September 14, 2026

The Eastman City Council met in a regularly scheduled meeting on the above date at 6:00 p.m. The following council members were present: Graham Snyder, John Battle II, Dwayne Burney, Mark Peacock, and Debra Sheffield. Others present were City Attorney Chris Gordon, City Manager Spencer Barron, Police Chief Billy Cooper, Fire Chief Derl Maxwell, City Clerk April Sheffield, Assistant City Manager Dayna Winslette, Code Enforcer Gerald Fordham, and Public Works Director Wynnon Pittman. Other department heads present were Street Supervisor Brandon Brisco, Water Distribution Supervisor Evan Harrell, Water Operator Rodney Harrell, Wastewater Operator Matt McDaniel, and Park Director Tanijia Hughes. Present from the community were EM Harrington III, Mitchell and Susan Coffee, Charlie Johnson, Beulah Mae Allen, Hazel Cohen, Kathleen Scott, Leroy Sparrow, and a few others.

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Snyder.

Invocation was given by Councilor Burney.

Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:
No items needed to be added or removed from the agenda. **On a motion from Councilor Peacock and seconded by Councilors Battle & Burney, the agenda was unanimously approved.**

APPROVE MINUTES:
A motion was made by Councilor Burney and seconded by Councilors Battle and Sheffield, to approve the minutes of the August 24, 2026, regular meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:
SECOND READING OF PROPERTY MAINTENANCE ORDINANCE AMENDMENT:
Attorney Gordon suggests opening up a public hearing. Councilor Snyder opens up the forum. Leroy Sparrow comes forward to speak. Overhearing the discussion at the last meeting, he asks about the end result of the procedures. He understands the penalize part, but what is next? It is stated that the provision in the ordinance gives the judge the authority to make the decision. The end result is not to be penalized but to clean up the area. If it comes to where the homeowner cannot afford to do it themselves, be it out of town or we can't get a hold of them, there's an abatement process where the city can step in and abate the issue itself, and the money it costs to abate the issue goes against the lien on the property, and when the property ever gets sold or anything like that, the city is paid back. Sparrow asks if the city does end up having to abate, does that mean that the city owns it? The answer is that the city will not own the property but will have a claim on any funds that come from the owner selling the property.
Mr. Sparrow also raises a request about the stream that runs from the park all the way back over to Walmart. He asks about some sort of road that would run along that stream and across town. One that would be the smaller size but able to accommodate electric bikes, scooters, and carts.
Susan Coffee asks if the public is able to report any issues or is it strictly on the code enforcement officer to find? Gerald says anyone can call City Hall to report an issue. She also asks about the old cars, etc. that have been up on blocks. Gerald assures her that those will be taken care of.
Gerald reiterates that the main goal is compliance. It isn't to make money or take anyone's property. It is a long process that starts with a courtesy letter or phone call. He will give them every opportunity to correct the violation themselves. A fine is the last thing to do. It will not be an overnight fix either because the process is spread out over a couple of months.
The public hearing is concluded, and Councilor Snyder asks for a motion to approve. **Councilor Peacock made a motion and was seconded by Councilors Burney and Battle. Motion was carried to approve the Property Maintenance Ordinance Amendment.**

SECOND READING OF WEED AND VEGETATION GROWTH ORDINANCE AMENDMENT:

Councilor Snyder opens up the forum for a public hearing. Mitchell Coffee came forward to ask about undeveloped land like the one across from his house. No one lives on the land, but someone certainly owns it. It is confirmed that the city will no longer be responsible for maintaining rights-of-way. It will be the property owner's responsibility. Manager Barron confirms that Eastman is just trying to follow what other cities are doing. The street department is down to four or five people, and the city has 108 miles of road. The city is just asking for everyone to help by keeping their own ditches, etc. cut. At times, the city may be able to help in some of those undeveloped areas, but right now, that is just not the case. Barron also reminds the public that the city does not technically own the right of way. They just have access to use it for utilities, etc. The same goes for the state. The state has been known to cut their ROW once or twice a year. The city has helped where they could but are not obligated to do so. They are now asking the property owners to help. Whether the property owners do so remain to be seen. Brandon Brisco has been asked to speak for his street department. Brandon states that if you look back over his monthly reports, cutting grass is one of the main things that his department does and spends the most time on.
He feels that there are still a lot of unknowns concerning the ordinances and how things will transpire as well as where the council may want his department to turn its focus to.
Mr. Sparrow comes back up to speak and states that he agrees with the property owner taking responsibility for their own property within the neighborhoods. However, the tradeoff should be that the city shifts its focus to making sure Main Street areas and Oak Street areas should look immaculate. Be able to show our community off. He also asks about the property that was cleared off by the post office. Manager Barron states that the area that has been cleared up will be an integral part of the trail that will run from the park to the hospital, just as Mr. Sparrow requested earlier.
Ms. Coffee comes back to talk about the state pulling the ditches along their part of the Hawkinsville Hwy and making them harder to keep cut. Most property owners do not have the proper equipment to cut those ditches. She asks the city to please take into consideration situations like this. The public hearing is then closed.
Councilor Snyder asks for a motion to pass the Weed and Vegetation Growth Ordinance Amendment. A motion was made by Councilor Peacock and a second by Councilor Sheffield. Motion was approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

