



City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center
300 S. Church Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Meeting Minutes City Council

Tuesday, January 2, 2024

5:30 PM

Municipal Center, 300 S. Church

SPECIAL CALLED NOMINATING & RULES COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING AT 4:45 P.M.

PUBLIC SERVICES COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING AT 5:00 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER BY MAYOR HAROLD COPENHAVER AT 5:30 P.M.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

3. ROLL CALL (ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE) INITIATED AND CONFIRMED BY CITY CLERK APRIL LEGGETT

Present 11 - Brian Emison;Chris Moore;Chris Gibson;David McClain;Joe Hafner;Mitch Johnson;Anthony Coleman;Janice Porter;John Street;LJ Bryant and Ann Williams

Absent 1 - Charles Coleman

4. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

5. CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of the Consent Agenda

Councilmember Chris Moore motioned, seconded by Councilmember Chris Gibson, to remove RES-23:212 and RES-23:216 from the Consent Agenda and adopt the Consent Agenda. All voted aye.

A motion was made by Councilperson Chris Moore, seconded by Councilperson Chris Gibson, to Approve the Consent Agenda. The motioned PASSED

Aye: 11 - Brian Emison;Chris Moore;Chris Gibson;David McClain;Joe Hafner;Mitch Johnson;Anthony Coleman;Janice Porter;John Street;LJ Bryant and Ann Williams

Absent: 1 - Charles Coleman

[MIN-23:122](#)

MINUTES FOR THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING ON DECEMBER 19, 2023

Attachments: [CC Minutes 12192023](#)

This item was passed on the Consent Agenda.

[RES-23:314](#) A RESOLUTION DECLARING AN EXCEPTIONAL SITUATION AND WAIVING THE REQUIREMENTS OF COMPETITIVE BIDDING FOR EMERGENCY REPAIR WORK ON A FIRE DEPARTMENT TRUCK

Attachments: [Siddons Martin Invoice](#)

This item was passed on the Consent Agenda.

Enactment No: R-EN-001-2024

[RES-23:315](#) A RESOLUTION TO WAIVE COMPETITIVE BIDDING AND AUTHORIZE PURCHASE OF TWO POLICE EQUIPPED CHEVROLET SILVERADOS AND SIX POLICE EQUIPPED DODGE DURANGOS

Attachments: [Police Pickup quotes](#)

This item was passed on the Consent Agenda.

Enactment No: R-EN-002-2024

RESOLUTIONS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA

[RES-23:312](#) A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ADOPTION OF A BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS, FOR THE TWELVE (12) MONTHS BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2024, AND ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2024, APPROPRIATING MONEY FOR EACH ITEM OF EXPENDITURE THEREIN PROVIDED FOR; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Attachments: [2024 Budget](#)
[EMAIL Budget 12272023 LJ Bryant](#)
[2024 Budget Powerpoint Overview](#)
[Job Descriptions Handout 12282023](#)

Mayor Harold Copenhaver stated, I would like to go ahead and relay some comments on the budget. I want to present this budget to you and we have spent many long hours, the administration and department directors, and in many cases, by you, yourselves, city councilmembers and I appreciate the work of all. For those of you who provided requested feedback and asked questions, helped ensure what we consider all options and found that we are confident. This is the best budget for the City of Jonesboro in 2024. Just like the first three years, it is a balanced budget, one that we are comfortable projecting will be exceeded by revenues. I took office with a pledge to keep expenses in check and to ensure fundamentals such as safety and infrastructure, including more paving of streets, building of sidewalks, and drainage improvements, matches our investments in parks, trails, and other quality of life endeavors. Many of you know how this process works and we have invested your time in meetings with the administration, met with me individually, and even participated in working meetings available to the public for input regarding Jonesboro's future goals. While I especially want to thank our Finance Director, Steve Purtee, and Finance Committee Chair, Joe Hafner, for their wisdom and commitment to hammering out the details. I want to close by saying that while I am happy to provide any additional information that hasn't previously already been provided or explained, I am confident this budget takes all in consideration and presents what I feel is an appropriate position for our city for 2024. My responsibility is to present the city's operating budget. I feel the engagement of everyone has contributed to this effort. I appreciate the Finance Committee's input and unanimous

endorsement and I will now open the floor to council for comments before requesting your approval. Thank you for allowing me that time council.

Councilmember L.J. Bryant said, Mayor, a couple of comments. I think maybe I am too cheap. I don't know. Joe was sitting here saying he was too cheap to register for the Arkansas Traveler. So, I don't know who is cheaper, me or Joe. Yeah, I get a little scared of it and I drive a 2014 Chevy Traverse, but I was reading today Governor Sanders, much like Governor Hutchison and Governor Beebe, Governor Sanders put in a hiring freeze and a promotion freeze in January. And, so, my concern has been for some time, I voted against it, in December 2020, we took the Mayor's Office from three to five and now it is proposed to take Communications from three to four. And, so, we continue to invest on the admin side and I just feel like, at least in my businesses, I am trying to consolidate positions instead of adding positions. And, in government, it seems that we never delete positions, we just continue to add positions. And, I will say on the social media side, we own a business in Conway and we make several posts per week by paying an agency \$500 a month. So, I am not sure this is the most efficient use of our resources. And, we need to be careful about adding headcount. So, for lots of reasons, I feel like, if we were sitting here and we had equity in a company and we were stakeholders and it was our money at stake here, I don't think there is any way we would vote for this and add these positions. But, anyway, I wanted to share that and explain why I am voting no. Mayor Copenhagen said, duly noted.

