

**MINUTES  
CITY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 21, 2025**

The Regular Meeting of the Cordele City Commission was held on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 9:00 AM, Cordele City Hall Courtroom, 501 North 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Cordele, Georgia with the following present:

Joshua Deriso, Commission Chairman  
Vesta Beal-Shephard, Commissioner  
Isaac Owens, Commissioner  
Tommy Coleman, City Attorney

Royce F. Reeves, Sr., Commissioner  
J. Wesley Rainey, Commission Vice Chair  
Angela Redding, City Manager – via telephone  
Janice Mumphery, City Clerk/Recording Secretary

**Staff present:** Maurice Hill – Community Advancement Manager, Sonya Alexander – Senior Accountant, Fire Chief Todd Alligood, Irene Cantrell – HUA Director, David Wade – Human Resource Director, Jackie Walker – Chief Municipal Court Clerk, Police Chief Jalon Heard, Jessie Mercer – Interim Public Works Director & Cemetery & Parks Director, Rick Smarr – Social Media Marketing Manager, Debbie Wright – UC&T Director.

**Call to Order:** Chairman Joshua Deriso, called the Regular Meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

**Opening Remarks:** Chairman Deriso also stated that this is a Regular Meeting and comments will not be taken from the audience. Department Heads and City Officials will speak to give Reports during this Meeting. If there is a subject that needs an expert opinion, then the expert on that subject matter will be allowed to speak

Chairman Joshua Deriso asked all attendees of the Meeting to put their phones on silence or vibrate, preferably silence. If anyone needs to take a call, please step outside the door, away from the doors, so your conversation will not be heard.

**Invocation:** There was a moment of silence.

**Pledge Allegiance to the United States Flag:** The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Rainey.

**Roll Call:** A quorum was established

Attendee's Name	Title	Present	Absent
Joshua Deriso	Commission Chairman	✓	
Royce Reeves, Sr.	Commission Vice Chairman Ward Two	✓	
Vesta Beal Shephard	Commissioner Ward One	✓	
Isaac Owens	Commissioner Ward Three	✓	
J. Wesley Rainey	Commissioner Ward Four	✓	

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – January 21, 2025: City Manager Angela asked for an Amendment to the Agenda to Consider Ms. Taucer's Appeal Request.

Commissioner Reeves moved to the Amend the Agenda for January 21, 2025 to Consider Ms. Taucer's request for an Appeal; seconded by Commissioner Rainey. The Amended Agenda was Approved by the Commission.

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**APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES** – January 7, 2025: Commissioner Reeves moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes from January 7, 2025; seconded by Vice Chair Rainey. The Regular Meeting Minutes were approved by the Commission.

**SPEAKERS APPEARANCES:** Five (5) minutes: No Requests.

**SPEAKERS ON A SPECIFIC AGENDA ITEM:** Three (3) minutes: No Requests.

**RETIREMENT RECOGNITION:**

- a. Michael Lavant: Not Present

**CONSIDER APPEAL – CORDELE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

- a. Debra Taucer: Not Present

**DEPARTMENT HEADS GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

**1. Community Advancement/HUA – Maurice Hill Reported.**

**GOAL #1:** Attend the DCA Community Planning Institute Conference

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Attended the conference January 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> in Dublin and got information on a \$20,000 Historic Preservation Grant for building stabilization.
- Met with the DDA Director and reviewed the grant requirements, we identified a building downtown and call contractors for repair estimates.
- We spoke with RVRC about a Historic Preservation Plan Update (required for the grant), and cost to write the grant and submit it by February 1, 2025, deadline.

**GOAL #2:** Attend the Georgia Land Bank Authority Web Conference Call

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Attended the call on January 9th, and discussed making property donations to the Land Bank, Owner Occupied properties with a 3 to 5 years requirement to occupy the home.
- Signed up to be on the Governance and Intergovernmental Committees for GALBA and to be a member of the National Land Bank Authority for resources and training.