MONTHLY DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS:

Interim Chief Maxwell presented the fire report for the month of August 2026. The department answered a grand total of 222 calls. There was one non-working structure fire in the city last month. There were two other fire-related calls in the city. The EMS portion included 133 medical related calls with 88 in the city and 45 in the county and 8 MVC's with 4 in the city and 4 in the county. There were 66 public service calls such as fire alarms, smoke scares, and trees down with 55 in the city and 11 in the county. The department was cancelled in route once in the city and once in the county. There were 10 Air Evac calls. There was a total of 252 training hours for the department. Maxwell reported that Firefighter Jacoree Wilcox passed all of his tests and is now a certified community risk reduction officer. The entire department is working hard, getting certifications, and doing extremely well.

Chief Cooper presented the August report for the police department. The department answered a total of 629 calls, worked 15 traffic accidents, wrote a total of 45 tickets and 35 written warnings. They collected a total of $13,459 in cash bonds and fines. There were 1,176 gallons of gas used while patrolling 12,566 miles. The total number of arrests and citations was 147. There was a total of 2 jail days.

Evan presented the water distribution report. There were a total of 433 work orders to be broken down as follows: 117 water cut-ons, 205 water cut-offs, 23 possible water leaks were checked, 8 actual water leaks,

48 locates, 1 valve installed, GPS of 1 meter, pulled 1 meter, performed maintenance on 5 meters, 2 meters to be read, 1 meter inspection, and applied cold patch in one area. The sewer orders included 3 sewer investigations, 2 repairs, and 13 lines required cleaning. As far as stormwater is concerned, they helped with cleaning 2 catch basins. The department used 435 gallons of gas last month. He also gave the reminder that the next day was cut off day.

Brandon presented the street department report. For the month of August, there was a total of 2 work orders for animal calls, 3 areas needed trees trimmed, 9 limb pickup orders, 45 limb/leaf dumping, 1 tree down, 7 requests for mowing certain areas, 2 signs down, 2 potholes, and 1 sinkhole repair. Vehicle maintenance was performed every Monday morning on the department vehicles. The department is trying to wrap up the end of summer and they are down people. They are doing the best that they can.

Rodney came forward to give an update on the wells. A total of 34,293,000 gallons of water were pumped during the month of August. That is an average of 1.106 MGD.

Matt presented the wastewater information for August. A total of 616 hours were spent with 77 hours on cleaning clarifiers and filters, 123 on lab and sampling, 35 on the belt press and sludge, 61 on lift station and well repair, 65 on lawn maintenance, 89 on plant maintenance, 30 on routine rounds, 28 on management duties, and 108 on plant operations. The amount of treated water released from the plant into Sugar Creek was 14,010,000 gallons with an average of 0.452 MGD. There were 698,900 gallons of water used at the plant. The total rain for this month was 4.4 inches. The lab charged $4,482 for wastewater testing.

Gerald gave an update for the code and permitting departments. There was a total of 69 work orders in August. He handled 46 grease trap inspections, 1 blighted property, and issued 3 code violations. There was 1 sign permit issued, 7 building inspections, 4 building permits, 3 business license inspections, 3 electrical permits and one progress inspection. Gerald participated in 32 hours of training last month.

