

City of Chipley
Council Meeting
Minutes
April 8, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Ms. Tracy Andrews, Mayor
Mrs. Linda Cain, Council Member
Mr. Leonard Blount, Council Member

Mr. Kevin Russell, Mayor Pro-Tem
Ms. Cheryl McCall, Council Member

Others Present Were:

Mrs. Patrice Tanner, City Administrator
Mr. Guy Lane, Asst. City Admin. /Public Works Dir.
Mr. Hunter Aycock, Fire Chief
Mrs. Tamara Donjuan, Planning/Code Enf. Officer
Mrs. Michelle Jordan, City Attorney

Ms. Sherry Snell, City Clerk
Mr. Michael Richter, Police Chief
Mr. Rodney Pittman, Collection System Foreman
Mr. Brock Tate, Recreation Director

The data reflected in these proceedings constitute an extrapolation of information elicited from notes, observations, recording tapes, photographs, and/or videotapes. Comments reflected herein are sometimes paraphrased, condensed, and/or have been edited to reflect essential subject matter addressed during the meeting. Parties interested in receiving a verbatim account of the proceedings are responsible for coordinating with the City Administrator and providing their own representative and equipment pursuant to Chapters 119 and 283, Florida Statutes.

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Andrews at 5:00 p.m.

B. PRAYER AND PLEDGE

Prayer was given by Council Member Blount and Mayor Andrews led the pledge to the American Flag.

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Andrews added regular agenda item #9 - Resolution No. 25-26.

A motion was made by Council Member Russell and seconded by Council Member Cain to approve the agenda with the addition. The motion passed unanimously.

D. CITIZENS REQUEST

The City of Chipley welcomes you to this meeting. This is time set aside for the Citizens of Chipley to address the City Council. This is not a question and answer period, it is not a political forum, nor is it a time for personal accusations and derogatory remarks to/or about city personnel. If you would like to address the City Council please raise your hand to speak, state your name and address for the record and limit your comments to no more than three (3) minutes per Florida Statute 286.0114. To ask a question via phone; dial *9 and wait to be recognized/unmuted. If you are attending via webinar, there will be an onscreen option to ask a question during the public comment portion of the meeting. Your participation is welcomed and appreciated.

No citizen requests. No further discussion.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Regular Council Meeting – March 11, 2025

A motion was made by Council Member Russell and seconded by Council Member McCall to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

F. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

1. Recreation Department Report – Brock Tate stated opening day was April 4th and everything went well. Mayor Andrews stated she appreciates the Recreation Department doing a good job. No further discussion.
2. Attorney Report - Michelle Jordan. Attorney Jordan stated she needed direction on a code case at 1471 South Railroad Avenue. Mayor Andrews stated this item could be revisited at the end of the meeting. Discussion ensued.
3. CRA Report - Leah Pettis. Mrs. Pettis stated there is a House and Senate Bill that is proposing the dissolution of all Community Redevelopment Agencies across the state and urged everyone to reach out to our state legislators. Discussion ensued.
4. Fire Department Report - Chief Hunter Aycock. Chief Aycock stated it was a busy month with a lot of fires. He stated seven volunteers participated in a ropes course training last week and it shows their dedication by taking the time away from their jobs and family to do this. Some of the other volunteers stayed local to handle calls during this time. Mayor Andrews thanked them for all of their hard work at a recent hotel structure fire. Discussion ensued.
5. Code Enforcement Report - Tamara Donjuan. Mrs. Donjuan stated it has been a busy month. There were no questions. No further discussion.
6. Planning & Zoning Report - Tamara Donjuan. Mrs. Donjuan stated it has been a busy month. There were no questions. No further discussion.
7. Police Department Report - Chief Michael Richter. Mr. Russell asked about late night foot traffic on streets. Chief Richter stated there is a curfew for juveniles. We have a new hire, Logan Foster, who is a certified K-9 handler and we are in the works to get a second K-9. The Police Department received 10 LifeVac systems last month and Officer White was able to utilize one yesterday on a choking child and may have saved the child's life. Mayor Andrews thanked Officer White for his service. Discussion ensued.
8. Public Works Department Report - Guy Lane. Mr. Lane stated they started the arthropod program last month. The Spring Clean Up will be held in May and is being advertised. Discussion ensued.
9. Water Utilities Department Report – Rodney Pittman. Mr. Pittman stated the generators at John Teal and Vo-Tech were installed. Discussion ensued.
10. Finance Department Report – Jamie Richter. Mrs. Richter stated everything is going great and has been busy. Discussion ensued.
11. City Administrator Report - Patrice Tanner. Mrs. Tanner stated the design on Bennett Drive Improvements is 30% complete; Chipley Lift Station Generators Project – once that project is 100% complete, and the permit has been closed out with the county, then we will work toward the close out of the FEMA grant and the Florida Department of Commerce grant; Chipley Peach

