



# City Administrator Briefing Report

## Mayor

Rhonda Haight

## City Council

Angie Arp, Mayor Pro Tempore

Jack Taylor

Christy Kay

Bill Bivins

William Whaley

## November 2023

### City Administrator Eric M. Soroka

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This report is prepared in order to inform the Mayor and City Council of ongoing matters, governmental services activities and the status of major projects.

### **Downtown Fire**

On November 18, a fire that started in Danielle's Café on East Main Street swept through the Fieldstone Shopping Center and several of the businesses and storefronts were destroyed by the fire. The Fannin County Fire Department along with units from Union and Gilmer County fought the fire and were able to save 3 businesses and 3 homes directly exposed to the initial fire. The city's Police Department and Public Works Department assisted in traffic control and cleanup during and after the fire. The city extends their deepest gratitude to all the first responders who acted swiftly to contain the fire. Several businesses have initiated fund raising events and "go fund me" websites to assist the businesses impacted by the fire.

### **2024 Budget**

**Complete.** The 2024 proposed budget document was submitted to the City Council on November 1. The budget also includes a five year projection of capital improvements to address infrastructure needs in the City. A City Council Workshop was held on November 8 to review the budget document. A public hearing was held on November 8 to obtain public input and the budget was approved at the November Council Meeting.

### **2023 City Council Elections**

The following Council members have been reelected to a four year term:

Post 1 Jack Taylor

Post 3 Christy Kay

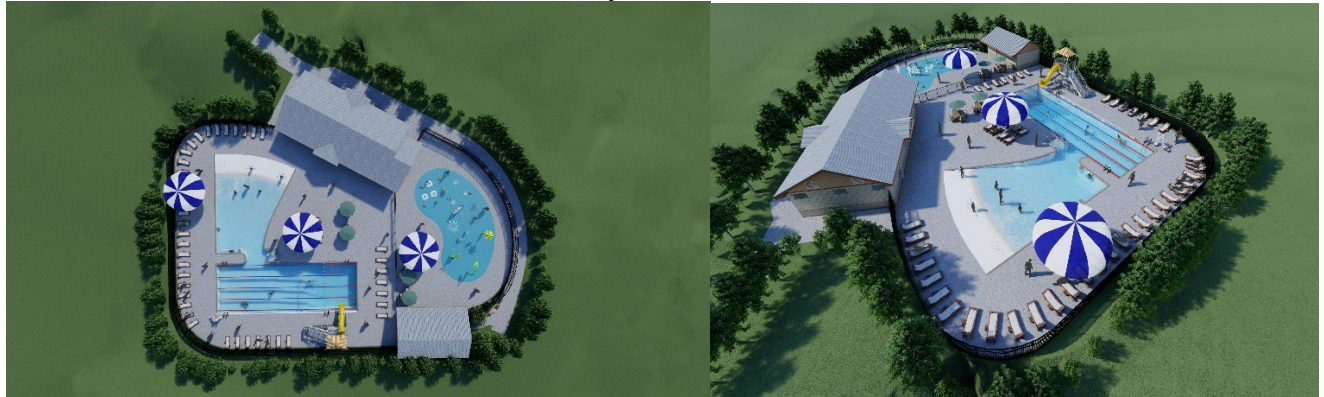
Post 5 Bill Bivins

**Chamber of Commerce Agreement**

At the November Meeting, the City Council approved the renewal of the Agreement to comply with O.C.G.A. 48-13-51 with the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce. The Agreement outlines how the restricted Hotel/Motel Tax is distributed to the Chamber and how the money is to be allocated in conformance with state law.

**Intergovernmental Agreement for Blue Ridge City Park between the City and County**

The County has awarded the bid to Integrated Properties out of Chattanooga in the amount of \$3,697,000.00. Construction is underway.



**New Work Order/Purchase Order System**

The new Citizen Portal that enables citizens to submit work orders from reporting potholes to down trees. This user-friendly system offers a streamlined approach for instant communication and requests directly from citizens to our city departments. Users of the system will be able to track your work orders and receive updates via email. The goal is to expedite the resolution to requests and provide a response as quickly as possible.

