



7019 Pleasant Ridge Road CR 4217 * Coffee City, TX 75763 Phone: (903) 876-3414 * Fax: (903) 873-2433

CITY OF COFFEE CITY
City Council Meeting
September 11, 2023 @ 6 pm
7019 Pleasant Ridge Rd
Coffee City, TX 75763

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A COUNCIL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF COFFEE CITY. TO BE HELD ON **MONDAY, September 11, 2023, at 6:00 PM AT THE COFFEE CITY, CITY HALL, 7019 PLEASANT RIDGE RD, COFFEE CITY, TEXAS.** FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS. THE CITY COUNCIL RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MEET IN A CLOSED SESSION ON ANY AGENDA ITEM SHOULD THE NEED ARISE AND APPLICABLE PURSANT TO AUTHORIZATION BY TITLE 5, CHAPTER 551, OF THE TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE.

Council Members

Jeff Blackstone – Mayor (P)

Carrie Ousley - Place 3 (A)

Ruthie Seward - Place 1 (P)

Keith Skender - Place 4 (P)

Marquis Castleberry – Mayor Pro-Tem (P)

Ollie Harmon - Place 5 (P)

1. Call Meeting to Order:

Mr. Blackstone called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

2. Roll Call and Announce if quorum is present:

Mary McDonald announced roll call and stated a quorum was present.

3. Opening remarks:

Mr. Blackstone thanked everyone for coming out. He stated that this was a regular scheduled meeting and there would be city business that will need to be handled and asked that the citizens refrain from speaking during the meeting and that after executive session it would be open forum and the two individuals that signed up would have their chance to speak then.

4. Consider and Act upon approving items 5 & 6.

Ruthie Seward made a motion to approve items numbers 5 & 6. Ollie Harmon seconds the motion. Keith Skender stated he would abstain from voting due to not attending the special called meeting. Motion carries.

5. Approving City financials for August 2023.

6. Approving meeting minutes for the August 14, 2023 Council Meeting and the September 1, 2023 Special Called meeting.

Mrs. Seward stated she wanted a correction done on the August 14, 2023 minutes for item #16 regarding the EDC, correction to note that she abstained from voting.

7. Consider and Act upon approving changes to the Community Center Rental agreement, adding a \$100.00 nonrefundable sanitation fee.

Mr. Blackstone asked if everyone agreed on the application that was included in their packets and Mrs. Seward stated that she did not agree with it. She stated that the city of Chandler charges differently for

residents and nonresidents. Mrs. Seward stated that we still have not found a signed contract for the church and until we receive one, they should be considered just like any other renters. Mrs. Seward made a recommendation to charge the \$100.00 deposit, that will be returned if the center is cleaned after the event then a rental fee of \$125.00 for Coffee City residents and \$250.00 for nonresidents. Mr. Castleberry asked if the nonresidents would be charged the sanitation fee and Mr. Blackstone stated that they would not be. Ruthie Seward made a motion to approve the community rental fees of \$100.00 deposit, \$125.00 day rental for Coffee City residents and \$250.00 day rental for nonresidents. Keith Skender seconds the motion. Motion carries.

8. Consider and Act upon the removal of Ron Stutes as Coffee City's Attorney.

Keith Skender made a motion to remove Ron Stutes as the Coffee City's Attorney. Ruthie Seward seconds the motion. Motion carries.

9. Consider and Act upon appointing Robert Davis with Flowers Davis Law Firm as Coffee City's Attorney.

Ruthie Seward made a motion to approve appointing Robert Davis with Flower Davis Law firm as Coffee City's Attorney. Ollie Harmon seconds the motion. Motion carries.

10. Consider and Act upon amending the 2023 – 2024 City Budget regarding legal fees.

Mr. Blackstone stated that they would be retaining the law firm and the monthly retainer is going to be \$1,300.00 a month. He stated the legal fees in the budget would need to be adjusted to reflect the \$1,300.00 a month retainer. Mr. Castleberry asked if it would be an increase or decrease, Mr. Blackstone stated that it would have to be an increase. Mr. Castleberry asked what the difference was and the exact number that will need to be increased. Mr. Blackstone stated it would need to be increased by \$16,000.00. Ruthie Seward made a motion to increase the legal fees in the 2023-2024 budget by \$16,000.00. Keith Skender seconds the motion. Motion carries.

11. Fire Dept. Report:

Chris Moore gave the fire department report. He discussed the number of calls for service, the upcoming events. He asked about the fall clean up and Mary McDonald stated that it had been set and it was scheduled for October 7th.

12. Police Dept. Report:

NO REPORT

13. Municipal Court Report:

Mary McDonald gave the court report, listing the total amount of collections and the distributions.

14. EDC Report:

Vicki Castleberry gave the EDC report, stating that during their August meeting they selected officers. She stated that they have been discussing the possibility of addition ordinances for the city to help clean up the properties that have collapse structures. Mrs. Castleberry also stated that they were still working on the welcome signs to be placed at both entrances entering Coffee City on Hwy 155 and waiting on approval for placement. She stated that they are also working a new logo for the strip center. She discussed the Airbnb's and collecting the HOT taxes. Mrs. Castleberry also stated that they would be cancelling this years Halloween event do to the lack of participation. She stated the next upcoming event will be their Christmas market which will take place on December 2nd. The final discussion was that the EDC has been discussion the use of the land in the community that the EDC has acquired, she stated if anyone had ideas of what they would like to see or need, to let her know.