**GOAL #3:** Meet with the State Office of Rural Health Executive Director

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Attended a meeting to understand their services and set up a stakeholder meeting for February 21<sup>st</sup> with other community organizations to collaborate on grants and projects.

**GOAL #4:** Call with the Ga. Department of Economic Development/Atlanta

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Discussed the Georgia Sports Innovation League possibly operating a program in Cordele

**GOAL# 5:** Meet with the Dean of Albany State Cordele

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

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- Discussed the upcoming Video Conference call with the Ga Film Academy and space for the Georgia Sports Innovation League programs and activities at the Cordele Campus.

**GOAL #6:** Attend the upcoming UGA PROPEL Program Meeting

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Participated in discussions on the progress of the process.

**Chairman Deriso** asked how would someone acquire land through the Land Bank?

**Mr. Hill** replied, that the person would make an appeal to the Land Bank once the property is identified. It would be a very transparent process, so anyone is able to acquire the land.

**Mr. Hill** also stated, one thing he learned in the Land Bank Webinar, property coming through the Land Bank should be identified as owner-occupied property to eliminate speculator from going in purchasing the property, getting the property for free, doing a lot of renovations and escalating the price, where it becomes unaffordable for the people that the Land Bank is trying to reach.

**Chairman Deriso** asked about the Georgia Sports Innovation League, specifically, what is that?

**Mr. Hill** replied stated that he will have more information going forward, there is a web site. A former sports football figure, they are looking to do somethings throughout the State of Georgia.

**Chairman Deriso** stated that he has a concern working with a sports team and utilizing Albany State to facilitate because in the City of Cordele, there are successful Community Leagues that are under funded and do well, but they are supported less in Cordele. He stated that he would to see Cordele fund them before someone else is brought in from the outside to help.

**Mr. Hill** stated that he is very inclusive. At the end of the day, if I receive the names of the Community Leagues, he will make sure that they are part of the Meeting. His goal is to get them to bring their money to build out the facility at Albany State. He stated that he is not looking at the City or County giving resources to them, he is looking at how many resources he can get from the Georgia Sports Innovation League to bring to Cordele.

**HOUSING URBAN ADVANCEMENT (HUA) REPORT**

**Historic Preservation Meeting 1/15/25**

Consider Applications for Certificate of Preservation for the following Properties located within the Gillespie-Selden Historic District and the O'Neal Historic District.

**APPROVED** - Property Owner Donna Faye Tripp is requesting to demolish an existing shed and replace it with a 10 x 12 new wooden shed placed on a concrete foundation and located within the same location at 715 East 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**APPROVED** - Applicant Dean Thaxton, LLC and the property owner is Douglas Dean, 601 East 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The proposed scope of work will consist of installing an Aluminum fence, back and side yard, 4.5 feet in height.

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**DENIED** - Applicant Debra Taucer, 719 E 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue is requesting to add onto an existing fence on the east and west side and across the front with two six (6) foot metal gates. **SHE IS APPEALING TO THE CITY COMMISSION – YET TO BE SCHEDULED**

**2. Finance Department – Sonya Alexander Reported.**

Ms. Alexander stated that there is an increase in Business License being collected. Property taxes have been mailed out and there is a significant increase in revenue, that will be reflected in next month's report.

**3. Fire Department – Chief Todd Alligood Reported.**

**Goals**

- Provide best possible service to the citizens and visitors of Cordele through firefighter recruitment and retention, professionalism (actions and appearance), extensive training, quick response and effective emergency mitigation, community risk reduction programs, and community engagement.
- Maintain morale and confidence in leadership. Continue to practice servant leadership.
- Actively recruit, hire, and promote outstanding individuals that make our team better.
- Fill all available positions.
- Complete our Live Fire Burn Facility.
- Add to the GPSTC Certified classes that we can teach locally.
- Move toward an RFP, identify funding, and begin construction of Station 3.
- Add to the number of NREMTs we have on our department.
- Schedule and complete all our annual certification testing for vehicles, equipment, and personnel.
- Complete budget for 2025.
- Make our new website user friendly with an employment application link, updated information, and on-line forms for the public.