Street Lift Station Improvements – the Council approved the award of contract at a special meeting contingent upon the bid documents and contract being approved by Florida Commerce; Chipley Wastewater Energy Efficient Project – this project which will be used to optimize energy consumption, reduce operational costs, and ensure compliance with regulatory standards. The goal is to replace pumps/motors/scada system to enhance the performance and sustainability of our wastewater treatment processes. We have been approved for a site visit in the next couple of weeks at which time we will know if we have been approved for funding; FDEP Septic to Sewer Project – this funding will allow us to improve water quality, protect public health, and enhance wastewater infrastructure by moving 32 septic systems onto our city sewer system. We are currently awaiting funding approval to see if we will be awarded in the amount of \$1,325,500.00; Mongoven Building – the construction contract was approved last month and the contractor has started work. We do have some concepts for your review for the next phase. A decision does not have to be made tonight. Mr. Brent Melvin stated they have worked on the concepts and wanted to note they are still evaluating the restroom option. Another item is the shading with trees. Our landscape architect has suggested two options: Eagleston Holly tree which would have less maintenance but would produce berries or Crepe myrtles. Discussion ensued.

G. PRESENTATIONS

1. **Professional Municipal Clerks Week Proclamation** – The City Council honored the City Clerk with a proclamation for Professional Municipal Clerks Week, May 4-10, 2025, to recognize the time honored and vital part of local government of the Municipal City Clerk.
2. **National Police Week Proclamation** – The City Council honored the Chipley Police Department with a proclamation for National Police Week, May 11-17, 2025, to recognize and honor the selfless and heroic service provided by the men and women of the Chipley Police Department.
3. **International Firefighters Day Proclamation** – The City Council honored the Chipley Fire Department with a proclamation for International Firefighters Day, May 4, 2025, to recognize and honor the dedication of their lives to the protection of life and property provided by the men of the Chipley Fire Department.

H. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Recreational Facility Use Agreement** - The Washington County Phenoms
2. **Special Event Application** – Watermelon Festival Parade
3. **Request for Development Order and Certificate of Appropriateness** - Waffle House, Inc.
4. **Special Event Application** - Thursday Night Lights

A motion was made by Council Member Cain and seconded by Council Member Russell to approve the consent agenda items. The motion passed unanimously.

H. AGENDA ITEMS

1. **CDBG First Public Hearing** – The regular meeting was closed and the public hearing was opened at 5:38 p.m. Mr. Brent Melvin, David H. Melvin, Inc., stated this was the First Public Hearing for the City to apply to the Florida Commerce for a FFY 2023-2024 Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) He discussed the four (4) funding categories which must meet one of the following National Objectives: Benefit to low and moderate income (LMI) persons; Prevent or eliminate slum or blight conditions; or Meet a need of recent origin having a particular urgency. The types of activities for which the CDBG funds can be used include

constructing stormwater ponds, paving roads and sidewalks, installing sewer and water lines, building a community center or park, making improvements to a sewage treatment plant, and rehabilitating low-income homes. Discussion ensued. The public hearing was closed and the regular meeting was opened at 5:44 p.m.