15. Executive Session: Jeff Blackston called for executive session at 6:20 PM.

Consider Personnel Matters, including but not limited to chief of Police JohnJay Portillo, pursuant to 551.074. Receive privileged communication from City Attorney regarding personnel

issues and deactivation issues pursuant to 551.071.

16. Consider and possibly act upon personnel issues involving Chief of Police, JohnJay Portillo and deactivation.

Reconvened to open session at 6:35 PM. City Attorney, Robert Davis, addressed the mayor and council stating that at 2:27 PM today, an email was received from JohnJay Portillo allegedly reporting to resign and it's unsigned. He stated that his recommendation to council is to not act on that and move on to act on the council's decision as to whether or not to terminate his employment. Skeith Skender stated that based on the investigation and the citation received by Chief JohnJay Portillo, he made a motion to not accept his resignation and to fire and terminate him as the Chief of Police at Coffee City effective immediately. Ruthie Seward seconds the motion. Motion carries.

City Attorney, Robert Davis, addressed the Mayor and Council again and stated that his recommendation to city council is to vote to deactivate the police department until such time as it can retain the services of a new qualified chief of police. And once that's done allow individuals who were with the department now to reapply if they wanted. Keith Skender made a motion to deactivate the Coffee City police department effective immediately. Ruthie Seward seconds the motion. Motion carries.

City Attorney, Robert Davis, addressed the Mayor and Council again and stated that it was his recommendation that the council passed a motion requesting that Botie Hillhouse, the Henderson County Sheriff, assist the city and answer calls on behalf of the city during the period that the police department is deactivated. Ruthie Seward made a motion to accept that Sheriff, Botie Hillhouse, assist the city during the time until a new Chief of Police is hired. Ollie Harmon seconds the motion. Motion carries.

17. Open Forum:

- Open Forum is limited to items currently on the agenda.
- Speakers must sign in 5 minutes before the beginning of the meeting.
- Speakers will be given 3 minutes to speak.

Any person that is unable to attend and wishes to submit questions to the council can e-mail the questions to the City Secretary at citysecretary@cityofcoffeecity.com

Kimberly V. spoke, she stated that she has the upmost respect for the sheriff's department but having experience needing their help and calling and having to wait 45 minutes before they could get anyone to help makes her feel unsafe with not having our police department. She stated that she hopes this isn't something that is extended for very long. She stated the surrounding areas are not the best and without the police presence, they will encroach on our peaceful little community we have here. She stated that the sheriff's department being willing to help with best of intentions, they're still 45 minutes to 2 hours away. She stated that as a community member, when the decision was made, her heart sank a little because now she wasn't going to feel as safe in her home. She stated that she appreciates the efforts of the city council but she appreciated being able to call the on-call sergeant if she was in an emergency situation. Mayor, Jeff Blackstone spoke and stated that he understands and that we all have the same sentiment as part of the reason why we wanted to have a police department in our community because we are on the fringes of the county lines. He stated that they hope that sooner than later they would be able to find a very qualified chief, do all the background checks that need to be done to ensure that we have the best candidate and that we can start over rebuilding a police department that we can really be proud of. He stated that they were going to work as fast as they could, but don't want to be in a hurry because they want to make sure they have the best person for Coffee City that not only helps us but helps rebuild our reputation in Henderson County and Smith County community. Mr. Blackstone also stated that he has had many conversations with Sheriff Hillhouse and made the department of public safety aware that we are not going to have coverage in our area. He stated they ensuring that

they're going to make sure to have officers closer to our vicinity to have a quicker response. He stated Henderson County is a very large county so it does require a little longer response time for the sheriff's department but they're going to do everything they can to really help out during this time while we are without our own officers.

Jamie, she requested her last name not be announced. She stated that she also appreciates all the efforts from everyone but she's hoping that doing what's being done is not going to be a mistake. She stated that she has her son and also manages a business in town and two weeks ago she had to call the police department because someone was on the property and the girls were there alone and it felt unsafe. She stated that they get a lot of different people especially during the holidays and summertime and it's really unnerving to not have the police presence. She stated that she hopes that the issue can be resolved much faster. Mr. Blackstone spoke, stating that he understands and that even himself has had break ins on his property. He stated that they would go as quickly as possible but also want to make sure they're making the best choice moving forward. He stated they were not involved in the hiring process of the former chief so this round, they would be starting from scratch and they wanted to make sure they have the best police department they can have moving forward.

18. Adjournment:

Ruthie Seward made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ollie Harmon seconds the motion. Motion carries, meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM.


The City Council of the City of Coffee City reserves the right to adjourn into Executive Session at any time during the course of this meeting to discuss any matters listed on the agenda, as authorized by the Texas Government Code, including, but not limited to, Section 551.071 (Deliberation about Gifts and Donations), 551.074 (Personnel Matters), 551.076 (Deliberations about Security Devices), 551.087 (Economic Development), 418.175-183 (Deliberations about Homeland Security Issues) and as authorized by the Texas Tax Cod, including, but not limited to, Section 321.3022 (Sales Tax Information).

CERTIFICATION

I CERTIFY THAT A COPY OF THE MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2023, CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA BY THE COFFEE CITY, CITY COUNCIL WAS POSTED AT THE CITY HALL PUBLIC NOTICE BOARD AND THE CITY WEBSITE ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2023 BY 5:00 PM.



JEFF BLACKSTONE
MAYOR



MARY MCDONALD
CITY SECRETARY