

The Lyerly Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, February 9, 2022 at Lyerly Town Hall. Those in attendance were:

Mayor James Ferguson  
Phil Brooks  
Juanita Baker  
Shirley Davis  
Jim Gilliland

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The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ferguson at 6:10pm.

Mayor Ferguson said that he has nothing to tell them. Shirley Davis said that he can tell them about what's going to happen in the park in April. Mayor Ferguson said that will be River Fest and he knows nothing about it. Jim Gilliland asked who is doing it. Mayor Ferguson said that it's the county and the chamber. They all talked about it last year. Juanita Baker asked what they are talking about. Mayor Ferguson said that they are having a thing on the Chattooga River called River Fest. Mayor Ferguson said that is also a problem that Juanita doesn't know about it. They aren't advertising it very well. Sally Kerce said that it is going to be at the park and they are going to have vendors and stuff and they have a lumberjack competition from Minnesota coming. She said that she saw that in an ad on facebook. We are going to let a non-profit use the concession stand. Mayor Ferguson said that they told him that they don't need anything from us besides space. Phil Brooks said that it could be like Down Home Day. Sally Kerce said that she thinks it will be a lot like that just not us doing it.

Juanita Baker asked if the mayor has heard anything else about the shooting range that was going to be built. Mayor Ferguson said that he hasn't heard anything else about it. He said that he can ask Blake. Shirley Davis asked where that was going to be. Mayor Ferguson said that it was going to be down toward Alabama. Phil Brooks said that it would bring traffic through.

Shirley Davis asked if he has found out anything about the Ragland building. Mayor Ferguson said that he hasn't. He is trying to figure out when to bid it out so he has to have a ball park figure of the cost for the first round and to plan it with SPLOST coming in. Shirley Davis said that she meant was someone coming in and checking the building out. Mayor Ferguson said that Josh Wyatt is doing it. He was actually coming today.

Juanita Baker asked if the mayor has heard anything about the annexing of the properties. Mayor Ferguson said that he hasn't. They have asked for the plats from the tax office but for some reason, they can't find them. Phil Brooks said that they may have been in the ceiling when it leaked and flooded all those times. Jim Gilliland said that the state should have that. Juanita Baker asked what it consists of. She said that she knows what a plat is but what do they need a plat of. Sally Kerce said that they need the plats for each property that will be included in the annexation. Mayor Ferguson said that they need plats for everything from where the city limits is now to where it will be. Shirley Davis said that she doesn't understand them not having it. They can show you where your property is and how much it's worth and all of that. Jim Gilliland asked if our attorney hasn't tried to do anything. Mayor Ferguson said that he hasn't gotten him involved.

Juanita Baker asked if the mayor has heard anything about cleaning up down the road. Mayor Ferguson said that his understanding is that he is going to sell it. Juanita Baker said that she thought he had already sold it. Jim Gilliland asked where down the road is. Mayor Ferguson said that old Lucky's. Phil Brooks said that it would be his best move. Mayor Ferguson said yeah, what is he going to do with it. He said that he sold his logging business. Juanita Baker said that she heard that he has a big farm somewhere in the county. Shirley Davis said that this is kind of a casual meeting, isn't it. Mayor Ferguson said that he doesn't have an agenda to go by. Sally Kerce said that no one gave her anything to put on an agenda. Mayor Ferguson asked the council if they have anything to discuss.