Wynnon came forward to give status updates as of the end of August. 113 gallons of fuel were used for limb and leaf disposal site and the mini x at the park splash pad. The remodel of Building B at the park is nearing completion with only a few minor concerns that need to be addressed. Graham & Studstill's crew have satisfactorily met the expectations and requirements of the bid. 97% of the dirt work is done for the splash pad. Korkat has finally moved in and began on the plumbing. They are planning to be through by the end of September but the actuality of that remains uncertain. Jeffersons on Main Street did not pass the latest state fire marshal inspection and will need to redo some things. The Sleep Inn is still progressing along with anticipating being open for rentals by November 1, 2026. The car wash on Congo Lane is still needing the power to be hooked up, the dirt work completed for the curbing and paving, as well as the water line work to be completed. The subcontractor is currently working in another town and unable to complete the project here right now. There is no planned opening date. The lot at the airport grad site has been cleared and all of the pipe has been delivered. Graham & Studstill have tentatively set a start date for the second week of September. The City Hall bathroom project is set to begin on Tuesday, September 14, after the contract amendments are approved. G&S are also nearly complete with remodeling the college. The Gracie Lane project already has 4 new homes completed and rented out. The contractor is set to move forward with 5 more in that area. Public sidewalks have been poured in that subdivision around the new homes. The lot beside the post office that was donated by Kimbo Properties has been cleared and 21 loads of sand has been hauled in to dress it up. The donor has also provided seed and straw and is currently working with a local contractor to install a pavilion and potentially a small dog park. They have allocated the city $100K to use towards this project. The Windsor Way project has created a few complaints, but 4 new homes have been built and already sold. He also has more permits to build more after these.

Park Director, Tanijia Hughes, came forward to give updates about her department. August 3 – 20 pickleball league registration was held. Angel Gray & Gerald Fordham hosted Code Enforcement classes during the week of August 11 -14. On August 13, the park hosted "Bring a friend, tell a friend". It was a pickleball skills clinic and open play night to help participants learn more about pickleball and get additional practice. The first Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) classes were held at the park on August 14 & 15. Opening night of the current pickleball league was August 25. Looking ahead for September, more events are being planned for the upcoming holidays. They will be introducing Kickball to the Eastman City Park. Registration is now open for a free and friendly community game to kick off the fall season on September 23rd at 6 PM.

RALPH GIUNTA:

Mr. Giunta had some complaints that he wanted to take before council concerning the repercussions of the building that is taking place in Windsor Way. Gerald and Wynnon went by and visited with Mr. Guinta today. They listened to him and explained what the city ordinances cover and dictate. Mr. Guinta then decided that there was no need to come and talk to the council at this time.

BEULAH ALLEN PROCLAMATION:

The family of Ms. Beulah Mae Allen has requested that the city recognize and honor Ms. Allen for her 90th birthday on September 24, 2026. Ms. Allen is a lifelong resident of the city of Eastman and Dodge County. The proclamation will serve as a true testament of her faith, value, strength and perseverance in reaching this important milestone. **Councilors Peacock and Burney made a motion to approve the proclamation with Councilor Sheffield offering a second to the motion. The proclamation was approved unanimously,** and the full version will be included in the minute book. Council also stood with Ms. Allen's family and friends for a picture.

APPROVE BUDGET AMENDMENTS:

Assistant Manager Winslette has gathered some amendments to make to the 2026 Budget. Instead of only doing these once a year, she would like to do them quarterly to keep the budget and funds as up to date as possible. **Councilor Peacock made a motion with Councilor Battle offering the second. These amendments were passed unanimously.**

SET MILLAGE RATE HEARINGS:

Councilor Snyder asks what the pleasure of the council is. If they choose not to accept the rollback, there will be no need for the hearings. An extensive work session was had prior to the meeting to discuss this. They are certainly trying to address the needs of the city, the needs of the community. and how we can see or how we can make Eastman grow. To put it in context, in our work session, we discussed a bunch of different scenarios. One cost that is a key driver of our cost is our insurance for our employees, which are a valuable resource that are hard to replace. So that's certainly something we are factoring in and trying to make the best decisions possible for both the employees and our taxpayers. Because without their resources, without their generosity, none of this would be possible. What is our purpose? What is our mission going forward? **Councilor Peacock makes a motion to stay at 9.55 and freeze everything. Councilor Sheffield gave a second to Mr. Peacock's motion.** Councilor Battle states that he thought they had discussed raising it a half. Peacock feels that it needs to be done another way. He is aware that insurance will play a big roll, but no specifics will be known until October or November. Peacock says it will be a hard year, but they will have to make it work. Try not to go up on the property tax owners. If we have to raise fees and come back down later, that's one way. The property owner alone is the one that's carrying the burden and it's not fair to those that are not paying property taxes. We need to figure out another direction. A discussion was had about setting a higher millage and coming back down after more

information comes in about the insurance. Manager Barron pointed out that a decision would need to be made tonight. Peacock stands firm on not raising the millage rate**. Councilor Snyder called for a vote and received a unanimous approval of a 9.55 millage rate for 2026.**

