

MINUTES OF THE CITY OF SKY VALLEY REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON A TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 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, Turner, Oliver, Curtis, and McAfee

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Streetman, City Clerk Fleming, Communication Specialist Van Camp, City Attorney Kidd, Building Inspector Pyburn, 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

August 19, 2025 - Regular Council Meeting

There was a typo on the agenda that read October 21, 2025, and Mayor Steil stated the correct date of August 19, 2025. Councilor Turner made a motion to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Councilor Curtis, unanimously approved.

4. Adoption of Agenda

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

5. Mayoral/Council Remarks

Mayor Steil thanked the Special Projects Committee and volunteers for the fabulous Fall Fest event. Also, thanked the SV/Scaly Fire Department for their participation, Sky Valley Landscaping for having the City look so fantastic, and Sherron along with the Public Works Department for all their work.

Councilor Curtis commented on the EMI study as not being an easy read, but all the data is presented to show that over time there has been a small but steady increase in the readings indicating failing septic systems in the valley. He went on to say that the current council has taken on small projects but also large projects like major infrastructure projects which is very important. He feels that putting in a sewer system is the right thing to do.

6. City Manager Report

City Manager Streetman thanked the staff and volunteers that helped to make Fall Fest great. All the hay bales looked great, and he has received many compliments on how great the City looked. A sound system has been ordered and will be installed in the Chamber Room, soon. The short-term rentals are up for renewals, and the registration fee is \$300.00 annually. On the financial side, we are currently around 79% for expenditures. The revenue side is running a little shorter than anticipated due to shortage in issuance of building permits. Some unexpected expenses in the water and garbage fund have occurred but should finish up the year somewhere around \$500,000 in expenses for water, with a projected \$530,000 to be received in revenue. The garbage fund should end up around \$214,000 in expenditure and \$220,000 in revenue. The election is next month, November 4th, with early voting going on now. A TSPLOST renewal will be on the ballot and if it passes the City would receive an estimated three million over the next six years with funds starting to come in around April of next year. Budget drafts are underway, and a workshop will be scheduled around November 6th or 7th. The SPLOST funds should be coming in soon and will be received for the next five years totaling an estimated \$600,000.

6. Departmental Reports

City Manager Streetman read a report for Public Works Superintendent Shope and Water Coordinator English as they are busy working on a PRV pit. Roads – Patching is underway along with blowing and removal of leaves along the road sides. Paving has taken place on Red Wolf, Flint Knob, and Bayberry. Water – Two pressure reducing valves pits have been rebuilt recently making a total of nine to date. The worst has been completed. Leak detection monitoring is ongoing along with water sampling. The pump for well seven has been recently replaced.

Al Piontkowski, 66 Pleasant Mountain, asked why it took two guys in the Kubota with the leaf blower? City Manager Streetman explained that it takes a driver and then someone operates the remote for the leaf blower.

Building Inspector Pyburn reported that there was one stop work order issued on Bayberry with the contractor being issued a \$125 fine. Two certificates of occupancy have been issued. The new home construction on Knob drive is still underway. Two new home permits have been issued on Ridgepole. In the month of September, 20 building permits were issued along with 10 tree permits.

Susie Piontkowski, 66 Pleasant Mountain, stated that a new neighbor, on Sugarbush, is parking in the right-of-way with one sometimes two wheels on the road. Building Inspector Pyburn stated that he would check on the situation with the help of Chief Baumes.

Police Chief Baumes reported that accidents are down by 20 compared to this time last year. Year to date – 546 traffic stops resulting in 210 warnings and 336 citations. Residents' checks are at 24,235 and business checks are at 19,000. Officer Williams is making the Police Department a separate Facebook page for information, along with diligently working on obtaining more grants like the one received for the guardian lights that aid officer's safety during a traffic stop. A grant was also obtained to receive new ballistic vests next year. The department is currently staffed with five full-time officers along with himself and two part-timers that work only as needed.

Councilor McAfee asked if handing out the magnets with contact numbers has been completed and Chief Baumes stated no, still passing out in different zones that are assigned to different officers. Mayor Steil asked if he could elaborate on the information that is being handed out, and he stated that pamphlets with helpful information concerning bears, etc., along with a magnet that has phone numbers which can be called in the event of a non-emergency. This is a "Knock and Talk" event so the residents can meet the officers and express any concerns while obtaining phone numbers to have on hand which Councilor Allred commented it will be helpful in case of an emergency also.

Al Piontkowski, 66 Pleasant Mountain, asked Chief Baumes what the residential and business checks consist of? He was told that the residential checks were done upon request of the homeowner, and each shift the house is checked for anything suspicious. The businesses' doors and windows are checked as well and as there are only approximately seven businesses the checks can easily be done during a 12-hour night shift. Mr. Piontkowski asked about community engagement with the officers and Chief Baumes stated that was the initiative behind the "Knock and Talk". He then asked about the closure rate by arrest on any burglary or criminal mischief and Chief Baumes told him no burglaries or criminal mischief have taken place since he has been Chief, only some scams that have been reported, most originating from overseas and then reported to the bank investigator.