Jim Gilliland said that he has something about the stimulus money. Mayor Ferguson said that's fantastic and asked what he's got. Jim Gilliland said that it looks like most of the people that work for the city think they are entitled. He doesn't know what the entitlement is; maybe because Menlo got it. He doesn't know. Mayor Ferguson said that if they were hoping for something it's because all municipal governments around us gave something. Jim Gilliland asked if they all got it or just Menlo. Mayor Ferguson said that the county and Menlo did it. Jim Gilliland said that it's still not entitlement. He said that he got some information from Sally Kerce about everyone's pay and we are way behind. When McDonald's is paying \$17 per hour and we're paying someone \$12 per hour, we are way behind. Mayor Ferguson said to keep in mind that it has gone up a lot in the last two years. It has changed dramatically in the last 24 months. It didn't used to be like that but you are correct. In the current environment we are behind. He said that he raised everyone when he took over as Mayor. Jim Gilliland said that here we have A, B, C and D without using names, which is public record anyway. A is at \$14.83 per hour which is roughly 20% of our annual payroll budget without any over time or anything. B is at \$12.25 per hour which is 17%. C is at roughly \$20 per hour which is 21% and then you have D which is about 42% for one person. We are way out of whack for the amounts of the difference in the people. Shirley Davis asked doesn't one person have more responsibility. Mayor Ferguson said that one person has all of the responsibility. Juanita Baker asked don't they get paid on how long they've been here and that kind of stuff too. Mayor Ferguson said that is how we've always done it. Shirley Davis said that that one person, you probably don't like what they get paid, but they keep the town going, don't they. Mayor Ferguson said the person that gets 40% has all of the responsibility. Jim Gilliland said that he saw two people working on the community center and another one sitting around doing nothing. The other two were doing all of the work. Mayor Ferguson said that he can have you stand over them with a shotgun. Juanita Baker asked what they did to the community center. She saw them down there a lot. Shirley Davis asked if we had termites at the community center. Mayor Ferguson said that we did. Jim Gilliland said that you have one person at \$31 per hour and the least person at \$12 per hour. Juanita Baker asked how many years has the one making \$31 per hour worked here. Mayor Ferguson said that it's Michael. Juanita Baker said that she knows that. Shirley Davis said that he has so much more responsibility and he has to make sure everything is going. Mayor Ferguson said that he holds all of the licenses. Juanita Baker said that he has been here longer and gotten all of the certificates to work here. Jim Gilliland said that isn't a great big deal. He said that he sold to cities and counties for 15 years...Shirley said that it is now. Jim Gilliland said excuse me, would you let me finish, everyone that works at a sewer plant has to have a license or a water plant has to have a license. We have one person with that license. That one person can hold you hostage if we don't send somebody else to get a license. Why wouldn't we send somebody else to get a license? Juanita Baker said that we have to find someone that is willing to do that. Jim Gilliland said that we have someone willing to do it. Mayor Ferguson said that we don't. Jim Gilliland said that one told him that he

would be happy to. Mayor Ferguson asked who because that is a change of tune. Jim Gilliland said that JR told him that last week. Mayor Ferguson said that is news because when asked he has always said no. Jim Gilliland asked him if he would be willing to go and get his license and learn more about the water and sewer and he said yes or that's what he told me. He added that he doesn't see us being held hostage by one person. Juanita Baker said that is the way it was when Snook was here. Phil Brooks said that he does agree with him on that and we do need redundancy. Jim Gilliland said that we need cross training. He asked if there is anyone that disagrees with that. Everyone said no. Phil Brooks said that we do need the redundancy in case something catastrophic happens. Jim Gilliland said that when you have someone making over 41% of the yearly payroll budget, that's ridiculous. Juanita Baker said that we have had a guy have a stroke here at work and if he had been the head man, we would have been up the creek. Phil Brooks said that he doesn't have a problem with that. Mayor Ferguson said that his compensation is comparable to everyone around here in North West Georgia that has the same job. Jim Gilliland said that the guy that was the City of Summerville superintendent was at \$58,000 and he just recently got an increase. Supposedly he has a license for both and he has a lot of responsibility. Now this one has been at \$31 per hour for a while which is the difference between a person doing the work and a so called working supervisor. He said that he sees a disparity there. He said that he would rather give across the board instead of a bonus which will be gone. Give the hourly people \$1 per hour raise. Mayor Ferguson said whatever ya'll say. Jim Gilliland said that we are talking four people and maybe \$8,500 per year. Shirley Davis said that if we would have given them a bonus, it would have come out of the stimulus money but what you give across the board would come out of the budget. Mayor Ferguson said that is correct. Juanita Baker asked if what the employees got at Christmas came out of the stimulus or out of the budget. Mayor Ferguson said that it came from the budget. We have not touched the stimulus money. Jim Gilliland said that he doesn't know of anyone having a raise since he's been here. Mayor Ferguson said that they get a raise every year. Sally Kerce said it is a cost of living increase. Jim Gilliland said that he means across the board raise. Mayor Ferguson said that in the past four years, everyone has gotten more money. He said that he doesn't remember exactly what we did but he raised everyone when he took over as mayor and they have gotten a yearly ever since. He said that he has not blanketly given them more money since he has taken over. Jim Gilliland asked why we can't do that. Mayor Ferguson said that there is no reason why we can't. It's up to the council. Jim Gilliland said that they are under paid. There is no doubt that they are under paid for sure. One person is fine. Shirley Davis said that if you give one person a raise, you have to give them all one. Jim Gilliland said that is what he just said. Mayor Ferguson said that we are talking about three people. Shirley Davis said that you are talking about one person getting paid so much more but if you give the others a raise, you have to give him one too. Mayor Ferguson said no, we aren't talking about management. We are talking about our three hourly employees. We aren't talking about Michael. Michael is fine. Juanita Baker asked how much you want to give them. Jim Gilliland said \$1 per hour. That will bring them more in line with other people. Where are you going to find skilled labor for \$12 per hour? Phil Brooks said that he saw a sign at Jack's for \$11.04 per hour. Jim Gilliland said that isn't skilled labor. Phil Brooks agreed. Sally Kerce asked if that would include Destiny. Mayor Ferguson said just to be clear, we have three full time employees and one part time. Shirley Davis asked if the budget can handle it. Mayor Ferguson said yes. Juanita Baker asked if we are going to give part time the raise too. Jim Gilliland said that he doesn't really think so. He said that he is talking about the people that are working full time. Phil Brooks asked who we are talking about. Jim Gilliland said that we have Sally, JR, Jason and Destiny is part time. Phil Brooks said that she does a good job and she seems to care. Shirley Davis asked if Destiny is as qualified