Snyder asks Clerk Sheffield on the dates needed for the public hearings. April explains that the rate was presented tonight, the first and second hearing advertisements along with the 5 – year history will be in the paper Wednesday, September 16. She suggested 10 AM & 6 PM hearings on Wednesday, September 23, as well as the final advertisement to be in that day's paper. Councilor Snyder asks about a specific time frame, but Sheffield stated the length of the hearing did not have to be specific but at least one of the hearings had to be held between 6 and 7 PM. On Wednesday, September 30, she suggests calling a meeting at 10 AM to hold the last public hearing and then officially pass the millage rate. Attorney Gordon stated that at the end of the hearings, you could choose to adopt a millage rate lower than advertised rate without restarting the public hearing process. Snyder explains the reason behind having the hearings is because the city opts for a 9.55 millage when the rollback is 9.368. That means an increase of 1.94%. **With no other comments, a motion was made by Councilor Burney and a second was made by Councilor Battle. The council unanimously approved 3 public hearings to be held at 10AM & 6PM on Wednesday, September 23, 2026, and 10 AM on Wednesday, September 30.**

APPROVE JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN RESOLUTION:

Manager Barron states that numerous meetings were held with the county and other cities here in Dodge County, and one requirement is that we come together, publish, and adopt what is called the Dodge County Joint Comprehensive Plan: Dodge County, an Exception to the Rural. It's a requirement under state law to pass a resolution approving this plan for the city to be able to draw down grants. Councilor Snyder states that they were open meetings and several people from the community attended. A lot of information was thrown around that meeting and a lot of good food for thought on how we want to grow and better this community. With no other comments, **Councilor Peacock made a motion to approve the new Joint Comprehensive Plan Resolution. Councilor Burney gave a second and all members approved.**

APPROVE 2025 LMIG/LRA CONTRACTOR:

The 2025 LMIG/LRA was put out for bid recently. Atlanta Paving and Concrete Construction came in at $502,549.87. East Coast Asphalt at $302,932.74. Griffin Grading and Concrete at $376,114.46 and then the Scruggs Company at $417,774. The city's engineers, Hofstadter and Associates, reviewed the submitted documents and recommend that we go with East Coast Asphalt in the amount of $302,932.74. The areas included are Congo Lane Connector, 1st Avenue, Willow Way, Airport Rd, and Main Street with 3rd & 4th Avenues. **A motion was made by Councilor Peacock and a second by Councilor Battle to proceed with East Coast Asphalt at $302,932.74.**

SCHEDULE WORK SESSION:

Councilor Peacock made a motion to have a work session on Monday, September 21, 2026, at 6 PM. The purpose of the work session would be to discuss the 2027 Budget, projects, and a plan for next year. Councilor Sheffield gave a second with a unanimous vote by all.

CITY MANAGER REPORT:

Manager Barron reminds everyone that the next day is cut off day. He asks the public to please take advantage of the pickleball and kickball activities going on at the park. Hopefully the splash pad will be up and running sooner or later. Music on Main will be downtown on October 24, 2026. Come down and celebrate. Lastly, if anyone has a problem or concern, please reach out to City Hall and someone will try to address it and get back with you as quickly as possible.

OTHER BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL:

Councilor Burney tells Mr. Pittman not to drop his standards. He is doing a great job. Councilor Peacock says thank you to all the staff and everybody that does things for the city. It doesn't go unrecognizable. Sometimes it's not where they can always pay increases, but they thank you for sticking in there with them. Councilor Battle appreciates everything that the employees do and commends the community for coming out and speaking their mind.

On a motion from Councilor Peacock and a second from Councilor Burney, the meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote.

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CHAIRMAN **CITY CLERK**