Patti Lack, 4108 Forest Hill Road, said, Happy New Year to all of you. You know, L.J., it is funny because that is exactly what a lot of people have talked to me about is talking about the 13 new positions that are being proposed. They were saying that, like the E911 and the Animal Services are probably necessary. One of the ones that they said was a Construction Outreach Coordinator for Engineering to establish and maintain relationships with private builders to help insure that projects are in compliance with the city's codes and to troubleshoot. I think that where this bothers me right here is that who is the administrator to establish and maintain a good relationship with the citizens? We have a great Engineering Department and I think they establish with the developers here. I don't know why we need one extra person in there to do that. And, then, I noticed that there was a thing for looking at signals. Another one of them is a Marketing and Community Outreach Coordinator for Communications to focus on increased community engagement on the city matters that we have right here. Well, the matters of the city is right here at the city council. I think we really need to strive to get people coming to city council meetings. I think if you guys remember before Covid, we used to fill this room with people. And, then Covid happened and now that we don't get it. So, that would be just an easy thing to do without hiring anybody.

The Street Department, to help manage increase investments for funding and streets for the streets and sidewalks. Well, that kind of goes along with the development, the developers in our city. And, also too, the Grants Department to apply for grants for the sidewalks that we have and then the special groups that we have had. Last week at the Finance meeting, I heard about the JETS Marketing Coordinator to increase advertising, to increase the revenue for the system and that half of the salary would be paid for by the city and half by the state or by the federal government. One, we don't have enough buses. We don't have enough bus drivers. We don't have enough covers for those people. We have talked about that for a long time. I think the previous manager of the JETS bus said at one time is that we could do advertising on the back of the covered bus stops that we have, that would be easy to do. I don't know why we need to hire one person to do that because what I did also too is that I looked at the ridership and how much money we made on JETS bus. We are making, it was between November 1st and December 17th, we made a total of \$7,932. That is

not a lot of money and now we want to hire another person to help us with that. I don't know if that is the best use of our money there. Parks and Recreation, two new maintenance people and a person for the concessions. I guess that person will be busy when we have tournaments, but what is that person going to do when we don't have tournaments here in Jonesboro. I know that Danny does a great job and we have them all of the time, but there is going to be a down period. So, what is that person going to be doing? The Pool Coordinator for the Northside Park, the pool is not even built yet, but we are going to get a Pool Coordinator. The pool won't open up until probably, what April or May, around there and then it closes down. So, what is that person going to be doing the rest of the time?

And, I agree with you L.J., is that, you know, maybe, we need to make more efficient use of the people that we have here on there. When we are talking about advertisement and stuff like that, I was in, these are all of the nice brochures that we have at Human Resources. It talks about the Shooting Range, the police, and all of that. I don't know who does all of these, but they are super nice. I don't know who does this, but we need to hire this company or this group to start doing advertising to promote Jonesboro also too. You know, I don't know if it is individual departments that need to do it. We need to do an overall type of procedure. But, the main thing that is really important that I heard from a lot of people is that I know last week was the Finance meeting. I watched it. There was no mention during that meeting of where the citizens that don't see any type of meeting advertised, there was no mention of where that citizen could go to, to find out and look at the budget that we have. There was a newspaper article. There was no mention in the newspaper article which would have been easy to say go to Legistar.com and click on that. There was nothing. Our Facebook page for the city needs to be utilized a lot better. It would have been really nice because there are a lot of users on Facebook to have, hey, here's the budget, click on it and you can read it. It is 112 pages. I know all of us are busy during the holiday season, but at least it was going to be available. So, for all of you, I hope, because you guys are the ones that represent the citizens and I know I am up here a lot, but I represent a lot of citizens that speak out. Is that there is no rush to this budget. I know I talked to Dewayne today and I know he says we need to pass it and get started and I understand that everybody wants to get a pay increase and get this started and stuff like that, but we can have one more reading and you guys can go out there and talk to the citizens that you represent. We can put it on the Facebook page and let people know what it is because that is what I believe like what Scott McDaniel said when he came up here and spoke a couple of weeks ago, just talking about how we need to be open and transparent and get the citizens involved. And, right now, not many people know about what this budget, but I appreciate all of your help and the work that you have put into it, but the citizens need to know exactly what you guys are voting for because it is a lot of money. So, thank you. Mayor Copenhagen said, thank you.

Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, she just brought up a good comment. I just want to be more informed in my vote and I wasn't here last week for the Finance Committee, but I did listen to it. I watched it and I appreciate the comment and the question and the comment from Mr. Tony regarding the Marketing Coordinator, I believe is the name of it for JETS. However, Ms. Patti Lack brought up something as it relates to communication and I just haven't heard anything regarding communication and the need for those other positions. I really, I feel like my job is to look at it in a macro level. I try to leave the nuts and bolts to the administration so I do, but in order for me to make an informed vote, I would like to hear, I don't know, from you or Bill or someone regarding the communications. I saw the digital and then the marketing and then we need a JETS Communications and so on and so forth. So, I would just like to hear that. Mayor Copenhagen said, sure, and we discussed it last week. Each, basically, almost every one of the personnel requests and Steve, correct