as Sally. Sally Kerce said that she takes water bills and tax payments. Mayor Ferguson asked what Destiny makes. Sally Kerce said that she makes \$9.50 per hour right now. She added that she was going to ask for her a raise this year anyway. Jim Gilliland said he would say yes. Phil Brooks made a motion to give all of the hourly employees a \$1 per hour raise. Jim Gilliland seconded. All in favor. Mayor Ferguson and Juanita Baker both said to start it next week.

Sally Kerce said that she wanted to let everyone know that she hasn't seen any major changes but there is a new Final Rule, which is what the stipulations for spending the COVID money is called, that goes into effect in April. It is broadening it some but she hasn't seen any changes yet. Phil Brooks said that it seems to have more inclusiveness. Sally Kerce said that they keep including stuff so it can be spent. Shirley Davis said that she thinks that the employees would rather have the raise instead of the onetime lump sum bonus. Mayor Ferguson said that he thinks they are separate discussions. He doesn't think one has anything to do with the other. Juanita Baker said that the mayor had said that the other governments have gotten their stimulus, how did they do theirs? Mayor Ferguson said that they just gave a lump sum. Juanita Baker then asked if that was to each employee. Sally Kerce said that the county gave \$1,500 after taxes to each employee and Menlo gave depending on how long you had been there. She thinks Sid got \$3,500 and not sure how much for the others. Jim Gilliland said that the stimulus is a onetime thing but a raise.... Shirley Davis asked if that did away with their stimulus money. Phil Brooks said that it didn't affect the stimulus money. Shirley Davis said she means what they were going to give them. Sally Kerce clarified that Shirley is asking if giving the raise does away with ya'll giving a bonus. Juanita Baker said that we aren't going to give a bonus if they give the raise. Jim Gilliland said that doesn't eliminate the bonus. Rather than give it back to the feds..... Phil Brooks agreed but he said that he thinks that there will be something to use the money for. Mayor Ferguson said that they will broaden the rules until it can be spent. Jim Gilliland said that if you don't spend it, they want it back. He said that if the annexation does pass, he was concerned about us having the funds for anything that we have to do as far as sewer and water. Mayor Ferguson said that what we end up having to do shouldn't be a problem at all. The most expensive thing will probably be hooking Smith Ironworks expansion onto sewer. Shirley Davis said that the residences up there are not on the sewer. If the annexation happens, is it going cost them or us to hook onto the sewer? Phil Brooks said both. We will bring it to a certain point and then they will have to hook on to that. Mayor Ferguson said that this will be a gradual process. He isn't going to slam anything on anyone. He added that it isn't a done deal yet but as soon as it is, he will sit down with all of those people and we'll work out how to do it. Juanita Baker asked if everything happens, could we use the stimulus money to hook them on instead of them having to pay. Mayor Ferguson said that we can if that is an approved way to use it. Phil Brooks said that we could probably use it for the pipe and stuff but probably not for their tie in. Juanita Baker said that they aren't asking to be in the city limits so why couldn't we foot that bill so they don't have to. Phil Brooks said that it isn't Lyerly's tax payer's job to foot the bill for that. It will be a gain for them. Juanita Baker said it will be a gain for Lyerly too. Phil Brooks said the houses won't be. Juanita Baker said that she is just saying that they aren't asking to be in Lyerly. Mayor Ferguson said that the bill for the annex will get voted on this session but as far as the schedule of the sewer and when the residents start paying property taxes, we will handle all of that. Jim Gilliland asked what the exact extent of the increase is. Mayor Ferguson asked if he meant the increase of taxes. Jim Gilliland said no, the city limits. Mayor Ferguson said that it will go to the railroad tracks. Jim Gilliland said so the rug mills warehouse will not be included. Juanita Baker asked how we can skip the warehouse. Mayor Ferguson said that it's on the other side of the railroad tracks. Jim Gilliland asked how it would extend east and west. Mayor Ferguson said that it will go to the

end of the property line bordering highway 114. He said that you can draw a circle around the town and they can legislate everything inside that circle or you can do it this way.

Juanita Baker made the motion to adjourn. Phil Brooks seconded. All in favor.  
Meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm.

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Mayor

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Town Clerk