

MINUTES OF THE CITY OF SKY VALLEY REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON A TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2025 AT 10:00 A.M., LOCATED AT 3608 HWY 246 (CITY HALL) & VIA TELECONFERENCE (ZOOM) SKY VALLEY, GEORGIA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Steil, Councilors Allred, Truner, Oliver, Curtis, and McAfee

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Streetman, City Clerk Fleming, Communication Specialist Van Camp, City Attorney Kidd, Building Inspector Pyburn, Public Works Superintendent Shope, and Police Chief Baumes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Steil called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance

Councilor Oliver led the Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Minutes

July 15, 2025 – Council Work Session

July 15, 2025 – Regular Council Meeting

August 6, 2025 – Special Called Council Meeting

Councilor Curtis made a motion to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Councilor McAfee, unanimously approved.

4. Adoption of Agenda

Councilor McAfee made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented, seconded by Councilor Curtis, unanimously approved.

5. Mayoral/Council Remarks

No Remarks were made.

6. City Manager Report

- Finalizing BMS pay which will give residents an opportunity to set up an account for detailed information and payment options.
- Switching over to BMS from QS1 for property taxes to increase efficiency.
- The Consolidation Report has been received from the County which will give a good idea of where we are from a net digest.
- Received a draft copy of the Water Rate Study.
- Financial Reporting – General Fund Expenses are at 63%, Water Fund 74%, and Garbage 71%. The overages with Water and Garbage expenditures are due to Workers' Compensation, Property Insurance, and Supplies, which are ever increasing. General Fund Revenue is at 90%, 76% on Water, and 67% on Garbage.
- We will be receiving the final payment this month for the current TSPLOST which will add to the \$2,034,538 that has been received thus far. The current bank balance is approximately \$300,000. These funds have provided resurfacing of many streets and necessary equipment. The next proposed TSPLOST will be on the referendum in November and hopefully will pass as it helps with the City's expenditures, tremendously.

7. Departmental Reports

Police Chief Baumes stated that auto accidents have been cut in half compared to last year at this time, 17 vs. 39, 0 officer complaints vs. 6 this time last year, public assists are 188 vs. 84, visitors escorts 42 vs. 20. Officers Snow, Clark, and Lieutenant Edwards, have completed their firearms training. An active shooters class has been conducted.

Public Works Superintendent Shope stated that his department is busy with road patching, right-of-way cleaning, mowing, and clearing culverts out. A new culvert has been added to help with drainage at the Mud Creek Fall's parking area. His department has added a new part-time employee, Cale Chastain and he also announced the passing of Kenny Chastain's mother.

Councilor McAfee thanked him and his crew for patching the hole at the end of Evergreen.

Building Inspector Pyburn, reported that he issued one citation in July. The citation was for putting heavy cardboard into the trash compactor on Knob Drive. There are currently three new homes being built with one certificate of occupancy issued for the month of July. There are potentially three additional new home applications, being discussed.

8. Committee Reports

Special Projects Committee's Chairman Turner, stated that he is scheduling a meeting with his members in a couple of weeks concerning the Fallfest planning. Fallfest will be held on the 18th of October.

NEW BUSINESS

9. Consider setback variance request of David Goodrow

Planning and Zoning Chairman McAfee stated that the variance request is for a carport because of the drop off of the land lot. No neighbors object and the Committee would like to state their recommendation for the approval of the request.

Councilor Curtis made the motion to approve the variance request for 615 W. Sugarbush, seconded by Councilor Turner, unanimously approved.

10. Consider Resolution to enter into an IGA (Intergovernmental Agreement) between Rabun County and all the municipalities within Rabun County to place a TSPLOST (Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) referendum on the November 2025 election cycle

Mayor Steil stated that this agreement is between all the cities in the County and asked City Manager Streetman to elaborate. He stated that the cities have gotten together to discuss this agreement and each one will present this Resolution to their Council. The TSPLOST will be on the referendum for the November election. If it passes it will be for 6yrs./26 million. In the past when the dollar amount had been reached the collection of the penny tax ends but this one would continue for the full six years and could collect way more than the 26 million. Councilor McAfee asked if Sky Valley's determined percentage would be 11.5% and City Manager Streetman answered yes. Councilor Curtis stated that Sky Valley has some of the best roads in the County thanks to resources like the TSPLOST which is based on miles of road in the City verses population. Mayor Steil stated that the City will be receiving approximately \$600,000 from SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) that passed last November. Those funds should starting coming in around October or November of this year stated City Manager Streetman and he went on to say how impressive the level of corporation between cities during the recent wildfire event was. Councilor Allred stated that it was good to see all the cities corporating together, which hasn't always been the case.

Michelle Hershel, 108 Ridgepole Drive asked if the City has received any funding from State Sales Taxes or if there was a cap on local taxes and Mayor Steil stated yes that local taxes are capped.

Chris Pence, 66 Driver Lane asked if the SPLOST funds would be earmarked specifically? City Manager stated that the funds are deposited into a special account and are earmarked for specific expenses: Brick and Mortar \$95,000, Infrastructure \$400,000, and Vehicles \$100,000.

11. Consider approval of Annexation and Rezoning Ordinance for Larry Turlington (2nd Reading and Adoption)

Planning and Zoning Chairman McAfee stated that this request was presented to the Committee and the recommendation is to approve the request. City Manager Streetman showed the Zoning Map and stated that the City's water line runs by the property and if passed the property would have to follow the same Sky Valley development pattern which would have a minimum of 1,750 square feet. This property would be zoned SF (Single Family). This is the second reading of the Ordinance.

Councilor McAfee made a motion to approve the Ordinance for the annexation of tax parcel 058B 007A into the City Limits of Sky Valley, seconded by Councilor Turner, unanimously approved.