me if I am wrong, I believe we had almost upwards of 80 requests from the different directors as we moved through this. And, as that process went through, we validated what each director truly needed, the reason for the growth. And, in Communications, we are seeing, at the current time, they have three employees. And, over the last two years, I have heard repetitiously from Council and the community that we need more communications. And, to be honest with you, the uptick in FOIA requests, which we have over 1,000 FOIA requests in the police department. We are seeing almost, Bill, I don't know what our number is at that point, but if you would like to approach the podium as well. And, then, our two other employees that are in his department, they have to record every one of the meetings. The request for FOIA's has basically taken my director's time to the point to where we need more marketing and material information out there for the general public to make them more aware as Ms. Lack was talking about. This is the exact reason for that. In many of the other ones, we addressed as well, we had 24 new employee position requests. Sixteen of the twenty-four were for safety, twelve for fire and the other four in the police and other safety elements in the community. And, so, the remaining eight are growth avenues. Now, I will explain to you this. Sometimes, and Steve, you can come forward if you would like to, explain to me and to the Council once again how yours is working in the Finance Department. You will have a position open, but that is not a filled position and we are transferring an individual into another new position. So, just because you are seeing a new position doesn't necessarily mean that it's being another person added as an active employee. We are just keeping open another position should that need to be filled later on. So, Bill, if you don't mind, explain a little bit about the Communications Department and the reason for your request.

Bill Campbell, Director of Communications, said, the first thing I want to tell you is with FOIA's, we are seeing now 100-200 a month. It varies pretty wildly, but they are in-depth. If it is anything that gets into any legal, I have to ask Carol and her staff/her team to help vet it to make sure that we are doing everything just right because if you know Arkansas law on FOIA, it is written by the lawsuit. There are a lot. I have worked in five states as a journalist. There is no state with tighter FOIA laws in the South, sunshine laws we call them, that are more strict than Arkansas. In Alabama, you have one year to respond to a FOIA. In Arkansas, you have three days. It makes a FOIA top priority. It doesn't mean if a complicated piece of paper comes out, I have to have the full answer in three days, it means I have to have a response. And, Carol has taught me from the get-go to respond as we go through papers. You know, in other words, if I have this much of a FOIA completed, I will send that and then go through more. It requires our departments, every department that might have some papers is required to, but our IT Department searches every file that we have. If you have files in your office, you have to turn those things in. FOIA sounds easy. It is not. So, it is work, but beyond that, the whole Communications Department has been ramped up. I have been here about eight years now. The responsibilities have been ramped up. The state now requires that every public meeting be recorded. Everything that we have in this building is recorded on video because we have those capabilities now. I'm sure some of you have been here long enough to remember when that was not done or not able to be done.

I think the person before me had two assistants and we have added a third because of the hours that it takes both Cam and Brandon who are very efficient with their time and they are very responsible and good at what they do and now we have Lynette Hirsch, who is, she is kind of jack of all trades, but she is really good at social media as is Cam, as is Brandon. But, we have to make sure we are sending the message very clear as some people say, you know, you have to make sure that you don't think you, you think of what the unintended consequences of what you say are. You know, can somebody twist your words? If you have ever sent a text where somebody took it the wrong way, everything we do is essentially a text and we want to make sure we

deal with it the right way. There are some things that we can't do and I've heard complaints about things, and you know, that wasn't the worst idea about posting the budget on the website. That is not a bad idea and that is something we can consider in the future, but I will say it is on our website, or Facebook or someplace else. Anytime we put something on Facebook and April can tell you that it and Carol too that it could be illegal for us to promote this meeting or this particular issue on Facebook. If I say, come to the Council tonight because we are taking up the budget, you can't do that because next week, as Keith Inman can tell you, it looks like we are trying to slide something through. You know, somebody could quickly come up here and say, oh you want to not talk about this, you are trying to slide this through. So, there are a lot of thought processes that have to go into things. You know even Sanitation posts, sometimes we have to talk about what makes sure we can, we are going to be able to do this and go through it right. So, it is a complicated process. We would also like something I talked about with Lynette is marketing the City of Jonesboro stuff. If a convention comes to Jonesboro and they want something. Hey, we'd love a souvenir from the city that says City of Jonesboro, we don't have anything. We don't sell anything. We don't make t-shirts that say City of Jonesboro. We don't build that pride. If you will go to the state house, you will see a corner of where you can buy stuff that says State of Arkansas, you know, whatever types of memorabilia or pens and paper, whatever you want. I want that. I want that to be available, maybe in our lobby. These are the kind of things that I would like to work on in this coming year and that is the thing that we would like to accomplish. This is what it is going to take an extra person in Communications.

Our Communications people do not do police stuff. We don't do Parks social media, but we work with all of them. We work with them. We work with the Fire Department, the Police Department. I talk to Sally regularly. We communicate. We try to keep everybody on the same page. That is why the directors meetings are held on Monday morning, to keep everyone on the same page because different director's talk about different subjects and different concerns. And, it is hard to know what is going on in 23 departments. Even if you are in my job, it's hard to know what's going on in 23 departments because these guys have been doing it so long, it may not even occur to them to take a before shot, you know, if we are going to fix a new road or repair a street or demolish a blighted home or something in the house. We have to stay on that same page. And, we are fortunate enough to have so many directors, so many staff members who are truly concerned about Jonesboro and truly proud of the work they do because I have watched it. And, you know, after a while, you do kind of, you know, you kind of bristle at the criticism that they get because these guys and ladies, man, they are up here every Monday with the best of intentions and that happens through the week. You know, it is hard to see. You guys probably appreciate more than the average resident might, maybe not, I don't know. But, the work that actually goes into making the city run. And, so, we try to communicate that, but we are trying to also grow. Jonesboro is growing part of, you know, Brian can talk to you about or Steve about these individual positions, but I want to leave you with this thought. When I look around, I look at departments with a plate that runneth over. And, I worked in Journalism when they continued to cut positions and when they said, you need to do this, you need to do this, and somebody, a younger person would come to me and say what does that do, I have got all of this, I would say, figure out what to get rid of because that is your boss telling you we need to focus on this. You only get so many hours in a day, figure out what not to do. I think most of these directors will tell you they are doing a lot of that. And, I think that is the number one thing. Jonesboro grows, the City of Jonesboro grows. When I got here eight years ago, we had just under 600 employees. Well, last I heard, we have just under 600 employees. So, that's all I got.