2. **Ordinance No. 992 (Public Hearing)** – Amendment to Chapter 16 – Fire Prevention and Protection. Mayor Andrews closed the regular meeting and opened the public hearing at 5:44 p.m. Mrs. Tanner read Ordinance No. 992 by title:

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF CHIPLEY, FLORIDA, PROVIDING
FOR AN AMENDMENT TO CHAPTER 16 OF THE CITY CODE,
RELATING TO OPEN BURNING, REGULATIONS; PROVIDING FOR
SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, AND FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Mrs. Tanner explained this Ordinance, if approved, will amend Chapter 16 – Fire Prevention and Protection to update Section 16-6 Open Burning. This will allow burning of natural products such as yard debris in the city limits without a permit. Burning of unnatural material such as plastics, oil, tar, rubbers, garbage, etc. will be prohibited. Official notice to advise the public of the proposed adoption of Ordinance No. 992 was published in the Washington County News on March 26, 2025. The ad complied with the legal requirements of the City Code and Florida Statutes.

Mayor Andrews closed the regular meeting and opened the public hearing at 5:46 p.m. Discussion ensued.

A motion was made by Council Member Russell and seconded by Council Member McCall to approve the final reading of Ordinance No. 992. The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Request for Land Use Map Amendment** – 735 Main Street – Lota Kay Braxton. Mrs. Tanner explained applicant Lota Kay Braxton’s request for a Small-Scale Amendment. Per City Ordinance Chapter 44, Zoning, Article XII- Amendment approval through Planning and Zoning and City Council is a requirement. The location for the small-scale amendment is at 735 Main Street. The applicant would like to rezone the property to allow business to be permitted for land use.

The property is located at 735 Main Street, parcel 000000000-00-1238-0000, 1.465 acreage is currently low density residential. Approval of the Small-Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment would change the property to neighborhood commercial which would provide a transitional use zone in which residential uses, institutional uses, professional uses and certain types of neighborhood convenience/shopping/retail sales and service uses can be intermixed. The proposed amendment is consistent to the area with no substantial changes to the district. Approval of the small-scale amendment would allow the ability to redevelop property for business use, which could generate income, create jobs and stimulate economic growth to the community.

Signage posted to the property on February 25, 2025, provided public notice of the hearing satisfactory to the 30 days required. Public notices were sent certified to fifty-nine (59) property owners within five hundred (500) feet of said property. Forty-four (44) letters claimed, seven (7) returned unclaimed.

A motion was made by Council Member Cain and seconded by Council Member Blount to approve the Land Use Map Amendment for 735 Main Street. No vote taken.

Mayor Andrews called for any discussion.

Jennifer Jones, 720 Main Street, spoke in opposition to the amendment.

Cindy Birge, Elite Realty, spoke in support of the amendment.

Kristin Martin 766 4th Street, spoke in support of the amendment.

Patricia Dedge, 730 Main Street, spoke in support of the amendment.

Kevin Crystal, 761 Main Street, spoke in support of the amendment.

Mr. Russell stated he was concerned about Coggin Avenue and the increase in traffic, the parking area, and what might happen ten years down the road.

Ms. McCall stated Coggin Avenue was just a milled asphalt road that does not meet standards and is only fifteen feet wide.

Mr. Crystal stated he is working on a solution for Coggin Avenue due to the affordable housing that is coming to the lot that he owns located at 761 Main Street. As a developer I may have to take on some additional responsibilities for it as a developer.

Mrs. Birge stated that she understands that Mr. Russell's grandmother lives across the road and that Ms. McCall is located within 500' which I don't think ethically either of you should vote due to the Florida Statutes, but I don't have a problem with you voting.

