

**Minutes
City of Folkston
Regular Monthly Meeting
June 21, 2021**

The Mayor and Council of the City of Folkston met in regular session on June 21, 2021 at City Hall.

Mayor Gowen called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. He gave the invocation and led the pledge of allegiance.

Members Present: **Lee Gowen, Mayor**
 Ruby Baker
 Jim Gowen
 Rob Roberson
 Bruce Young

Members Absent: **Marion Davis, Jr.**

Also Present: **Leonard H. Lloyd, City Manager**
 Darlene Williamson, City Clerk
 Hali Coffey, Deputy Clerk
 Wesley Green, Chief of Police
 Patrick Brooks, City Attorney

Visitors: Marla Ogletree with Charlton County Herald, Dana O'Quinn Director of Okefenokee Chamber, Charlene Carter, Brandi Murrell, Julie Hughes, Kim Rodgers, Garrett Rodgers, Claudia Burkhart, Wendy Hernandez, Michael Lusk, Sylvia Everett, Pastor Antwon Nixon, Elaine Bailey, Kimberly Mitchell, Gloria Brown, and Pastor Terrance Pender

AGENDA

Mrs. Baker made a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Mr. Young seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

MINUTES

Mr. Young made a motion to approve the minutes for the May 17, 2021 Regular Meeting as presented. Mr. Gowen seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

APPROVE INCOME AND EXPENSE STATEMENTS

Mrs. Baker made a motion to approve the May 2021 income and expense statements as presented. Mr. Young seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Mayor Gowen stated the police department filed 54 incident reports, investigated 9 accidents and answered 1464 calls during the month of May 2021. The police department collected \$11,099.00 fines and forfeitures; the city's portion is \$8,988.19.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Lloyd gave an update on the LMIG Main Street Project. The bids for the project will be opened August 4, 2021 at 11:00 AM.

The lift station at Clay Branch bridge on Okefenokee Drive needs to be replaced. The bid documents were posted on June 21, 2021. The bid opening will be July 21, 2021.

There is an issue with rain water pooling on Main Street and Tower Street. The engineer and contractor is aware of the problem and are working on a correction for the drainage.

The city has submitted an application for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant, the last day to apply was June 21, 2021. The funds will be used toward the renovation of the sewer treatment-facility. The engineering plans for the project are to be submitted by the year 2024 and the money is to be spent by the year 2026.

DANA O'QUINN / OKEFENOKEE CHAMBER:

Dana O'Quinn introduced the Chamber Board members to the council. She presented an outline of upcoming events for June through December of 2021. She then requested the council to reconsider the approval of a two-day Okefenokee Festival. She informed the council that she is requesting a quote for private security for Saturday and Sunday. The Sheriffs Office has volunteered to provide security for one of the two days. Meridian Waste has agreed to sponsor trash cans and trash pickup for the festival. She also stated there will not be a parade during the festival. After a discussion the council agreed to allow the two-day festival under the condition that all the requirements are met. Mayor Gowen and city manager, Pender Lloyd will work with the chamber to make sure the details have been addressed.

Mr. Young made a motion to approve the Okefenokee Festival for October 9 and 10, 2021 contingent upon all requirements and conditions are met and to authorize Mayor Gowen and Pender Lloyd to oversee the planning of the festival. Mrs. Baker seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mrs. Baker and Mr. Young stated they were pleased with the success of the Junetenth celebration and commended everyone involved with the planning and organizing of the event.

Mayor Gowen commended Dana O'Quinn for her hard work and dedication to the Chamber and for making Folkston look good.

He also commended Natasha Donley and Kim Mitchell for their hard work on the Juneteenth celebration.

He thanked Pastor Antwon Nixon for all the work he is doing with the youth in the community.

ADJOURN

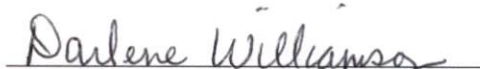
Mrs. Baker made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Young seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting closed at 7:02 pm.

ATTEST:



Lee Gowen, Mayor



Darlene Williamson, City Clerk

City of Folkston

Regular Meeting

June 21, 2021

Please Sign In

Please Print

Maria Ogletree

Dana O'Quinn

Charlene Carter

Brandie Murrell

Julie Hughes

Kim Rodgers

Corbett Rodgers

Chaire Bailey

Sylvia Everett

Claudia Burkhardt

Antwon Nixon

Kim Mitchell

Gloria Brown

Terance Burke

Wendy Hernandez

Michael Lusk

June 21, 2021

- Food Truck Friday was a Success! All 3 food trucks, 2 sweet vendors & peanut truck sold out. Adding a truck for next event on Friday July 18th.
- Juneteenth was a success! The organizers did a great job.