Mayor Copenhaver said, and I can add, as of this morning when we had our directors

meeting, the Sanitation Director, Patrick Courtois, told us that we were, he was reaching capacity with his employees and that is the first time that I have ever been aware of that happening for us. So, employment is good in those departments. Also, the investment that we continue to make our employees, we have got to be competitive, folks. And, the bottom line is, it's a strategic investment and we need to stay competitive on that. So, thank you Bill for that. Did that answer your question councilman? Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, yes sir. I guess the only other question I think from what I heard from L.J. is, is there a possibility of some consolidations with something? That was just something I was gearing towards and asking. Mr. Campbell said, well, you know, one thing L.J. has not said to me, but I have heard that he has said is use AI. We do use AI. And, everyone is invited to come look and see how we use AI. And, I will take, I mean, it's new. I'll take any tips. If you have some suggestions on how we use AI, I'll be glad to take that, but we do use it. And, we need to use it more, but it has to, you don't just say AI tell me this and it posts it and sends it out to the world because it has to be Jonesboro. I mean I can write a real nice poem to David McClain on AI just by saying give me a little chubby guy who is on tv and is an upstanding member of his community, but he has got gray in his beard and he needs to blacken that up. And, you know what, I'll do it here in a second and send it to each of you and you will have a great poem to David.

Councilmember David McClain said, a couple of things. City Attorney Carol Duncan asked, do you want him to clarify who he was talking about being chubby? Councilmember McClain joked, um, yeah. One, are we not able to utilize a company outside? Like in consolidate some of that for as far as the social media aspect? There are companies that do that, specifically. Mr. Campbell said, correct. Councilmember McClain said, if we could partner with and say, hey, you do this. You are the ones in charge of that because it is cheaper for us to get someone to do that. I mean for us to not have to pay payroll taxes, benefits, etc. It is cheaper for us to do that. So, is that something that has been discussed? I mean I know the Mayor talked about it a little bit. We have had it in the past. So, how many times have we done that? Have we done it once and said it didn't work or is it something that we are always looking at and trying to clean that up? Mr. Campbell said, our staff and I talk about this every year and we talked about what because we get advertisements or we get people trying to sell us stuff and emails and we all look at it and weigh it. I think there will be a time for that. Right now, honestly, I'm talking about four bodies among the four of us. If one person is sick, if one person is on vacation, we are on three bodies. And, again, meetings have to be run. But, to answer your question, yes, there are software that do writing, that do even FOIA requests, but, then, you still have to proof it. So, it can make it easier and more cost and probably time efficient. The stuff that we looked at with a local guy who was creating a website, he wanted too much money for it, but we would love to have. This guy worked with Mickey Mouse. I mean this is Marlin Henderson. I don't know if you know his company, but he lives in Dallas, he lives in LA. He's from here and he's got some fabulous stuff. I would love to say that, but, you know, when I got here, we were going through cuts. There were raises without tax benefits. I said we were going to go to bare bones. And, you know, if we have growth and that's a thing that we can do later, I think it would be a good thing. I'm eager to see what we can accomplish this year with what we have got. But, if there comes a time when Carol and IT and everyone agrees and the Mayor and Brian and Tony agree that we need to go to some software for some of these things, yes sir, that could be a good alternative. Councilmember McClain said, last thing. Be careful what you say. Mr. Campbell said, gotcha.

Finance Director Steve Purtee said, if you don't mind, let me tag team with Bill on some of the comments regarding consolidation. I think you will find in this budget and I want to speak specifically to the Finance Department. We referred to that at the Finance Committee last week. The Finance Department consists of nine employees.

There are six of those in what I will call the traditional Finance Department bean counters. There are three of those who are in our Collections Department that maintain all of the receipting that comes in through the city. What we are doing is we did have a resignation of our city accountant who was a job grade 118. What we did was we decided to transition that position to a job grade 115. That's taking that annual salary from an average of \$65,000 down to an average of \$54,000. So, therein is a savings there regarding that. What we are doing is we are taking another position in our department and we are regrading it from a 112 to a 115 because that person has the skillset and the talent to perform those responsibilities. So, in the end, we are doing a net cost savings of just under \$10,000 to the department. Headcount is remaining unchanged. There is one other department that has a reduction in headcount. That is the Mayor's office. His administrative assistant position. There are six full-time equivalences, the way I would term those, in that department, and one of those positions is being held open during this next budget cycle as is the city accountant position with a zero budget. So, you will see those in there as well. Our current headcount is 606 and with these 16 and 8 that the Mayor referenced earlier, our headcount at the end of this budget conclusion will be 630. Twelve of those, again, being in the fire department and then four of those being in the public safety sector as well. So, Mayor does that answer the questions regarding consolidation? Mayor Copenhagen said, yes, thank you Steve.

