenery that you could put on the fence so it wouldn’t look so bad. CM Harrison – Do you think the garden club might help with that? Natalie – I think the garden club was looking into putting some type of shade trees over there. So if the city does the greenery, then they may do the trees. CM Cross – The inmates is the labor that I thought about hanging it on the fence. CM Coogle – Do we have to make a motion or anything to get it ordered? CM Harrison – No, we already did that previously. CM Cross – I just wanted to get a consensous from you all first. Melissa put this on the agenda for next week to go ahead and get that ordered.

2) Police Chief Application process – CM Cross – Melissa gave me @ 30 applications that had at least some police experience. I went through them and didn’t keep any of the job hoppers. We had 12 that looked good on paper. I gave Melissa a letter to send out to them that had the general information about our city with wages and all. 6 people responded that they wanted to continue. 2 didn’t show up to their interview. 3 did. One was a gentleman from out of state. He seemed nice, but when I googled it, I couldn’t get the information stating for sure that the records would transfer over. Michael is shaking his head that no they would not transfer over. So he would have to go completely through chief school in Ga. The second guy – we couldn’t ask him anything because he wouldn’t hush. He gave me the impression of being a Rambo. The third one was within the 35 miles, the last place he was terminated for poor workmanship. The time before that he was terminated for using his patrol car illegally. He got into a verbal altercation with law enforcement also. Melissa handed me two more tonight to look at. I was kind of disheartened that some of those didn’t show up for their interviews, but however I know that working remotely is the way people are going right now. CM Coogle – I think we ought to work with what we have with the City of Montezuma. Get a longer- term contract with them and it could blossom into a lot more if we would work into some type of consolidation with them. Not completely do away with everything and I think it has worked good for Oglethorpe. I just don’t see trying to fund a police department when you can’t even hire enough officers to run it. It makes no sense. And this makes a lot of sense. CM Finch – Let me explain something to you. In this whole process, I took Whitehead to the academy, he passed. I sent 4 others and they all failed. Some have asked me to hire, but I didn’t want to bring anyone that had been terminated or been on probation. It has even been hard for us to hire. The reason we have some because we issued $5K hiring bonuses and they have to hire on for 2 years. Agencies all around us are having a hard time finding law enforcement. CM Mahone – you can find individuals, but there is a lot of liability behind all of that. The day and age of how it used to be is obsolete now. When I first got here, I seen so much stuff, and I was like this ain’t going to work. I know what can and can’t be. This is not a profession that people are knocking the door down to come to and if they are, they don’t have the knowledge. The move that we made is the best move that could have ever made, ever because you are not going to get anyone with the knowledge needed. We started off at scratch. We couldn’t even have given a citation. The worst thing you can do is get put in a situation to answer something that you can’t answer. I agree with Mr. Coogle. We need to go ahead lock in what we got now. CM Cross – I will say ideally it is lovely to have our own police chief and our own police force. I know that’s what the citizens want and that’s the reason we needed to explore it, but there wasn’t a whole lot there. I will make sure that I’ve done my homework and that it will be somebody that actually shows up and that they know what they are doing. CM Mahone – The days and time of an officer pulling up to a situation are over. You are not going to have the resources for just one city. Even though individuals don’t know it, what is going on now is what has been going on prior to now. Anytime Oglethorpe had a situation, Montezuma came in to back them up. Chief Finch – I got 5 officers covering this whole little area. If something happens, I have the resources to clean it up and move it out. Whatever I got, you got. The City of Montezuma, we losing. Like when you had the missing person, we had already deployed the canine unit on my payroll and it didn’t Oglethorpe one penny because of that contract. But people don’t see it. Then we made some phone calls and found out the lady wasn’t missing. People don’t understand where yall had child molestation cases and shooting cases. It don’t cost you one penny. I don’t even charge you for that. It’s helping both cities. When they ask me what am I doing? I say we solving these cases. CM Coogle – It’s really our job, too to run the city and this is running the city in the best possible way. Chief Finch – Like Veteran’s Day, I had two Oglethorpe officers at the Veteran’s Day and we had 2 domestics happen. So, I floated my officers across the river to work that for ya’ll. CM Beckum – It’s taken me a while to get back up to speed, but three or four things that I’ve thought of in this light is first is I don’t know the contract that we have with the city of Montezuma. So as a council person I would need to know more about that to see how we might could make that work better. Another consideration is affordability. I’ve heard that the city of Oglethorpe has enough money to hire a Chief of Police, but do you have enough money to pay the benefits and everything that goes along with it? Plus the fact that you would have to have additional officers unless you worked something out with Montezuma. Trying to find a good qualified person. That is probably the most important thing. The last thing is