- Request Reconsideration of 2 day Okefenokee Festival – October 9-10, 2021 to be held on Main Street
 - ❖ Includes vendor booths, kids area, car show
 - ❖ Allow vendors to begin setting up on Friday night after 4
 - ❖ Festival would open at 10 am Saturday
 - ❖ Live Entertainment at the Depot 6-8 / all booths shut down for evening by 9 pm
 - ❖ Reopen vendor booths on Sunday at 11 am and all vendors shut down by 4 pm and be cleared out by NLT 6 pm
 - ❖ Meridian Waste will sponsor trash cans and pickup for the festival
 - ❖ Have requested a quote for private security for Saturday/Sunday
 - ❖ Sheriffs Office has volunteered to provide security for 1 of the 2 days
 - ❖ No parade

Upcoming Events Planned:

June:

1. June 24-25th – Travel Writers with Traditions Magazine to tour and feature our area
2. June 26 – Farmers Market

July:

1. July 6-9 Georgia Association of Chamber Executives Leadership Conference – Jekyll Island
2. July 18 – Food Truck Friday
3. July 24 – Farmers Market
4. July 31 – Back to School Backpack Event (working with Robert Alderman & Charlton Family Connections)

August:

1. August 06 – Food Truck Friday
2. August 28 – Agriculture Day (AG Day) & Farmers Market (working with Extension Office/4H)
3. August 30 – September 2 – Explore Georgia Training Symposium

September:

1. September 9 – Senior Day Event (working with Council on Aging)
2. September 10 – Food Truck Friday Tailgate (Charlton vs McIntosh Academy)
3. September 11 – Miss Okefenokee Beauty Pageant
4. September 17 – Homecoming Parade down Main Street
5. TBD Farmers Market

October:

1. October 1 – Food Truck Friday Tailgate (Charlton vs Turner)
2. October 9 – Okefenokee Festival
3. Scarecrow and Fall Decorating Contest
4. October 30 – Halloween Town
5. TBD Farmers Market

November:

1. Annual Chamber Dinner & Silent Auction
2. Events TBD (Cornhole Tournament/ BBQ & Chili Cook off)
3. TBD Food Truck Friday
4. TBD Farmers Market

December:

1. December 5 – Christmas In the Park with Lighted Parade/Car Show
2. TBD Live Nativity and Sing

Interesting Facts:

Road trip travel is up 185% in the last 2 months

- ✦ Consumers are open to travel information more than ever
- ✦ Outdoors is the #1 searched for travel
- ✦ HB317 – Beginning July 1, 2021 Adds a \$5.00 tax to short term rentals which goes directly back to the county. This mainly affects VRBO/AirBNB type listings. The tax is restricted in use like the hotel/motel tax.
- ✦ Tourism in Georgia drives \$68.96 billion industry for the state.
- ✦ According to the UGA, In Charlton County it supports 256 jobs (food, ONWR, lodging, etc) and makes a \$4,585,514 dollar impact in our community.
- ✦ The more we do to drive traffic, manage our marketing in a professional manner to our destination and give visitors a great experience, the more we can grow and provide more benefits and opportunities for our citizens.

Our office promotes Charlton County as a destination for:

- Okefenokee Swamp
- Train Fans
- Traders Hill Campground
- Historical Churches & Cemeteries
- Historical Buildings
- State recognized trail (Woodpecker Trail)
- Traditions Highway
- Georgia Grown
- Dining
- Unique lodging experiences
- Central location to urban areas, beaches, rivers, fishing, camping
- Boutique shopping
- Festivals and Farmers Market

Thank you for your continued support of our office and our services!!!

Chamber of Commerce:

A chamber of commerce is an organization of businesses seeking to further their collective interests, while advancing their community, region, state or nation. Business owners in towns, cities and other territories voluntarily form these local societies/networks to advocate on behalf of the community at large, economic prosperity and business interests.

Chambers focus to some degree on five primary goals: Building communities (regions/states/nations) to which residents, visitors and investors are attracted; Promoting those communities; Striving to ensure future prosperity via a pro-business climate; Representing the unified voice of the employer community; and Reducing transactional friction through well-functioning networks. Chambers have other features in common. Most are led by private-sector employers, self-funded, organized around boards/committees of volunteers and independent. They share a common ambition for sustained prosperity of their community/region, built on thriving employers. Most are ardent proponents of the free market system, resisting attempts to overly burden private sector enterprise and investment.

Convention Visitors Bureau (CVB)/Destination Management Organization (DMO):

We are recognized by the state of Georgia and through an agreed upon contract between the Chamber and the County & City as the CVB/DMO for Charlton County. Grants issued by the State regarding tourism are required to have this designation.

A convention and visitor bureau are a "destination marketing" organization. Both in Georgia and nationally, most convention and visitor bureaus are not-for-profit organizations. The fundamental mission of a convention and visitor bureau is the promotion of visitor and business travel, which generates overnight lodging for a destination. They are directly responsible for travel and tourism "product awareness" to visitors. Billions of direct and indirect revenues, and taxes are generated into the state and local economy due to the marketing efforts of Georgia's convention and visitor bureaus.

Regional Visitors Information Center:

The mission of the Regional Visitor Information Center (RVIC) Program is to create synergy, partnerships, increase communication and provide professional development between Georgia's Visitor Information Centers and the Regional Visitor Information Centers that operate in Georgia

Train Museum – We are the managers and owners of the Train Museum which includes inventory, visitor management, etc.

In addition – We are responsible for the development and production of City/County Festivals (Okefenokee, Railwatch, Halloween downtown, Christmas in the Park, etc.) We also put on the beauty pageant, work with the schools on various events and work with local organizations beneficial to the community.