**Accomplishments**

- Achieved an upgraded ISO Class 2 rating.
- Received \$25,000 Firework Tax Grant and used to purchase G-1 MSA Air packs.
- All firefighters were First Responder Certified (Emergency Medical Training).
- I attended and graduated from the Leadership Crisp program.
- We made some improvements to Station 2.
- Developed and filled the Training Officer position (Lt. Jared Averill).
- Spoke to several community agencies during the year.
- Developed a Functional Fitness test that is administered during the hiring process for new recruits.
- Updated our station radios and walkie-talkies during the County encryption process for improved communication.
- Took part in the annual Mass Casualty Training with our City and County partners.
- We updated and began using the 2019 Automatic Aid Agreement with CCFR for structure fires in the city limits.
- Updated and changed our alert tones so that it does not affect priority tones used by CPD and CCSO.
- Contracted with ImageTrend for our incident reporting and Vector Solutions for expanded training options.

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- Hosted a Heavy Wrecker Extrication class that was open to first responders statewide.
- Completed and passed all annual certification testing for trucks, equipment, and personnel.
- Worked with our community partners for a better Cordele/Crisp.

**Chairman Deriso** asked where will Station 3 be located?

**Chief Alligood** stated that there is a location on Hwy. 90 between Blackshear Animal Hospital and a Church. There is two (2) acres of land that the City owns. There is a Well on the upper left-hand corner. Chief Alligood stated what he would like for an Engineer to look at it and say yes or no, that there is enough land to do it. He stated that this is an ideal location, because from there, the Fire Department can go and catch Hwy. 75 North Bound, can catch the backside of the Industrial area, Pateville Road, we can get the far end of 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It is a really good location.

**4. Human Resource Director – David Wade Reported.**

Goals for 2025

**Develop a workforce profile that identifies strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for improvement:** Conduct a thorough analysis of the current workforce, including:

- Demographics: Age, tenure, diversity and retirement eligibility.
- Skills Inventory: Identify gaps in key skills needed for public service roles, such as technology, project management and customer service.
- Position Analysis: Review job roles and responsibilities to ensure they meet current and future service demands.

**Align HR goals with the City's objectives to improve public service delivery: Set measurable goals that support both short-term and long-term priorities such as:**

- Reducing employee turnover by enhancing retention strategies.
- Improve public satisfaction by ensuring positions in critical departments are filled promptly.
- Encourage and provide leadership development by setting clear paths for advancement within the organization.

**Create a qualified candidate pool for all roles:** Attract top talent by focusing on:

- Employer Building: Highlighting benefits of public sector employment such as job stability, community impact, competitive pay, wellness support and pension plans.
- Partnerships: Build relationships with the local school system, college, technical college and community organizations.
- Outreach: Ensure job postings reach a wide audience.

**Build a resilient, adaptable workforce capable of handling evolving public needs**

Invest in continuous learning to keep employees engaged and skilled.

- Leadership Development: Offer programs, both internally and externally, to cultivate future municipal leaders.
- Skill-Based Training: focus on specific competencies like conflict resolution, customer service and technical skills.
- Cross-Department Training: Encourage knowledge sharing between departments to improve collaboration.

**Minimize legal risks and ensure a safe and fair workplace:** Ensure compliance with internal policies, state, and federal laws regarding areas such as:

- At-Will employment
- Due Process
- Civil Rights
- Discrimination
- FMLA
- FLSA
- USERRA
- Public sector-specific laws

**Increase HR department efficiency through technology adoption:** Use modern HR tools to streamline processes and enhance services:

- Human Resources Information Systems: Automate benefits and employee records management.
- Applicant Tracking Systems: Improve the recruitment process by managing applications efficiently.
- Learning Management Systems: Deliver and track employment training programs online.