Mr. Russell asked Attorney Jordan if he would have any personal gain if he doesn't own the property where his grandmother lives at. Attorney Jordan stated she would need to research it further. Ms. McCall stated she was told years ago to think logically not emotionally. Emotionally I understand what they are going to do, but logically I have to look at the other people that have come to me. I haven't had one person come to me and say they are for this. Mr. Russell stated he would not vote until he knew it was legal. Ms. McCall agreed with Mr. Russell. Mayor Andrews stated Attorney Jordan should find out within 10-15 minutes so it can be handled. Attorney Jordan stated there are two different situations with each Council Member. Attorney Jordan stated she would need more time. Mrs. Tanner asked about in the past if a council member has asked in a meeting if they needed to abstain, I believe your response was, if you feel like you have gain from this or could be in jeopardy of voting you should not be voting on then you should abstain. But you have always left it up to the council member. Is this different? Attorney Jordan stated this is two different issues that have been raised and I don't have an answer right now.

The item was tabled until the end of the meeting.

Mayor Andrews moved agenda item #8 up to the next item for discussion.

4. **Code Enforcement Case** – Thelma Woods – 771 Pecan Street. Mrs. Tanner stated this is the parcel located at 771 Pecan Street – Thelma Woods, that had some code violations and fees that have accrued to the point that foreclosure documents have been served. Attorney Jordan would have additional information. Mrs. Wood has requested to speak to the council regarding this parcel. Thelma Wood – 2767 Owens Community Road, Vernon, FL stated she was supposed to be in violation of some code issues but was totally unaware of some of it. I need help to understand and see if it can be rectified. Someone served us papers about two weeks ago. I have been in and out of rehab for the past 2 years. The property has been in my family for well over 50 years and was built by my dad. I would like to be allowed time to get this done. Mr. Russell asked what the issues were that needed correcting. Mrs. Tanner stated originally there was the roof and the porch facing 6th Avenue and the missing 911 address. Additional areas of the siding and a couple of

places on the roof now need fixing. The biggest things are some items that need to be brought into compliance and Mrs. Wood has agreed to do that. There is a lien against the property and Attorney Jordan can give you more information. Attorney Jordan stated the order was entered on October 30, 2023 and was she was given 30 days with a \$50 fine. Attorney Hubert Brown, Brown & Lane in Tallahassee, FL, stated he would like to point out a few things. Dr. Wood is 96 years old and has health issues. I have what was served and the issue is the mail was just regular mail and not certified, which is part of the reason that she was not aware of this issue. Also the fine is \$23,750 and someone mentioned they have pictures and that is close to the value of the home. I am working with her now to make sure all the requirements are done, but this was based on no 911 address and some shingles in the beginning. I am here to help make sure she gets it in compliance. It would be a financial hardship on her living on a fixed income at her age which would be very detrimental to her. Mr. Blount stated Mrs. Wood is a highly respected person in our community and he is familiar with her home. He asked for any leniency for this case based upon Mrs. Wood's character. Attorney Jordan stated the amount of fines is \$24,750 through today. The attorney fees are \$609, but that is not all of the cost. Mayor Andrews stated the biggest thing is to keep it out of foreclosure and allow her time to make the repairs and to look at all the fines. Mr. Russell stated his red flag was the papers were not sent certified mail. Mrs. Donjuan stated the notice of the meeting was sent certified but the order that the Special Magistrate issued was not mailed certified. Mrs. Tanner stated the last communication was from Tamara in March 2024 so there would not have been any more communication after that. Mayor Andrews stated noting was communicated from March of 2024 until it was filed this year. I remember discussing something at the January 2024 council meeting about taking care of this. Mrs. Tanner stated it was mentioned but the recording wasn't clear to state any action to be taken. In March of 2024 Mrs. Donjuan sent it to the city attorney so there would not have been any more communication until when Attorney Jordan filed for foreclosure in March 2025 and Mrs. Wood was served with the papers. Attorney Jordan stated in the past I've only seen council waive fees twice and this is a different situation. There are no guidelines established. Mayor Andrews stated the bigger thing for us is how do we justify a lapse of no communication for a year, no last-minute attempt to make contact. We don't want these properties and we may need to enhance our process to mail certified letters. Mrs. Tanner commented we do not want the property; our long-term goal is to get properties cleaned up and not go through the foreclosure process and have to pay the attorney fees. Our goal is to rectify the problem and terminate the issue and be done with the property. This did not happen in this case but Dr. Wood is agreeing to make that happen. So is that under the circumstances of her going through the illness and having problems over the last 2 years during the entire process she has been going through rehab for 2 years. Is that something that needs to be considered when making a decision like this? In any foreclosure case or code case in general the end goal is to have the property cleaned up because we don't want to have to take the property over or to spend our taxpayer dollars to demo the buildings. Is this something we need to look at if a determination is made today that we need to look at in the future and come up with guidelines that would better enable the city council to make those decisions or be allowed to make those decisions. Mr. Russell asked about the total of the fines being taken from the city or just what is in place that we collect on some and we don't on others. Attorney Jordan stated the fines were the amount the Special Magistrate put in place. Mr. Russell stated this has not cost us anything for fines and asked the amount that it had cost the city. Attorney Brown pointed out Dr. Wood has already engaged someone to make the repairs. Other jurisdictions have waived fines and for Dr. Wood it's not a pandora's box because it is unique to have someone her age with her health conditions. She is not one to ignore things that need to be done. Mr. Russell asked if the city was out approximately \$1,500 that they have actually had to pay out versus the \$24,750 for fines. Attorney Jordan stated that was pretty close. Mrs. Tanner stated she was not asking council to go against what Attorney Jordan was saying but asked Attorney Jordan if the council makes the decision to stop the foreclosure and waive the fees, is there a policy that you would be able to draw up that would from this point forward give the council specific guidelines to follow when making these types of decisions. Attorney Jordan stated she would want direction from council on what kind of conditions and could make suggestions like the property must be in compliance before you will even consider the request. This would be an objective requirement that I can