Councilmember Bryant asked, I know we have a 4% cost of living right? And, then if we took the steps, what would you say like the average across the board is if you combine steps and cola, would you say that it is 6-7%? I mean what would you say the average raise is? Mr. Purtee said, the raise is 6%. Mayor Copenhagen said, now, Steve, clarify as well for our non-uniformed and uniformed because we have already done raises for the Police and Fire Departments. Mr. Purtee said, yes, the reference in the budget is we took care of our Police Department back in September and we took care of our Fire Department just a few weeks ago relative to their requested increases. The Police Department increase was in the range of 19%. The Fire Department increase was in the range of 7%. All non-uniformed will conclude this budget year with a 6% increase. Councilmember Bryant said, thank you.

Councilmember Ann Williams said, I just wanted to mention something and it occurred to me, we have a major event coming up April 8th. It is a once in a lifetime thing and we will have a lot of people visiting the city and I think it is going to be important to be fully staffed as far as communication and outreach to people because you don't get a second chance to make a first impression. And, there will be a lot of people here that will leave here after their visit having hopefully a good opinion of Jonesboro. And, you know, they might possibly be people that consider living here on down the road. I think it is important to be staffed as far as for that preparation for that. Mayor Copenhagen said, thank you councilmember.

Chief Administrative Officer Brian Richardson said, something that Councilmember Williams just brought up kind of made me think of a line that it is in all of our job descriptions and it is all other duties as assigned. I can't help but mention that, you know, out of all of the city council employees that we have, I am pretty sure that there is not a single one of them that only describes to the job duties that are described in their job duties. I just don't want to pass up a chance to point out that while we are approving actual job descriptions, what we are actually doing is requesting for approval of an additional resources that help serve the citizens of Jonesboro and the residents of Jonesboro and their fellow co-workers here in the city. I know it drives people crazy when I walk into their office because normally I ask them to do something that is not necessarily their assigned duties. We are blessed here in the City of Jonesboro to have a lot of employees that really care about the city. I just wanted to make that one comment about just because a job description says one

thing, you know, they are often invaluable tools in something that they are not asked to do on a daily basis, but somebody has to get the job done. And, very rarely do we hear a complaint about as other duties as described in that position. So, I just wanted to make that statement. Thank you. Mayor Copenhaver said, thank you Brian.

A motion was made by Councilperson John Street, seconded by Councilperson Brian Emison, that this matter be Passed. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 10 - Brian Emison;Chris Moore;Chris Gibson;David McClain;Joe Hafner;Mitch Johnson;Anthony Coleman;Janice Porter;John Street and Ann Williams

Nay: 1 - LJ Bryant

Absent: 1 - Charles Coleman

Enactment No: R-EN-003-2024

[RES-23:316](#)

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS TO AMEND THE CITY SALARY AND ADMINISTRATION PLAN BY INCLUDING UPDATED PAY RANGES, JOB TITLES AND GRADES

Attachments: [Revised Pay Grades & Salaries effective January 2024](#)
[Job Descriptions Handout 12282023](#)

Councilmember L.J. Bryant asked, Mayor, I just wanted to get clarity. So, we are having three positions regraded and two of the three are in Communications out of 22 departments? Is that right? Mayor Copenhaver said, that is correct, yes sir. Councilmember Bryant said, okay, I'll be voting against this. Thank you.

After the vote:

Mayor Copenhaver said, Council, I just want to say thank you for your support, your continued questions, and your continued involvement in this process. And, to the community as well. We did have a lot of inquiries on the budgeting process. And, I agree that it is very important that we continue to utilize our resources to provide that information to the city. So, thank you again Council.

A motion was made by Councilperson John Street, seconded by Councilperson Mitch Johnson, that this matter be Passed. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 10 - Brian Emison;Chris Moore;Chris Gibson;David McClain;Joe Hafner;Mitch Johnson;Anthony Coleman;Janice Porter;John Street and Ann Williams

Nay: 1 - LJ Bryant

Absent: 1 - Charles Coleman

Enactment No: R-EN-004-2024

6. NEW BUSINESS

ORDINANCES ON FIRST READING

[ORD-23:045](#)

AN ORDINANCE TO THE CITY OF JONESBORO TO PLACE VARIOUS TRAFFIC SIGNS AT DESIGNATED LOCATIONS AS DETERMINED BY THE TRAFFIC CONTROL COMMITTEE

Councilmember John Street motioned, seconded by Councilmember Brian Emison,

to suspend the rules and offer ORD-23:045 by title only. All voted aye.

Held at one reading

[ORD-23:048](#)

AN ORDINANCE FOR THE TRANSFER OF LOCATION OF PRIVATE CLUB PERMIT

Attachments: [Name Change Application](#)
 [Publication Fee Receipt](#)

Councilmember John Street motioned, seconded by Councilmember Brian Emison, to suspend the rules and offer ORD-23:048 by title only. All voted aye.