Councilor Allred asked about recent hog activity and Chief Baumes stated that Lt. Edwards along with some help from the Country Club staff, have set up the hog trap on Tahoe due to the activity in that area.

Sherron Van Camp, 99 Alex Mountain, asked Chief Baumes about information given to the owners of STRs and if City Hall could get some pamphlets and magnets to give to the them as they register their and he stated absolutely.

Don Rice, 1824 Ridgepole Drive, commended the police department for the arrest of a suspect in the mail center robbery a couple of years ago. The police aided the investigation that helped recover some expenses of theirs and also aided him in getting his trailer registered after it had been stolen and then recovered, before he purchased it. He stated that they are doing a fantastic job and are very friendly and engaging in his opinion.

8. Committee Reports

Mayor Steil expressed her gratitude to all the volunteers that serve on the Committees for giving of their time and efforts.

Councilor Turner, Special Projects Committee Chairman, stated that the Committee is finished with Fall Fest and the cleanup along the road of Bald Mountain Road.

Councilor McAfee, Planning and Zoning Chairman, stated that the Committee has nothing pending.

Gordon Brand, Marketing Committee Chairman, talked about the media writers that recently visited Sky Valley and published a wonderful article that went out to over 50,000. The article can be found in "Southern Fairways". Another media writer was here September 9-12 and went really well as well. He also stated that a real estate tab has been added to the visitor's website. He went over the Fall ad in the Laurel and stated that he has received complements on the 246 road signs. Mr. Brand talked about his upcoming budget and has already received commitments from the POA, Club, TSSV, and the City.

Al Piontkowski, 66 Pleasant Mountain, asked Mr. Brand what groups that the Marketing Committee have reached out to for promotion of Sky Valley. Mr. Brand stated that with every meeting hiking is discussed and when showing the media writers around they are presented with all that the area has to offer such as hiking, fishing, kayaking, and water falls so they can add that to their articles.

Susie Piontkowski, 66 Pleasant Mountain, talked about the upcoming Sky to Summit race that will be taking place this weekend. This will be the 13th annual race in the City and will be dedicated to Victor Mariano that has participated all previous races and his love for Sky Valley. Also all future races in Sky Valley, will carry his name. She asked if this race could be promoted/celebrated in the future. Mr. Brand and City Manager Streetman stated that they have reached out repeatedly to Mr. Blanton to ask if they can help with the promotion and Mr. Blanton assured them all was covered. Mayor Steil asked Ms. Piontkowski if she could send some information concerning the dedication and the City can put it on the website. Ms. Piontkowski asked in the future if the Marketing Committee could reach out to Mr. Blanton to see if they can provide anything for the race and Mr. Brand stated absolutely. The City expressed the need for information to be provided ahead of time so it can be acknowledged earlier and Councilor McAfee stated that if the citizens know beforehand that Mr. Blanton will be here maintaining the trails that volunteers could be had to help with the effort.

Councilor Oliver, Mayoral Advisory Committee Chairman, stated that the Committee doesn't make any policies but only gathers information to present to the Mayor. At the last meeting in June the Committee was gathering plans from the police department, public works, and to establish a central point of communication so the plans can be communicated effectively. The Fire and Rescue have their own plan and will be a point of command. An evacuation plan is already in place. The information was to be consolidated and posted on the website after approval. This information should be released in the next ten days or sooner.

NEW BUSINESS

9. Consider Resolution to continue the ServLine Leak Protection Program and acknowledge rate increase.

City Manager Streetman stated that in 2022 the City partnered with Servline, a leak protection

program. When the program first started the residents were told that they would be opted in at the beginning but at anytime they could opt out as it is an optional coverage. Approximately 98% of the homeowners decided to go with the program. The cost of a single-family home was \$2.50/\$6.65 for commercial, and with this renewal and due to the amount of claims a rate increase will be needed. The new rates would be for a single-family home, \$3.44/\$9.25 for commercial. With the renewal homeowners still have the option to opt out.

Mayor Steil stated that before this program was implemented, residents would bring their cases before the Council. Councilor Oliver requested that information concerning the rate change along with how to file a claim to be sent out to the customers. City Manager Streetman stated that flyers will be sent out with the bills.

Carey Sue Beasley, 539 Overlook Way, ask how the City could benefit from this program. City Manager Streetman gave examples of how adjustments were given pre-Servline. An adjustment could be given but only once, to a homeowner/association/business, in a five-year period. The amount adjusted off would be a loss to the City. With the Servline program they pay, after repairs, the excess of a high-water charge and the City does not lose the cost of treated water. Councilor Oliver added that the insurance program is only for homeowners that have issues on their side of the meter. Ms. Beasley asked how much money does the City make a year with this program which City Manager Streetman stated that only fifteen cents per customer so on average \$1,200 a year. The extra is to cover administrative fees. Under the contract with Servline, this program is the only one that can be in place so the adjustment policy with the City, had to be extinguished. City Attorney Kidd gave examples of other cities that utilize the Servline program and how much simpler the insurance program is verses adjustments. A question was asked if the decision to abandon the adjustment policy of the City was done formally, and the answer was yes with a new Ordinance and public hearings.