**5. Municipal Court – Jackie Walker Reported.**

**Goals**

- Report accurate and complete information for the Court and Public.
- Complete Court Docket for the Judge in a timely manner.

**Accomplishments**

- All dockets and court dispositions were turned into the State on time.

**6. Police Department/Codes Compliance/Animal Control – Chief Jalon Heard Reported**  
**Police Department Goals and Accomplishments**

- We will continue to provide the City of Cordele with professional law enforcement service through our hiring process, training, and self-accountability. **We currently have five (5) applicants in the hiring process for Police Officers. One cadet is currently on her third week of the Police Academy.**
- Develop strategies to attract new candidates and to retain our current employees. **We had three (3) Corporals that applied for the open sergeant positions. Written assessments were completed last week and oral assessments will be Wednesday (15<sup>th</sup>) for sergeant positions. Corporal assessments will be scheduled in the near future to fill current open vacancies.**
- We will continue to connect with the community through collaborating with local churches, groups and businesses. **Our Event Committee will be having an upcoming meeting to discuss events for this New Year. Martin Luther King Community Event will be held Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup> at the Gillespie Auditorium. Chief Heard will be the Guest Speaker. Child Safety ID Cards will be provided to the children attending. We will be partnering with Greater New Birth Ministries in April with**

**an event for children Kindergarten through Eighth Grade. We will also partner with SAM Shortline with the Easter Express in April and National Train Day in May. Crisp County Primary School has invited us to attend "Community Helper Day" in April. We are also planning an Autism Stroll in April with Cordele Main Street.**

- We will continue to make advancements towards obtaining the Georgia Risk Reduction Certification.

Chief Heard gave an update on the Crime Statistics for the Past five (5) years.

#### **Code Compliance Division – Goals and Accomplishments**

The codes division will continue code enforcement efforts to increase code compliance in all Wards. This will provide more attractive and presentable neighborhoods for the current citizens, future citizens, workers and travelers with the hopes to attract new businesses, industry and potential residents to the City.

**Code Compliance Officers completed final inspections for a new construction residential home on Old Hatley Road. They also issued a stop work order for a non-permitted privacy fence on East 13<sup>th</sup> Ave. in the O'Neal Historical District.**

The code divisions will continue sending codes officials to advanced training and certification seminars through the International Code Council (ICC) and the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement (GACE) with the hopes of each code's official becoming certified in multiple inspection categories. **Code Compliance Officers are registered to attend the GACE Training in March.**

Address blighted commercial and residential properties through education, code enforcement, private funding, grant opportunities and working relationships with reliable, certified contractors. **Code Compliance was successful to obtain homeowner action for a new renovation and a demolition permit for two blighted homes in the 400 block of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue East.**

Increasing our social media presence and utilizing other innovative ways to relay information and announce code issues and problems. The aim is to educate and keep the public informed about code related issues that concern the. **Code Compliance recommends the commission to enact a Fence Ordinance with height restrictions for front yards.**

#### **Animal Control Division – Goal and Accomplishments**

Get more animals rescued/adopted by being more active in the community and on social media.

Work towards implementing a volunteer program at the shelter.

Make shelter improvements: grates for drains, seal the floors, replace rusted kennels pipes, add a few kennels outside. **We installed heat lamps in the isolation kennels due to the cold weather.**

Actively promote better animal welfare. (Spay/neuter, vaccinations, correct shelter (housing), kennel ordinance control).

Host events with the hope of bringing awareness to the shelter, animal health and increasing donations. Kiley Odom with Crisp County 4H did a "12 days of Christmas" project for our animal shelter. She donated dog food, dog treats, bowls and \$200.

Chief Heard thanked Tractor Supply and JAG Probation for the dog food donations.

**7. Public Works Director – Jessie Mercer Reported.**

R & D Lawn Care Service has finished cleaning one (1) Holding Pond.  
The Sidearm Mower has been delivered and we have started cleaning the ditches.

