



CITY OF STATESBORO  
CALLED COUNCIL MINUTES  
OCTOBER 03, 2024

Regular Meeting

50 E. Main St. City Hall Council Chambers

6:00 PM

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Jonathan McCollar called the meeting to order

**ATTENDENCE**

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jonathan McCollar	Mayor	Present	
Vacant	Councilmember	Vacant	
Paulette Chavers	Councilmember	Present	
Ginny Hendley	Councilmember	Present	
John Riggs	Councilmember	Present	
Shari Barr	Mayor Pro Tem	Present	

Other staff present: City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles, Public Information Officer Layne Phillips, City Attorney Cain Smith and City Clerk Leah Harden

**2. Public hearing and consideration of a motion to approve Resolution 2024-27: A Resolution setting the millage rate for Ad Valorem (Property) Taxes for the 2024 calendar year for the City of Statesboro, Georgia.**

A motion was made to open the public hearing.

**RESULT:**

Approved (Unanimous)

**MOVER:**

Councilmember Paulette Chavers

**SECONDER:**

Councilmember John Riggs

**AYES:**

Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr

**ABSENT**

City Manager Charles Penny stated when preparing the budget staff had in mind a millage rate in order to balance the budget and minimizing the use of fund balance. Staff's recommendation is to set the millage rate a 9.125. With that rate we would use about \$700,000.00 in fund balance in order to balance the budget. A couple of things driving the need for an increase in the millage rate include a new pay plan that cost \$2.3 million of which \$1.2 million is in the General Fund the other item was an additional \$1.2 million transfer from the General fund to the Fire Fund. The labor market is tough, last year we had 18 openings in the police department. With the implementation of the pay plan salaries for police officers went from \$46,000 to \$55,000, now we are down to 7 openings. In addition starting pay for Firefighters went from \$43,000 to a little better than \$50,000. We need to make sure that we can stay competitive with the growth going on in our community.

Don Armel voiced his support for the full 9.125 millage rate. He stated as we found out last week and hoping we don't get hit with another storm did not work. We really need to keep ourselves competitive so we have good personnel as well as increase the number of personnel due to growth. He also stated he wants to see this city to be the number one choice for people. And when we have good services it does help reduce the cost of insurance for homeowners the proposed increase comes out to be about \$12/month if insurance goes up it would be more than that per month.

Len Fatica stated as before he supports the full 9.125 millage rate. It's time to rip the band-aid off and do what is right for the citizens. The last week has proven it when the red lights were out there was terrible congestion and there are not enough officers to direct traffic because they were responding to other calls.

Marcus Toole spoke in favor of the increase despite him having to do some creative accounting to pay for the increases. He continued that dipping into the emergency fund for the regular budget is not a good idea.

Victor Dicky stated he is neutral and asked if the general fund is only built upon through property taxes.

City Manager Charles Penny explained the General fund is not made up of just property taxes it is also franchise fees and insurance tax. The General fund is about \$25 million but the property taxes at the proposed rate of 9.125 will generate approximately \$10 million which is less than half of the General fund. When fund balance is spent it does not recur next year we would have to save or increase revenue in order to get it back. There are very limited ways for city governments to raise revenues. The way to increase revenue is to grow the city's tax base.

Bill Thomas stated he does not recall being invited to any meeting where the city was challenged to find ways to save money or find ways to shave money off the budget.

Mayor Jonathan McCollar stated our general fund is about \$25 million and of that \$10 million comes from property taxes. The city of Statesboro is providing services to the people that live here. Although we have TSPLOST and SPLOST none of dollars go to paying police officers, fire fighters, or public works employees. Compared to other communities our tax rate is somewhere around the middle. The advantage some other communities have is they have the LOST tax if the city would be receiving it would roughly be an additional \$5 million which would allow for a lower millage rate for the city. Mayor McCollar stated, this staff watches every penny that's spent and leverages the city's resources in such a way that we're able to provide services. Mayor McCollar recognized that many employees in the public works department and police department that came into work over the weekend after the hurricane to address the needs our community.

A motion was made to close the public hearing.

<b>RESULT:</b>	Approved (Unanimous)
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember Paulette Chavers
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
<b>AYES:</b>	Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
<b>ABSENT</b>	

Councilmember Paulette Chavers stated she has made it clear where she stands and was there a year ago so we would not have to be in this position.

Councilmember John Riggs stated he is against the increase at this time because the housing market is skyrocketing and we don't know what's going to happen in the next year. He stated that he will reassess the situation next year and make another informed decision. He continued, I will never allow the employment of any city employee be threatened in any way, no one needs to feel that they're going to lose their job or benefits.

Councilmember Ginny Hendley stated she has not changed her opinion about the millage rate since last week.

Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr stated she is not comfortable putting more on citizens and offered a compromise and made a motion to set the millage rate at 8.625.

Councilmember Paulette Chavers stated she does not agree and that she is for the full 9.125, but she will compromise if that is what needs to be done today. She continued stating the storm was scary, you prepare now for stuff like that.

Mayor McCollar stated his philosophy is that you prepare for the worst of times in the best of times. For the last three years staff had made a recommendation and each time it was compromised which caused the city to have to use the reserves to help mitigate the cost of running the city. A big concern is that the 25% minimum of fund balance was put in place 20 years ago and with the increase of costs it is a dated policy. Mayor McCollar stated he would like to see the rate set at 8.725.

After further discussion by council a motion was made to approve **Resolution 2024-27** setting the City of Statesboro millage rate at 8.625.

<b>RESULT:</b>	Approved 3-2 (Mayor McCollar broke the tie in favor of the motion)
<b>MOVER:</b>	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Councilmember Paulette Chavers
<b>AYES:</b>	Chavers, Barr, Mayor McCollar – as the tie breaker
<b>NAYS</b>	Councilmember John Riggs and Councilmember Ginny Hendley

**3. Consideration of a motion to approve an award of contract to Thompson Consulting Services for debris removal monitoring in the amount of, not to exceed, \$300,000.00. This is a requirement of FEMA in order to be eligible to receive reimbursement funding. If approved, this will be funded out of the General fund reserves.**

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<b>RESULT:</b>	Approved (Unanimous)
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember John Riggs
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr
<b>AYES:</b>	Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
<b>ABSENT</b>	

**4. Consideration of a Motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss “Real Estate” in accordance with O.C.G.A 50-14-3(b).**

At 6:52 pm a motion was made to enter into executive session.

<b>RESULT:</b>	Approved (Unanimous)
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember Paulette Chavers
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Councilmember Ginny Hendley
<b>AYES:</b>	Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
<b>ABSENT</b>	

At 7:07 pm a motion was made to exit executive session.

<b>RESULT:</b>	Approved (Unanimous)
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember John Riggs
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Councilmember Paulette Chavers
<b>AYES:</b>	Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
<b>ABSENT</b>	

Mayor McCollar called the meeting back to order with no action taken in executive session.

**5. Consideration of a Motion to Adjourn**

A motion was made to adjourn.

<b>RESULT:</b>	Approved (Unanimous)
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember John Riggs
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Councilmember Paulette Chavers
<b>AYES:</b>	Chavers, Hendley, Riggs, Barr
<b>ABSENT</b>	

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 pm.

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Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

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Leah Harden, City Clerk