Held at one reading

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

ORDINANCES ON SECOND READING

[ORD-23:046](#)

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 117, KNOWN AS THE ZONING ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR CHANGES IN ZONING BOUNDARIES FROM R-1 AND C-5 TO C-3 FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 915 SOUTHWEST DRIVE AS REQUESTED BY G. S. BRANT PERKINS

Attachments: [Staff Summary - C.C.](#)
 [Application for Zoning Ordinance Map Amendment](#)
 [H23-075 Cahoon Boundary survey with aerial \(002\)](#)
 [H23-075 Cahoon Boundary survey](#)
 [Ltr](#)
 [Perkins](#)
 [Signed Owner Notifications](#)
 [U.S](#)
 [Warranty Deeds](#)
 [Zoning Sign](#)
 [Patti Lacks Handout on Trees 12192023](#)

Councilmember David McClain said, Mayor, I had a quick question. Carol, will you explain again, I read the notes from MAPC, but can you give me some clearer ground why we cannot enforce something, an ordinance that was broken by the gentleman clearing the trees and all of that stuff. City Attorney Carol Duncan said, I guess ultimately the issue is the enforcement of the ordinance. There are two ways to get an ordinance into District Court. District Court is the only place we can enforce an ordinance. So, in District Court, what you do is if somebody violates our Code of Ordinances, we cite them into District Court and then the judge makes a determination after trial whether they are guilty of violating our ordinance or not. It is just like a speeding ticket. So, if you get a speeding ticket, you come to District Court and the judge decides whether you are guilty or not before you are fined. With a violation of a city ordinance, we have to be able to serve the person. This person lives out of state. So, we could issue an affidavit for them, but unless they enter the state of Arkansas and we find them, we would never be able to get it served. And, that is a problem. I don't know how to solve that problem. It's the same on a misdemeanor crime. For example, only a felony crime allows you to go across state lines and require people to appear. So, you could commit a theft of less than \$1,000

and you hightail it out of state before an affidavit is filed telling us what you stole and I can't go get you and neither can the Police Department in another state to come back and answer to that theft. The only way we ever get you to answer to that theft is if we happen to catch you back in Jonesboro again and we serve you. It's just a rule of criminal procedure. And, our ordinances are enforced by the District Court, the same as a criminal case is. That is the unfortunate part. Councilmember McClain said, honestly, I guess somebody could do that every time. Ms. Duncan said, they could if they lived out of state and never returned. Believe me, I done some questioning about whether this person ever returns, if they have family or if they are here, is there a chance of serving them over the holidays, for example. But, unfortunately, no.

Councilmember Chris Moore said, all of that is fine and dandy except for the fact the person that we are trying to serve or violated our city ordinance is now asking us to do something for them. Ms. Duncan said, I do understand that and I just caution the Council that we have certain rules on what is required to approve a rezoning. And, we have been tasked before about being arbitrary and capricious and not following our set out rules for what we look at on a rezoning. And, while I understand the frustration, believe me, I just want to put that word of caution out there.

Councilmember Moore asked, so it is your legal opinion then that we should not weigh the fact that he is in violation of the tree ordinance in our consideration of the rezoning, is that what you are telling us? Ms. Duncan said, I am telling you that we set out what we look at on a rezoning in our code and that is not whether they have been a good business for the City of Jonesboro, whether they've violated city ordinances, whether they're a good partner is not one of the things that you guys adopted in your ordinance to look at when you are considering a rezoning.

Councilmember Moore said, listen, I am a simple person and I just need a simple answer. Are you telling us your legal opinion as our attorney that we should or should not take into consideration his violation of the tree ordinance in the deliberation of the rezoning? Ms. Duncan said, yes. I am saying you should not because it is not one of your criteria for a rezoning to be approved. Councilmember Moore said, you have to defend us that is why we ask your opinion. Ms. Duncan said, right, I would have concerns about that being deemed arbitrary and capricious. Councilmember Moore said, I got you. Thank you.

Councilmember Ann Williams said, there is one issue and this one wasn't brought up, I don't think, at MAPC about the safety of this location as far as traffic. Ms. Duncan said, oh yeah, I think that there are other issues. Anything that is on our list you can look at. Councilmember Williams said, for some reason, that wasn't brought up at MAPC, but we can consider that issue, can't we? Ms. Duncan said, you can consider anything on your list. Councilmember L.J. Bryant asked, Carol, long term, can we look at making a change? So, if somebody is in a situation like this, a bad actor, if you will, can we make it a consideration in the future? Ms. Duncan said, yes, I would like to do some research on how far we can go in that area, but sure. I mean, I don't think it comes up often. Mayor Copenhaver said, it is irritating. Ms. Duncan said, it is irritating. I mean we have similar situations with apartment complexes that are owned by out of state individuals that violate code. You know, we had a similar situation with a building that we don't like to talk about down here that was owned by a trust in St. Louis. It is very difficult to enforce city ordinances on out of state people. And, I don't know if that is something, you know in a civil lawsuit, a corporation is required to have a local agent for service, right, but that is different when you are talking about enforcing something through the criminal code. Essentially that is what you are talking about when you are talking about an ordinance violation. I don't know if the legislature is who we might want to approach about that. Mayor Copenhaver said, I have already reached out to them. Ms. Duncan said, I do understand the frustration, 100%.

Councilmember Moore asked, could you elaborate over the safety issue because that is a consideration that we can deliberate on. Could you tell us what the safety issue was at the MAPC over this piece of property? Ms. Duncan said, I do recall it being discussed at MAPC. Yeah, I recall it being discussed after about traffic issues at that location. That's all I can tell you. I don't know if Derrel has any better recollection whether the commercial, the amount of traffic at a commercial development there, would be a safety issue. Planning Director Derrel Smith said, normally on something like that, that is after. I mean we really don't consider that on a rezoning. We consider that when we look at the site plan as far as the safety issue, like traffic studies, and ways to get in and out of the development. It is not something that we normally look at on a rezoning. Ms. Duncan noted, and, it wasn't discussed at MAPC. It came up after I believe.