**8. Social Media Marketing Manager – Rick Smarr Reported.**

**GOAL #1: City of Cordele Website**

A goal from the beginning was to navigate the rebuilding of the City of Cordele website. Throughout 2024 the committee met with Granicus Project Manager Kian Miller and his team to decide on layout, accessibility (for website keyholders), and content. Through our collaboration, the goal of design was accomplished. As of this meeting, we are moving closer to completing Quality Assurance & content migration. A reveal date should be scheduled soon. From reveal we move to training and the goal of launch.

**GOAL #2: CGI Digital Partnership**

Another goal from the beginning was to coordinate with CGI Digital to produce 4 video chapters that will be placed on our new website designed to promote the City of Cordele. Business partnerships, video production, editing, and approval goals were accomplished in 2024. We look forward to placing this content on the city's new website when it is launched. The link and code for the widget that will be placed on the home page has been received.

**GOAL #3: Increase Communication and Social Media Interaction & Newsletter Publication**

As we work to keep the community informed through our social media platforms, we continue to be encouraged by the responses we receive. We strive to feed our platforms with positive content. We are knocking on the door of 2000 followers on the city's Facebook social media page, which has increased by approximately 1400 in the past year.

Positive posts, timely information, the incorporation of video, personal interaction, hashtags, and posting at optimal times, have all contributed to the growth of our social media presence. A goal for this year will be to continue to feed our social media pages with the kind of information that has brought us this far. Another goal will be to enhance the city's presence on the Instagram platform. YouTube continues to perform well with the addition of video content.

**9. UC&T Director – Debbie Wright Reported.**

- We received two (2) RFPs for the LSLR Phase. We had a committee of 4 and graded each RFP.
- We are working on the 2024 Water Quality Report required by EPD.



**AGENDA ITEMS**

1. To Consider the Request for an Appeal on property at 719 E. 13<sup>th</sup> Ave, Ms. Taucer. The Cordele Historic Preservation Commission denied the citizen to put up a fence in the O'Neal Historic District. There was a stop work ordered by Codes Division.  
After a brief discussion on this issue, by consensus the Commission stated Ms. Taucer needs to go before the Historic Preservation with new plans to install a fence.  
Commissioner Shephard, Vice Chair Rainey, Commissioner Reeves, Commissioner Owens voted aye.  
The Commissioner agreed for Ms. Taucer to go before the Historic Preservation Commission.
2. Consider and Approve New Board Appointments:
  - a. Community Clubhouse Coordination Board: Jessie J. Felton, Jr.
  - b. Cordele Carnegie Library: Jerome DealCommissioner Reeves moved to approve the New Board Appointments; seconded by Commissioner Shephard.  
Commissioner Owens, Commissioner Reeves, Commissioner Shephard, Vice Chair Rainey voted aye.  
The Commission approved the New Board Appointments.
3. Consider and Approve the Request to add the Main Street Manager as a Check Signer on the City of Cordele Downtown Development Authority Bank Account.  
Commissioner Reeves moved to approve the Main Street Manager as a Checker Signer on the City of Cordele Downtown Development Authority Account; seconded by Commissioner Shephard.  
Commissioner Shephard, Vice Chair Rainey, Commissioner Reeves, Commissioner Owens voted aye.  
The Commission approved the request to add the Main Street Manager as a Check Signer.
4. Consider and Approve Bank Signatories: Removing – Commissioner Royce F. Reeves, Sr. from the City of Cordele Bank Accounts; Adding Commission Vice Chair J. Wesley Rainey to the City of Cordele Bank Accounts.  
Commissioner Rainey moved to approve the removal and adding of Bank Signatories; seconded by Commissioner Shephard.  
Commissioner Reeves, Commissioner Owens, Commissioner Shephard, Vice Chair Rainey voted aye.  
The removal and adding of Bank Signatories were approved by the Commission.
5. Consider and Approve an Event Permit: Girl Scout of Historic GA Cookie Booth.  
Location: Wal Mart Store #1006, 1215 E 16th Ave. Dates: February 14 – 17 & 22, 23, 2025; March 1 -22 and 8 – 9, 2025. Time: Saturdays – 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM and Sundays – 12:30 – 5:00 PM. Organizer's Name – Ila Jo Lucas, 618 E. 24th Ave., Cordele, GA. Girl Scouts selling cookies between the two front doors. Written permission is on file from Wal Mart.  
Commissioner Shephard moved to approve the Event Permit; seconded by Commissioner Owens.  
Commissioner Reeves, Commissioner Owens, Vice Chair Rainey, Commissioner Shephard voted aye.