12. Consider Resolution to surplus City equipment

City Manager Streetman stated that the 2023 Tifermec Flail Mower has been well used but unfortunately is down more than it is used. The attachment that is needed would fit on the Bobcat Excavator which has a cab making it safer to operate than the John Deere tractor which currently is used with the Tifermec. The new attachment would cost around \$7,000 versus \$10,000 spent on the Tifermec which was the only attachment that would work on the John Deere. If approved the Tifermec would be listed with GovDeals.

Chris Pence, 667 Driver Lane, asked if the Country Club could purchase the Tifermac and he was told that it had to be listed for bids but the Club could certainly bid on it. Mr. Pence went on to thank the City for resurfacing the cart path by hole #5 that is used by the City, to get to the well houses. This was part of the lease maintenance agreement between the City and Club for allowing the well houses (4, 6, and 7) to be located on the Club's property.

Councilor Turner made a motion to approve the Resolution to surplus the Tifermec flail mower, seconded by Councilor McAfee, unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

13. Public Forum and General Comments

Carey Sue Beasley, 539 Overlook Way, read a letter that she had written, sharing her thoughts and concerns with the proposed septic to sewer project:

- The sewer would fix private property issues and would only be offered to a select few.
- No validation for the need of a sewer system or clarification of the 200+ units or 30% that was stated that the sewer would service.
- Contributing factors that could be the cause of failing septic systems.
- City should be focused on current aging infrastructure instead of adding a new system.
- New development would be competing with existing Country Club's restaurant, bar and café, along with staffing that could be affected.
- Financial concerns for the City due to static revenues.

Michelle Hershel, 108 Ridgepole Drive, stated that she appreciated the Q&A information that the City provided for clarification. She asked if any contracts or agreements had been signed to take service concerning the potential sewer service? City Manager Streetman answered that conversations have been had but Georgia Law does allow sewer providers to require properties to tie on to the system. Ms. Hershel went on to ask about the cost of operating a sewer system which City Manager Streetman stated that there are some estimated costs given in the ARC grant application but it may require one or two additional employees. Any sewer costs will be funded out of the sewer charges. Ms. Hershel stated that she heard that only one condominium complex was having septic issues and asked why would the City put in a sewer to help a few existing property owners when they are responsible for their own septic. Mayor Steil told her that the condominium complexes in the valley have already exhausted areas to extend or replace failing drain field systems and having a system for

them would help Sky Valley as a whole. City Manager Streetman explained that in 2021 Governor Kemp had put aside 15 million dollars for aging infrastructure. That consisted of five 3-million-dollar grants which we are the recipient of one. The 2017 sewer study was used to help us qualify for the grant. The condominium complexes would have to pay to tie on to the system as well as having to pay to abandon their old septic system along with a monthly usage fee. Capacity of the potential sewer is 40,000 gallons a day which is not a huge system but large enough to service the existing valley area along with some development. Ms. Hershel asked about the funding if the 2 million grant is not obtained and City Manager Streetman stated that a GEFA loan could be obtained, and payments would come out of the sewer fund. Councilor McAfee stated that there would be a sewer district and those in that district would be paying the cost of operating the system. He asked City Attorney Kidd to elaborate which he stated yes only the users of the system would be paying but the City is still trying to accumulate numbers concerning the operation side.

Gail Greenfelder, 19 Aerie Lane, read a letter that she had submitted to Council but what to share with others. Her opinion is that Sky Valley would be better off without no development by Harrison Merrill and his properties should be donated to a conservancy. Any development would add to the operational/maintenance cost of the City by way of sewer plant, road maintenance, water line maintenance, additional fire services, and police services. She presented a citizen fact sheet concerning Harrison Merrill and previous developmental plans and suggested a group come together and offer to buy the old lodge to turn into a community center or amphitheater to be ran like the Club, with investor's input.

Mayor Steil stated that all the plans are at the beginning stages and the Council is not beholding to Mr. Merrill. She asked City Attorney Kidd to go over zoning rights. He stated that the property owners have the right to use their land as zoned. The last zoning of property in Sky Valley took place at least three decades ago. The plans that have been presented, are in the preliminary stages and the owners are doing due diligence such as feasibility studies. Questions from the audience were asked concerning agreements already signed concerning the sewer. Mayor Steil and City Attorney Kidd both reassured all that no letters of intent has been signed nor approved by the Council concerning the proposed sewer plant. The only signed 2024 agreement has been for the burn pit area off of Knob Drive. Also, questions came forward concerning condemning the old lodge and treated water lose with the City's water system. City Manager Streetman answered saying proactive measures are being taken to find the water leaks and Mayor Steil stated that yes the City could condemned the old lodge if necessary, but it has been occupied up until recently.

Karla Stahl, stated that she supports some development just not to the degree being proposed. Also supports the proposed sewer system if the two million dollar grant can be obtained as it would be helping our Sky Valley neighbors. She gave an example of her community in Florida that currently have eight lawsuits because of rezoning and she shared information concerning a community in Michigan where a federal judge just order them to pay out 49 million dollars to property owners that was affected by rezoning. Condemning property, rezoning property, and/or taking property comes at a substantial cost. She went on to ask for the City's legal coverage and its limits. City Manager Streetman stated that our coverage does have an error in commission clause but not sure if it would cover any legal fees pertaining to rezoning and City Attorney Kidd stated that he would look at the City's policy but feels confident that it would not pay out legal fees or rezoning claims. She was told that the City would get back to her concerning that question.

14. Executive Session

None

15. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before Mayor and Council, Councilor Turner made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor McAfee, unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:



Hollie Steil, Mayor

Attest:



Karen Fleming, City Clerk