Councilmember Joe Hafner said, alright, I have a question then, if I can ask it since Derrel is up here. So, on the criteria, you know E is extent to which approval of the proposed rezoning would detrimentally affect nearby property, including but not limited to any impact on property value, traffic, drainage, visual, odor, noise, light, vibration, hours of use/operation, any restriction of the normal and customary use of the affected property, if that's not, looks like something that in the response or the explanation was, was with proper planning, there should not be any adverse effects caused by the property if rezoned to commercial. So, my question is, if that is not something that is looked at here in the rezoning, is it, do we need to have it on as one of our criteria? Because, if they don't look at it, it seems like it is always going to be yes on here. Mr. Smith said, on something like that, normally it will be a yes because we will look at it as the site plan comes in to make sure it follows city code. Councilmember Hafner said, but that is after we've already made the decision. Mr. Smith said, right. So, I'm just saying, do we need to revisit our criteria? Because, it seems like that is always going to be yes on this. And, if that is something that we are being judged, held to. Mayor Copenhaver said, state statute, I believe Council, is the way that we could change that. Councilmember McClain asked, so we can't change this criteria here? Councilmember Hafner said, well, this is our criteria, isn't it? Ms. Duncan said, no, well, you can change your criteria. Mr. Smith said, you can change the criteria. Ms. Duncan said, I mean it is not going to affect the rezoning that is in front of you right now. Councilmember Hafner said, right. Ms. Duncan said, because you can't go backwards. Councilmember McClain said, right, but what I am saying, but going forward? Ms. Duncan said, moving forward, yes. Councilmember Hafner said, yeah, right. That is something we might need to look at. Mayor Copenhaver said, thank you Derrel. Mr. Smith said, yes sir.

Held at second reading

[ORD-23:047](#)

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 117, ARTICLE III, KNOWN AS THE ZONING ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR CHANGES IN ZONING BOUNDARIES FROM AG-1 TO I-1 FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 2650 MOORE ROAD AS REQUESTED BY JOHN EASLEY WITH ASSOCIATED ENGINEERING

Attachments:

[Staff Summary - C.C.](#)

[Plat](#)

[23142 - CWL Rezone Mail Receipts](#)

[23142 - CWL Rezone Signs](#)

[Deed](#)

[Rezoning Application](#)

[Rezoning Plat](#)

[2650 moore](#)

Held at second reading**ORDINANCES ON THIRD READING**[ORD-23:043](#)

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 30-1 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS, THE DEFINITIONS OF INOPERATIVE VEHICLES

A motion was made by Councilperson Mitch Johnson, seconded by Councilperson John Street, that this matter be Passed. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 11 - Brian Emison;Chris Moore;Chris Gibson;David McClain;Joe Hafner;Mitch Johnson;Anthony Coleman;Janice Porter;John Street;LJ Bryant and Ann Williams

Absent: 1 - Charles Coleman

Enactment No: O-EN-001-2024

8. MAYOR'S REPORTS

Mayor Harold Copenhaver reported on the following:

Of course, the year-end report, I will make you well aware that we will be doing a lot of informational through the Communications Department on the year 2023 and then moving into 2024. But, since our last City Council meeting, we held a public input survey on social media for active transportation. It garnered more than 1,600 responses in Jonesboro and a little over 300, I think as well, in Paragould. The survey is closed as of today and I am eager to see what the residents have had to say.

I want to point out that we are not only done with last year's cleanups, but we are already into the first neighborhood cleanup at Magnolia Road Baptist Church this Saturday at 8:00 a.m. until noon. But, also, our sanitation trucks will be running Saturday to help catch up after the holidays. They work extra hard this time of year because trash never takes a holiday. Our neighborhood cleanups in 2023 were an unmitigated success. Sanitation, Code Enforcement, and volunteers from Keep Jonesboro Beautiful partnered with the residents to collect 95.6 tons of trash and 443 tires. They disposed of all at no charge to the residents who dropped off their unwanted things that don't fit into a trash bin. I anticipate this year to even be larger. So, I appreciate again all of the efforts of those departments that have participated and more importantly, we have to get that communication out to the community. Before, all of the waste was sitting in people's homes, yards, and storage units, not to mention our ditches, ugly upping the city. I'm proud of these work groups that have committed themselves to our residents and take pride in Jonesboro's appearance.

Several quality of life projects continued through the holidays, including the new swimming pool at Parker Park. If you have driven by, they have made a measurable difference. They are working on it every day, the new dog park off of Highland Drive, Downtown to ASTATE Connection Trail, and sidewalk improvements to name a few.

Lastly, most of you are aware that a good friend of mine, Pocahontas Mayor Keith Sutton passed away on December 24th at the age of 60. I was saddened about the loss. I had also gotten to know Keith on a business relationship because he was the Vice-President of the Regional Mayors Caucus. I will say, knowing Keith, there are

two types of servants for the public, and those who serve themselves and those that are a statesman. And, Keith was a true statesman for his community. I want to say that my sympathy goes out to his wife Stephanie and their two sons. Our condolences also go out to the families of Dr. Reverend Charles Coleman and A&P Chairman Jerry Morgan. Two representatives of the city who start this year off with a family loss. So, we ask that you continue to bless them through this trying time.

9. CITY COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilmember John Street said, Mayor, it was the first meeting of the year and it is in order to nominate the Mayor Pro-Tempore and I would like to nominate Chris Moore. Councilmember L.J. Bryant seconded the motion. All voted aye. Mayor Copenhagen said, congratulations. Councilmember Street said, Chris serves us well and I appreciate everything he does in that position. Mayor Copenhagen said, I agree. Councilmember Street said, other than that I would just like to wish everybody a Happy New Year. Mayor Copenhagen said, thank you Councilman.