The Commission approved the Event Permit.

6. Consider and Approve the Request for Items Listed from the Public Works Department to be Declared Surplus and to Dispose of the Surplus Items via GovDeals.com.  
Commissioner Reeves moved to approve the request for Items Listed from the Public Works Department to be Declared Surplus and to Dispose of the Surplus Items via GovDeals.com; seconded by Commissioner Shephard.

Chairman Deriso asked is there a law requiring that the City has to dispose of property through GovDeals.com?

City Attorney Tommy Coleman stated that it has to be bidden out or put on GovDeals.com. It can be done through solicitation or through GovDeals.com.

Vice Chair Rainey, Commissioner Reeves, Commissioner Shephard, Commissioner Owens voted aye.

The Commission approved the Request for Items Listed from Public Works Department to be Declared Surplus and to Dispose of the Surplus Items via GovDeals.com

7. Consider and Approve the Second Reading of an Ordinance Amending the Code of Ordinances of the City of Cordele, Georgia to Provide for a Term of Office for the Municipal Court Judge; To Provide an Effective Date; To Repeal all Ordinances or Parts of Ordinances in Conflict Herewith; and for Other Purposes.

Commissioner Reeves moved to approve the Second Reading of an Ordinance; seconded by Commissioner Shephard.

Chairman Deriso asked if this is to comply with the law? The Judge was appointed last year and again this year. Did this law come into effect last year?

City Attorney Tommy Coleman stated "yes", it was considered back in September of last year and it was decided to start the term on January 1, 2025, so it would be along with the other appointments.

Chairman Deriso asked, if he had been appointed for two (2) years now.

City Attorney Tommy Coleman, yes, a two-year term.

Chairman Deriso stated that he thinks that the Commission needs to move with speed on answering to some of the citizens issues and complaints that we look for a Public Defender and City Solicitor. The Public should know that the Appointment is not permanent; the City Attorney has shared that they are at will. He thinks a good number of this Board is dedicated to making our Court better through doing our jobs and that is, this Body looking into and selecting unbiased and impartial people to work the City Courts. The Commission should spend the first quarter of this year, talking with and finding people who can be unbiased.

Vice Chair Rainey, Commissioner Reeves, Commission Owens, Commissioner Shephard voted aye.

The Commission approved the Second Reading of an Ordinance.

8. **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:** City Manager Angela Redding Reported via Telephone.

**City Hall Weather Closures**

Tuesday, January 21, 2025 – 12:00 Noon

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Wednesday, January 22, 2025 – All Day

**Public Hearings – To opt out the Homestead Exemption**

Will be advertised in the January 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> publication of the Cordele Dispatch.  
Public Hearings are scheduled for: January 29<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM, February 4<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM and 6:00 PM.

Mr. Danny Ross resigned his position as Chairperson of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Commission selected Mr. Joe Ward as Chairperson and Alyssa Wilkerson as Vice Chairperson.

**Groundbreaking**

ADS Groundbreaking is on January 28<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 PM

Ms. Irene Cantrell will be retiring on January 31, 2025 and Maurice Hill has assumed her duties until a person is hired for the position. We thank Mrs. Cantrell for her many years of service to the City.

**9. CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT:** No Report.

**10. EXECUTIVE SESSION:** (For Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate)

**11. ADJOURNMENT:** Commissioner Shephard moved to adjourn the Meeting at 10:27 AM; seconded by Commissioner Owens. The Commission approved to adjourn the Meeting.