**Special Events Farmers Market**

The following events are scheduled:

- Ice Skating Rink scheduled from November to January
- Light Up Blue Ridge

**Utility Department Highlights and Infrastructure Improvements**

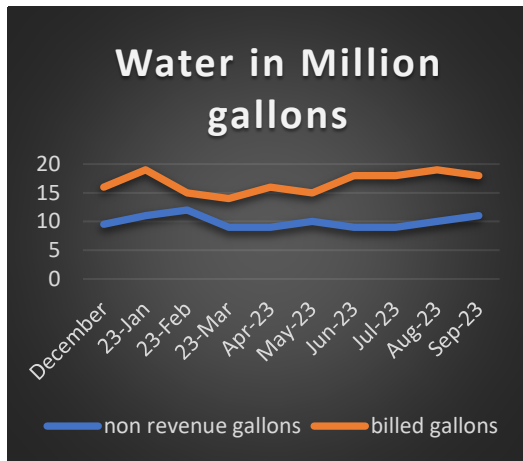
**WATER**

Finished water	<b>30,010,546</b>
Water sold	<b>19,100,923</b>
Non revenue	<b>10,909,623</b>

(includes flushing, road washing, fire department usage, etc). Water permit average daily use is 79%. Water plant capacity average daily use is 45%.

- The City was awarded a \$1,000,000 grant and the City will provide local match, for a total project of \$2,000,000 to address water loss in Mountain Tops. We are working with engineers to design the rehab to address areas with the most leakage in that subdivision. The project cost is \$2,000,000 to be paid as follows: \$1,000,000 from SFR funds (grant), \$400,000 water surcharge, \$420,000 splost, \$100,000 ARPA (grant), and \$80,000 from water funds.

Carter & Sloope, city engineers, has surveyed 100% of the rehab area and we are currently waiting on additional information from OPB on additional grant requirements.



- The pump station rehab at Mountain Tops is currently estimated at \$350,000. This project has been pushed to 2024-2025 so that it doesn't interfere with the water main rehab. The station is approximately 30 years old and needs rehabilitation.

- The crew has started field audits for EPD's new requirement on Service Line Inventory and is 85% complete with City service line identification. The purpose of the new regulation is to determine if there is any lead pipe in the water system. Currently there is no known lead pipe. By October 2024 the City will have identified every water main and service line in the system.

- Hwy 5 GDOT water line relocation. This line relocation is required by GDOT.
- 7 water line leaks were repaired, 1 fire hydrant was replaced and 0 city side service lines were replaced.

### **WASTEWATER**

Treated sewer	10,246,000
Billed	<u>9,376,343</u>
I & I	<b>869,657</b>

Sewer permit used is 44%. Sewer plant capacity used is 44%

\*Percentages can be affected rain, storm water infiltration or times of heavy; fluctuations are normal

- The City is continuing repair of known I & I issues.
- The design for the sewer lift station upgrades due to aging infrastructure for CVS and Industrial lift stations is complete. The plan to abandon the CVS station has been moved to phase II due to costs. The City will rehab the Industrial station into a bigger station that will handle what previously took two stations. Included in this will be the rerouting of a force main along 515. Carter & Sloope is finishing paperwork for easements and EPD approvals. The project was bid on September 22, 2023 and the bid award was awarded in October at the cost of \$3,243,362 funded by GEFA.
- The bid for the sewer treatment plant rehab project was awarded to Sol Construction, LLC in the amount of \$4,906,300. Construction is schooled to start in January 2024.
- 4 sewer leak was repaired.

**CUSTOMER BASE** – The City has 3,271 active water connections serving 3,606 units, 1188 active sewer connections. We have 3526 meters in the distribution system. The City installed 15 new residential and 1 commercial water taps and 9 new sewer taps. 12 new residential tap applications were submitted, none of these were in the City. The City signed up 41 new

customers at existing locations, had 43 customers leave existing locations and completed 202 work orders for the month.

**New Development Revenues - \$61,400.**

**Utilities Collection Revenue - \$398,646.**

**Police Department Statistics & Highlights**

The new message board trailer that tracks vehicle speeds has been deployed in various areas of the City to deter speeders.