Councilmember L.J. Bryant said, I would just say congratulations to the police department on a huge reduction of murders. That was really exciting. Mayor Copenhagen said, they were down over 100%.

Councilmember Joe Hafner said, just real quick, one thing that we talked about probably four or five years ago on City Council was the whole paper versus plastic bags for yard waste. As you drive around, you just see plastic bag after plastic bag stacked up. I briefly talked to Brian probably last week. One thing I would like for us to do some research on, I know there was a Sanitation Study done a couple of years ago, but kind of what is the city's cost of handling paper versus plastic. It seems like there is a lot of people who get paid to clean up yards and they just leave the plastic bags sitting around for the city to pick up and to dispose of for free. I would kind of like to get some numbers about the volume of the paper versus plastic, what our cost is to handle it and maybe we can come up with some options on ways to deal with the whole paper versus plastic thing because I know it is a huge eye sore for the city. We have got two different trucks driving around the same miles to pick up paper versus plastic because of the way we have to dispose of them with the incinerator and things like that. So, I just think it is something that we need to look at because there is a better way to keep our city beautiful. I think we need to look at it. Thank you. Mayor Copenhagen said, I agree, thank you Councilman.

Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, Happy New Year everybody. I haven't seen you all, all year. God bless you. Mayor Copenhagen said, thank you Councilman.

Councilmember Chris Gibson said, I just want to bring everyone up to speed on the impact fee discussions. As you know, we did pass the resolution to move forward with that. I met with the Mayor last week and we do have a few folks that are interested in serving on that committee. There is an application that has been added to the city website and we have extended the deadline to January 31st on that hoping to get a few more community volunteers to step up and serve on that committee. And, the RFQ process has kind of started slowly. So, just a brief update. Mayor Copenhagen said, thank you Councilman.

Councilmember Chris Moore said, I would just like to thank Alderman Street and the rest of the Council and wish everyone a Happy New Year and I hope this coming year will be as good as last year. Mayor Copenhagen said, thank you Councilman

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Patti Lack, 4108 Forest Hill Road, said, it is nice to be the first person to give the comments on that. I'm sorry to bring this up again and again and again. And, this has to do, I guess, just with the communications. But, we're talking about getting a response from questions that I have. Before Christmas time, I asked whether behind my house is the Savannah Hills apartments and I asked whether or not that Mr. Pickle got a grading permit and a tree removal permit. I got an answer and it said that they got both of them because they had a preliminary approval, not a final plan approval, a preliminary and that we can issue one of those before they get the final preliminary plan from the MAPC. I wrote back in forth with Mr. Campbell. I asked to see this in writing. I want to see it in the manuals stating that these are the steps that the developer has to take. He directed me to the manual and I already had looked at it before, but I could not find it. And, as of today, I have not gotten that answer. It should be just a really simple answer to a simple question. And, that is where it is kind of disturbing. We are not the FBI or the CIA. It's just a simple question. Let me know the page I need to go to, to look at the manual of where it states this. It gets really frustrating because I know that I am not the only one here in the city that asks questions. The city in this area around Savannah Hills have known that there has been a traffic problem since 2018. The citizens have come up here several times and asked about what we are going to do about the traffic. I noticed the other day that we are going to put two speed bumps on Russell Drive. Well, what that is going to do, it is not going to slow down traffic. What people are going to do is they are going to start using Brownstone. So, we are going to start having problems of people speeding down Brownstone. They are not going to take Russell Drive anymore. When Mr. Pickle came here or at the MAPC to get approval for his plan, six and seven, they did a traffic study. And, I told you guys about that the last time I was up here. The traffic study was only done on the two roads, on Craighead Forest Road and Russell Drive. It was not done on Harrisburg or it was not done on Forest Hill Road where we are getting a traffic signal. The reason why and I understand you have got your scope part of it, but our City Planner knew that we have a problem in that area with the traffic, but did not say anything. The last time I was up here, I informed you about our tree ordinance and you guys got a copy of it where it looked like little Spirograph on counting the trees. And, we all know that I had called up almost every single day, every single weekend, and someone came out. So, we know that he had reached them, the tree ordinance, but nothing has been done with that. On October 24th when it went to the MAPC for the preliminary plan is that they told the committee that wasn't going to be as many units as they had on the preliminary plan. So, what they submitted was not the same that is going to be on the final plan. Mr. Pickle has to put a fence around the area on the west side of where I am at. So, there are going to be some changes there. I requested to just see the step-by-step procedure of what a developer has to do and I think it is unfair that he gets to have a grading permit and remove the trees before the MAPC sees the final plans for that development because it is not the same. And, every single day I hear the machines plowing something down and I hear trees coming down. I hope, I hope that someone from the city goes and talks to Mr. Pickle and stops that until I get to see that procedure because if it is in a policy manual, I want to make sure that we are following and that the developer is following the right procedure on developing that property. So, I hope I can see that and get something in writing and I hope I don't have to write a FOIA request for that information because it is just really simple information you guys. Let me see the procedure, that's it. So, thank you. Mayor Copenhagen said, thank you.

11. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilperson Chris Gibson, seconded by Councilperson Brian Emison, that this meeting be Adjourned. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 11 - Brian Emison;Chris Moore;Chris Gibson;David McClain;Joe Hafner;Mitch Johnson;Anthony Coleman;Janice Porter;John Street;LJ Bryant and Ann Williams

Absent: 1 - Charles Coleman

_____ **Date:** _____
Harold Copenhaver, Mayor

Attest:

_____ **Date:** _____
April Leggett, City Clerk