defend. Mr. Russell stated the fines of \$24,750 has not cost the city or Dr. Wood anything so why are the fees there. No one has lost anything, it's just a document. Mr. Russell made a motion to cease the fines as of today, give Dr. Wood 90 days to get the property into compliance at which time the \$24,750 will be waived and not to waive any fees that have been accrued. Mr. Russell asked if the foreclosure would continue if we don't stop it. Attorney Jordan stated she would file a motion to abate the court proceedings but the property needed to be in compliance before then. Mr. Russell asked if the foreclosure would carry on while Dr. Wood is trying to get it in compliance. Attorney Jordan stated they do not move that fast. Mrs. Tanner asked if there is anything that would happen over the next three months with it being in foreclosure that the council would have to be concerned with. Attorney Jordan stated no. Mayor Andrews asked for a list of the things that need to be corrected for Dr. Wood and to make sure Attorney Brown gets a copy. Discussion ensued.

A motion was made by Council Member Russell and seconded by Council Member Blount to give Dr. Wood ninety days to get the property into compliance then readdress the fines after that, and to abate/pause the foreclosure proceedings for ninety days. The motion passed unanimously.

5. **National Wreaths Across America Day** – Mrs. Tanner stated this is an effort to honor our nation's interred heroes while bringing attention to a yearlong mission to Remember the fallen, Honor those who served, and Teach the next generation the value of freedom. Lieutenant Colonel Shayne Moore and Sergeant Jerome Finn will be the volunteer location coordinators planning the wreath-laying ceremony to be held at Glenwood Cemetery on December 13, 2025. Colonel Shayne Moore thanked the city for allowing them to host at Glenwood Cemetery. There were 132 sponsored wreaths in 2024 with 150 being the goal this year. Discussion ensued.

A motion was made by Council Member Russell and seconded by Council Member McCall to approve December 13, 2025 for the wreath-laying ceremony at Glenwood Cemetery. The motion passed unanimously.