	September 2023	October 2023
<b>DISPATCHED CALLS FOR SERVICE</b>	730	598
<b>UCR CRIMES REPORTED</b>	27	24
<b>ACCIDENT/INCIDENT/ MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS</b>	29/96	37/69
<b>CITATIONS ISSUED /WARNINGS</b>	94/388 * 3 parking tickets	75/218 * 13 parking tickets
<b>TOP 5 CITATIONS ISSUED</b>	*Tag violations *No Insurance *Driving w/ Suspended License *Shoplifting *Speeding	*Speeding *Tag Violations *Hands free violation *Following too close *Failure to obey traffic control device

**Municipal Court**

October 2022-October 2023 – Processed 2014 citations from all agencies with fines totaling \$368,969.

October 2023 - Processed 13 parking citations and 143 citations from all agencies with fines totaling \$28,267.

**Public Works (Streets & Parks) Department Highlights**

- Clean the Depot bathroom Sunday – Saturday.
- Clean the playground bathroom - Sunday – Saturday.
- Maintained Mineral Springs Trail.
- Cleared roads, sidewalks, curb, and gutters from debris in downtown every Friday.
- Repaired and replaced damaged storm drains.
- Cleared numerous drainage ditches in various sections of the City before and during heavy rain.
- Repaired various pothole and utility repairs throughout the City.
- City Parking Lot revenue to October 2023: \$ 156,602.
- The downtown planter beautification project was complete.
- A movable solar powered speed feedback sign was installed on Ada Street to deter speeders.

- Worked with paving contract to prepare areas for milling and resurfacing.
- Replaced signs and installed new signs.
- Worked with the contractor to have the Christmas Lights in the downtown area installed.
- Utilized city park employees to fix the flooring area around the restrooms at the Farmers Market at a cost savings.
- Prepared city float to be in “Light Up Blue Ridge” parade.

### **City’s 2023 Roads and Sidewalk Improvements**

The City Council awarded the bid to Johnson Paving, at the low bid price of \$1,101,558.12. The following improvements are complete:

#### **Sidewalks:**

1. Mountain Street (Roberts Way to Old Hwy 76)
2. Depot Street (E. Main St. to Old Hwy 76)
3. W. Main Street (In Front of Fire Dept)
4. E. Main Street (Church St. to past Hall St.)
5. Church Street (Old Hwy 76 to E. 2nd St.)
6. Summit Street (W. 1st St. to W. Main St.)

#### **Streets:**

1. Depot Street (Old Hwy 76 to W. 1st St.)
2. W. Main Street (Church St. to N of Depot St.)
3. Industrial Park Dr. (Ada St. to Windy Ridge)
4. McKinney Street (W. 1st St. to Old Hwy 76)

The portion of E. 1st Street (E. 2nd St. to 76 Conn) is delayed to complete utility work in the area. Tentatively scheduled for early December.

### **Downtown Drainage Project Update**

Railroad Crossing Portion- The contractor (Wilson Construction Management) has completed the culvert replacement/upgrade (24” to 60”) under the railroad tracks. This portion of the project has been inspected and approved.

The City completed the process of obtaining the main easement for the planned drainage work. Bids were received and opened for the above subject project. A total of four (4) responsive bids were received. North Georgia Concrete, Inc. out of Dahlonega, Georgia with a base bid of \$3,892,362.38 was determined to be the low bidder.

This is a major drainage project that has been put off for years. The City Engineer indicates that this project was in the works in 2017. Obviously, delaying this project has driven up the cost. Also, dividing the project in phases will not solve the drainage issues in the short term and could result in even higher costs.

The proposed 2024 budget contains \$1,900,000 for this project. We are exploring utilizing a loan from GEFA to fund the shortfall of \$2,000,000. Once GEFA determines if we are eligible, the project will be presented to the City Council to award the bid and begin construction.

**Mineral Springs Road Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation**

Complete.

**Downtown Restroom Facility Project**

Due to the cost of the original project bids, we are working with the Architect to redesign the building to a one-story building that only includes restrooms. The goal is to begin construction in January when the train is not in service.