how much additional officers and staff are you going to have to have versus what you have now. So until I have answers to those questions, I just about think I would abstain from voting on this, not because I am in favor of one or the other, but I need to know answers and I would think that those coming in would want to do the same thing. So, I think that it’s probably better for the city to continue like we are for now. If we find that really good candidate and we have the money for the additional and I can answer all of those other questions then I think that would be the time for change, but I don’t think that this is the time. Chief Finch – Another thing, we don’t have a problem coming back over here, I’m just being honest. The problem that we are still having is that jail. We are still transporting people everywhere and that’s why I have to have enough people to make sure these citizens are safe. People are looking at we want this and we want that. Ya’ll just don’t know how stressful it is for me to make sure that we have enough people in both these areas. CM Harrison – I would like to say. Chief Finch you and I have had the conversation. I appreciate everything with you stepping up for us. I just don’t want to short change the process because we didn’t find the person in the first round. I liked the two candidates that we interviewed. I definitely favored the one from Jacksonville more. I understand the concerns and rightfully so, so I called one of my friends who is management in Dekalb and he said what we could do is approve them to be chief until the next chiefs conference, you notify the post that there will be a change once appointed, you send them to the chiefs conference for $375 and pay for his stay while there. They would have to go to the Chief’s Conference anyway. I’m not saying he is the one, I am saying he is a one. I was also called by one of the people that submitted a resume. He stated he didn’t know me, but knew I was on council and that he didn’t receive a call back. He had 10 plus years of experience. I couldn’t say anything because I didn’t see the resumes, but I said I could bring it to council. CM Coogle – If you can tell me the name, I could tell you. CM Harrison – XXXX CM Cross – I can tell you, but we can’t say that in here with the name. CM Harrison – I’m just saying, don’t abandon the process and just leave it as it is. It’s absolutely no snub to you Chief Finch. I’m just saying don’t abandon the process. We have all of December, January, and February. CM Coogle – Jill let me ask you a question. Do you remember when we first came over here and we had Chief Taylor? You remember that? CM Harrison – Yes, I do. It was awful. CM Coogle – So why would you want to go back to something like that when this is working so well? I just don’t understand the thought process of going back to that and you are not going to get somebody. You’re just not. CM Mahone – You’re not. CM Coogle – And we have a wonderful deal here that we can build on two sister cities and the only thing between them is a river. I’ve been here all my life. I was born and raised here. This is a great opportunity for both cities to maybe just do so many things together. This thing is good. CM Harrison – Did I say it was awful? I said when we had nothing, it was awful. Nothings perfect, but do I feel like it was totally horrible when we had our own police chief and force, no. CM Coogle – Why would we go back to where we were? CM Mahone – We wasn’t … CM Coogle – in compliance. CM Mahone – Having Chief Finch, we have an army behind him. I don’t care who you bring in here. You just got him. That’s all we will have. CM Harrison – But prior to, didn’t we help each other when needed? Would we abandon that because we have our own chief again? Would that how the attitude would be? Because I remember there was help on both sides. Chief Finch – No. First of all, I am a professional person. The dynamics have changed since then. You had 4 police officers. You had a chief and 3 other full time officers, you feel what I’m saying? CM Cross – We had one full time officer and 2 part time officers. Chief Finch – No let’s go back to Taylor. You had ……. CM Cross – No we had the Chief, one full time officer, and 2 part time officers. CM Mahone – You had Z. CM Cross – No, he wasn’t hear then. Chief Finch – But you had those slots. If they needed help, yes our guys were coming to help them. But I am going to say, if you get your own department and running your own stuff and you don’t have coverage, then… that means I have to exhaust my resources. I’ve done that before. Even when Harold Cannon was here, I did that. We can go back to Harry Thompson who didn’t have a police license. CM Coogle – If the city limits were out there near the prison, we might couldn’t do this. But the way we are set up, it’s the perfect situation and has worked very well. We have been covered and probably have saved money. It’s something we ought to work towards then against. CM Mahone – I’m in favor of extending what we currently have. CM Coogle – I’m certainly there. CM Harrison – I’m not. CM Mahone – Even to the point of not even waiting because when I first came in, I didn’t know what was going on. But when that had happened, the time we spent so many months dealing with police to where other things we were trying to work on, it fell to the back burner. CM Cross – It’s taken a toll on me. CM Mahone – The direction of a lot of stuff that we had planned that we wanted to implement, it fell to the back burner because of the police station. I don’t even want to go into anymore of it. We can go ahead and take care of this here and that’s what I prefer. CM Beckum – Just a suggestion and it sounds like yall are ready to make a motion. CM Coogle – We can’t in a work session. Bruce – Just discussion. CM Cross – I just want to make sure that we have police coverage.

Other Business:

Adjourn: CM Coogle 7:41PM