6. **Reach America Christian Outreach** – Richard McMahon. Mr. McMahon stated Reach America would like to share the gospel in Chipley at the intersection of SR 77 and SR 90 which is a feeder to the beach with high traffic volume. A person on their team, Scott Daniel, would do outreach handing out leaflets when people stop. We just walk down with a little speaker so people with their windows down can hear. He would give out little cards with information. He would also have a sign that would include please donate. Ms. McCall asked Chief Richter if that would require a permit from FDOT. Chief Richter stated he would have to check with FDOT but according to city code, what they want to do is not allowed. Mr. McMahon stated they normally don't do fundraising but they have some significant expenses for internet, computers, cell phones and advertising. Scott Daniel works for them and is in public housing and in order for him to do this he has to have help with his finances. As he goes down the road he hands out the cards and has a jar that says thank you. People want to see this and are voting to see this continue by putting a few dollars in the jar. Mr. Daniel was able to go from full time work to part time work because of the tip jar. We would like to get approval for him to do this two (2) days a week in Chipley. Mr. Russell stated we need more information. Mayor Andrews stated we would need to do some research and communicate with you once that is finalized. Discussion ensued.
7. **Resolution No. 25-26** – FDEP State Revolving Fund Loan Program – Drinking Water Facilities Plan. Mrs. Tanner stated this resolution will approve the submission of a FDEP State Revolving Fund Loan Program Application for a Drinking Water Facilities Plan. The State Revolving Fund loan priority list designates Project No. DW670140 as eligible for available funding. The total cost for the Facilities Plan to be prepared is \$90,000. This project is funded 50%/50% loan and principal forgiveness. This Facilities Plan will include a listing of projects that need to be done in the city and will be required to apply

for funding through the FDEP SRF Program. Discussion ensued.

A motion was made by Council Member Cain and seconded by Council Member McCall to approve Resolution No. 25-26. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Mayor Andrews asked to go back to the item discussed earlier in the meeting for the code case at 1471 South Railroad Avenue. Attorney Jordan stated the fine as of today was \$74,500. The attorney fees and costs are \$5,000 and asked for direction in the foreclosure. Mayor Andrews stated we need to cover fees and costs. Attorney Jordan stated typically I will bid up to our judgement amount which is the amount of fines plus attorney fees and costs. She asked council if they wanted to cap the total amount at \$50,000 and stay in the county court or move into the circuit court.

A motion was made by Council Member Russell and seconded by Council Member Cain to not exceed \$50,000 on the bid. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Andrews asked to go back to agenda item #3.

9. **Request for Land Use Map Amendment** – 735 Main Street – Lota Kay Braxton. Attorney Jordan stated she could not find current opinions on the ethics issue and would like to call the Commission on Ethics to get an answer. She asked Council to table this item until she can get an answer. Council set a Special Meeting for April 10, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. to discuss further. Mrs. Tanner stated there will be 2 items on the agenda which will be the approval of the land use amendment and approval of Ordinance No. 993 (First Reading). Discussion ensued.

This item and Ordinance No. 993 (First Reading) were tabled until a Special Meeting on April 10, 2025.

10. **Resolution No. 25-25** – Background Screening Policy. Mayor Andrews brought this item back up and it was decided to move this item to the May Council Meeting agenda.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

Mrs. Tanner stated she has had some complaints and discussions about downtown buildings that are not maintained up to the standards that other buildings owners maintain their buildings at. The City has never enforced peeling paint on a building that I know of. The code is very vague and states diminution of property. So, what constitutes the diminishing value of property. Deferred maintenance can, but it does not specify in our code. I wanted to bring this to Council to let you decide how we move forward with this or if we want the attorney to look at it and come up with more specifics that can be put in the code to help us address these issues. It was decided we will hold a workshop to discuss this further. Discussion ensued.

J. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Andrews at 7:55 p.m.

City of Chipley

Attest:

Tracy L. Andrews, Mayor

Sherry Snell,
City Clerk