## CURRENT DEVELOPMENT & APPLICATIONS IN PROGRESS

Applicant	Project	Address	Application	Description	Status \Expiration date
GWG INVESTMENTS	LAND DISTURBANCE	0052-109A & 0052-110-01 SCENIC DRIVE	RENEWED PERMIT:2022-841	GRADING 2 COMMERCIAL LOTS AND STORMWATER PLANS	IN PROCESS 11-19-2023
FANNIN COMMISSIONERS	LAND DISTURBANCE	BR02-221 & BR02-222 134 CHURCH STREET	PERMIT:2023-865	PARKING LOT	IN PROCESS 2-15-2024
BUILDING OF BLUE RIDGE LLC	REMODEL	BR02-124B 544 EAST MAIN STREET	PERMIT:2023-885	REMODEL FOR A APARTMENT	IN PROCESS 3-28-2024
ROGER WATSON	DEMO PERMIT	BR02-005 524 EAST SECOND ST	PERMIT:2023-887	DEMO OLD BLOCK BUILDING	IN PROCESS 3/29/2024
GRUMPY OLD MEN	REMODEL	BR03-022 1315 EAST MAIN STREET	PERMIT:2023-897	REMODELING RESTROOMS AND ENCLOSURE ADDITION TO REAR SLAB OF BUILDING	IN PROCESS 6/7/2024
BBSI	REMODEL	BR02-098 631 EAST MAIN STREET	PERMIT:2023-898	REMODEL MAIN ENTRANCE OF BUILDING	IN PROCESS 6/8/2024
NEW HORIZON HOMES	DEMO PERMIT CONSTRUCTION PERMIT	BR02-063 951 EAST MAIN STREET	PERMIT:2023-899	DEMO GARAGE CONSTRUCT NEW GARAGE REMODEL KITCHEN AND BATHROOMS	IN PROCESS 6/8/2024
FERRO BUILDING COMPAN	BUILD DUPLEX	BR06-101 202 EAST SECOND STREET	PERMIT:2023-867	BUILD DUPLEX WITH DRIVEWAY	IN PROCESS 6/21/2024
MARK SIMS	CONSTRUCTION PERMIT	BR02-039 MCKINNEY STREET	PERMIT:2023-902	BUILD PRIMARY RESIDENCE	IN PROCESS 6/23/2024
WINDY RIDGE CONOCO	CONSTRUCTION PERMIT	0045-040-BC 4900 APPALACHIAN HWY	PERMIT:2023-906	INSTALL VENT HOOD WITH FIRE SUPPRESSION	IN PROCESS 7/24/2024

PATRICK HOGAN	REPLACE OF MOBILE HOME	BR05-102 564 SUMMIT STREET	PERMIT:2023-908	REMOVAL OF A 1975 SINGLE WIDE AND REPLACE WITH NEW ONE	IN PROCESS 8/11/2024
KIZUNA	REMODEL	BR01-140 140 PROGRESS CIRCLE STE 2	PERMIT:2023-911	REMODELING EMPTY PARCEL NEIGHBORING EXISTING RESTAURANT	IN PROCESS 8/18/2023
BLUE RIDGE CITY PARK	BUILD POOL	BR05-006 350 GRAY STREET	PERMIT:2023-914	BUILD NEW POOL AND SPLASH PAD	IN PROCESS 08/28/2024
DAVID HAIGHT	LAND DISTURBANCE	BR05-003 MINERAL SPRINGS ST & JONES ST	PERMIT:2023-762	RENEWAL OF LAND DISTURBANCE PERMIT	IN PROCESS 09/06/2024
JACK TAYLOR	CONSTRUCTION PERMIT	BR02-246 504 WEST SECOND STREET	PERMIT:2023-886	ADDING ROOF TO DECK AND EXPANSION OF DECK	IN PROCESS 09/08/2024
BRENDA QUEEN	CONSTRUCTION PERMIT	BR02-216A WEST 2ND STREET	PERMIT:2023-932	RAISE SLAB AND ADD PILLARS	IN PROCESS 11/27/2024