Councilor Curtis stated that the City is very proactive concerning water loss. Calls are made in the event of a high usage bill along with heavily suggesting turning the water off when leaving the residency for an extended period of time. Servline was comprised of the issues we have in the City concerning water line breaks and was still willing to offer the insurance. He stated that this is a great services to have even with the increase.

Gail Greenfelder, 19 Aerie Lane, questioned why Valley View Condos has the highest use of water in the City, and she was told that it was due to them having a swimming pool along with consisting of 48 units, which would be the largest multi-family complex in the City.

Councilor Oliver made a motion to approve the Resolution continuing the agreement with Servline, seconded by Councilor Curtis, unanimously approved

OTHER BUSINESS

10. Public Forum and General Comments

Beth Pence, 667 Driver Lane, presented three questions: Q: Have any Valley View owners or leaders been advised to not talk to certain candidates? A: No. Q: Where can I obtain the 13 million dollar estimate to connect to the Dillard system? A: That was a conversation between Mayor Steil, City Manager Streetman, Dee Van Camp, Sam Beck and Brandon Thompson with the Rabun County Water and Sewer Authority. Q: Has anyone checked on the cost of connecting to the Rabun County Sewer System before the dump area at Piggly Wiggly? A: It would be the same cost as the systems are both operated by the Rabun County Water and Sewer Authority.

Councilor Oliver stated that several years ago a pressurized system was investigated and at that time would have been seven million. The pressurized system would only allow the initial hook ons and no additional due to it being pressurized. A few years later the same system would have cost eight to

nine million. The system would have pumped the sewage up and over the mountain to Dillard. The cost to treat would have been at that time, \$100,000-\$150,000 annually. That is the reason for the package plant being on the table.

Ms. Pence then read an email from Henry Fitzgerald, president of Sky Valley Country Club, stating that the Club at this time, has made no official commitment to hook onto the proposed City sewer system as the current septic system is being analyzed.

Carey Sue Beasley, 539 Overlook Way, stated that prior information had indicated that the Country Club would hook onto the proposed sewer system but as the email indicated they haven't decided. She stated her opinion on how E. coli could end up in Mud Creek and questioned City Manager Streetman on the EMI water rate study. (She obtained the study, which hasn't been shared publicly yet, through an open records request). She went on to ask why he had stated that on the water side of the budget that it was looking good but the study shows that the water department is losing revenue. City Manager Streetman explained that without the unforeseen expenses the water department is doing well and is on track.

Roney Mateu, 38 McClure Lane, greeted everyone and gave his credentials. He has been a property owner in Sky Valley since 2002 and started building homes in Sky Valley, five years ago. Opinions have been expressed against his modern home designs, and posting on social media many false statements against him. Mr. Mateu wanted to clarify some of the information that is out there. A video was posted by Benita Cotton-Orr concerning the proposed sewer system and Mr. Mateu along with Mr. Merrill's development plans.

City Attorney Kidd called the allowed time per speaker, and Mr. Mateu expressed he wouldn't be much longer and said to use his wife's time as he would speak for her. He was allowed to continue and was stopped again due to time restraints. Attendees in the audience expressed their opinion for allowing him to continue to speak. The council agreed to give him five more minutes.

Mr. Mateu stated that he is no longer a development partner with Mr. Haverty and Mr. Merrill and decided to purchase the property on Tahoe Lane to build a small hotel. This hotel would have nothing to do with the proposed Charrette that was presented at the State of the City address. Ms. Cotton-Orr had stated in her video that the public was not allowed to be a part of the Charrette and Mr. Mateu clarified that he was not a part of it either as accused, and also addressed the accusation that the Council is in cahoots with the developers.

Al Piontkowski, 66 Pleasant Mountain, stated that the City didn't let the residents know when qualifying is each year and that the notice this year and stated that none of the current seats that are up for election would run again. He went on to indicate wrong doings with tree removal quotes, City Hall renovations not being designed by an architect, and the City Council allowing such. The firing of Police Chief Estes and Officer Brown was brought up and as not being approved by the Council. Mr. Piontkowski stated that during the campaigning this year, more information has been revealed than in the previous six years.

Mayor and Council stated that information has been posted each year concerning elections and qualifying, along with Rabun County publishing same information. None of the council, that is running this year, ever commented on not running during this election, except for Councilor Oliver.

11. Executive Session

Mayor Steil stated that at this time an Executive Session was needed to talk about possible litigation. Councilor McAfee made a motion to close the meeting, seconded by Councilor Oliver, unanimously approved. The meeting closed at 12:18 p.m.

Councilor Oliver made a motion to reopen the meeting at 12:45 p.m., seconded by Councilor McAfee,

unanimously approved.

Mayor Steil stated that no action was taken.

12. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before Mayor and Council, Councilor Allred made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilor Curtis, unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 12:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Hollie Steil, Mayor

Attest:



Karen Fleming, City Clerk