

MINUTES OF THE CITY OF SKY VALLEY ORGANIZATIONAL AND SPECIAL CALLED COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY JANUARY 6, 2026, AT 10:00 A.M., 3608 HWY. 246 (CITY HALL) AND VIA TELECONFERENCE (ZOOM) SKY VALLEY, GA 30537

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Cotton-Orr, Councilors Allred, Pence, Price, Beasley, and Curtis

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Streetman, City Attorney Kidd, City Clerk Fleming, Police Chief Baumes, and Sergeant Maloney

1. Call to Order

City Attorney Kidd called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

2. Swearing in of Newly Elected Officials

City Attorney Kidd sworn in the newly elected officials, Benita Cotton-Orr as Mayor; Beth Pence, Jesse Price, and Carey Sue Beasley as Councilmembers.

2. Nomination and Selection of 2026 Council President

Councilor Price made a motion to nominate Councilor Pence, seconded by Councilor Curtis, Councilor Beasley stated that she supported the nomination. Mayor Cotton-Orr called for the vote and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Set 2026 Regular Council Meeting Dates

Mayor Cotton-Orr wanted to incorporate quarterly evening meetings into the schedule of dates. January 20th, February 17th, April 21st, May 19th, July 21st, August 18th, October 20th, and November 17th meetings will be held at 10:00 a.m. March 17th, June 16th, September 15th, and December 15th, meetings will be held at 6:00 p.m.

Councilor Curtis made a motion to approve the meeting dates and times as stated, seconded by Councilor Pence, unanimously approved.

4. Inaugural address from Mayor Cotton-Orr

Mayor Cotton-Orr acknowledged her family and friends that were in attendance and via zoom. She thanked everyone that took part in the November election and stated that she is grateful for the trust placed in her from the voters. She stated that she is committed to work collaboratively on the challenges ahead. She pledged to foster transparency and government efficiency. She also thanked the outgoing Mayor Steil and Councilmember Turner, Oliver, and McAfee for their service to the City. She welcomed the newly elected councilmembers and stated that she looks forward to working with them alongside incumbents, Councilor Allred and Curtis. Mayor Cotton-Orr added that all residents and property owners deserve a voice in the decisions that shape the City. She will work to ensure that the City government is accessible, communicative and accountable. Some of the goals are to have a community directory on the City's website, newsletters going out in the utility billing, and an online checkbook register so owners can easily see where funds are spent. Infrastructure stewardship, public safety, and engagement are among her priorities.

Important decisions are ahead, increased development and proposed sewer system. These decisions need to be fact based rather than assumptions. Water rates may have to increase but to keep garbage rates down, recycle collection would have to end. She would like to see a dark skies Ordinance considered along with some changes to the City's website. Coffee with the Mayor will be held quarterly to encourage involvement for the success of the City and to keep her more accessible. She also thanked the City's staff, first responders, and volunteers for their service.

5. Introduction and comments of council members

Councilor Curtis stated that he has lived in Sky Valley full-time since 2011 and has served on the council for several years. He loves advocating for the residents.

Councilor Beasley thanked the outgoing Mayor and Councilmembers for their service. She stated that she is honored to serve the City of Sky Valley. She vowed to earnestly listen and respect different viewpoints to reach common ground.

Councilor Price stated that he was excited and humble to serve. He wants to bring fresh ideas to an already great City.

Councilor Pence stated that she is looking forward to serving with a humble and servant's heart.

Councilor Allred stated that he was born and raised in Rabun County. He moved away for a few years but moved back in 2004. He has served on the council for the past six years. He wants to serve and help for the success of Sky Valley.

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

6. Adoption of Agenda

Mayor Cotton-Orr asked for the assistance of City Attorney Kidd concerning the agenda. City Attorney Kidd suggested adding Executive Session to the agenda. Mayor Cotton-Orr asked for a motion to approve the amendment of the agenda adding Executive Session. Councilor Beasley made a motion to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Councilor Curtis, unanimously approved.

7. Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance

Councilor Pence led the Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance.

NEW BUSINESS

9. Set Qualifying Fees for 2026 General Election

Councilor Curtis made a motion to set the qualifying fees for \$15.00, seconded by Councilor Beasley, unanimously approved.

10. Consider approval of 2026 Committees (member appointments will be considered for approval at the January 20, 2026 Regular Council Meeting)

Mayor Cotton-Orr stated that the following Committees be considered for approval:

1. Finance and Administration Advisory Committee
2. Public Works and Facilities Advisory Committee

3. Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee
4. Community Connections Advisory Committee
5. City of Sky Valley Advisory Committee (Replacing Mayoral Advisory Committee)

Councilor Curtis made a motion to approve the Committees, seconded by Councilor Price. Councilor Beasley stated that the public has not had a chance to view the Resolutions so therefore she could not support the approval. She also thinks that too many Committees are being suggested. Councilor Curtis stated that Committees are a great way to expand the City's reach and the community could only benefit from this. He feels that the wording in the Resolutions for who can serve on the Committees needs to be looked at further. He went on to say that he doesn't agree with allowing all "recorded property interest" owners, only homeowners of Sky Valley, as he would like to hear from full-time and/or part-time residents only. City Attorney Kidd stated that he met with Mayor Cotton-Orr right before the meeting and that the wording could be changed to reflect that the members could be full-time and/or part-time homeowners or renters. Mayor Cotton-Orr stated that it was her intent for the interest of all folks in the community to be heard. She will only be asking residents, to be on the Committee, that could make a positive contribution to the community. City Attorney Kidd stated that previous Councils have not always created Resolutions to form a new Committee which is fine, because it would be reflected in the minutes. These Resolutions are just setting who can serve, what the duties will be, and the limitations of the Committees which is all legal. Councilor Curtis asked if the approval could be postponed until all the owners have a chance to view the Resolutions? Councilor Pence stated that she would support land lot owners wanting to be on a Committee as their input could be valuable and provide good insight. Councilor Curtis disagreed, stating that they would only have a financial interest and the City should only hear from the residents. Councilor Beasley stated that the Resolutions needs more clarity and that some of the Committees could be combined together. City Attorney Kidd stated that the currently established Committees would have to be voted on to resend.

Councilor Curtis amended his motion to approve the Resolutions for the establishments of the five Committees with City Attorney Kidd changing some of the details mainly the criteria on who can serve, seconded by Councilor Pence. Mayor Cotton-Orr called for the vote (Councilor Allred – Yes, Councilor Pence – Yes, Councilor Price – Yes, Councilor Beasley – No, Councilor Curtis – Yes). The motion carried 4-1.

OTHER BUSINESS

11. Public Forum and General Comments

Dick Grier, Forest Hills, wanted to discuss recycling as he didn't receive any information on recycling. He thinks that more organization is needed with recycling before it is completely thrown out.

Debbie Dalhouse-Curtis, 92 Demorest, agrees that more discussion is needed. She wants to keep the workers healthy but also keeping our environment healthy.

12. Executive Session

Councilor Curtis made a motion to close the meeting to discuss possible litigation and personnel, seconded by Councilor Pence, unanimously approved. The meeting closed at 11:10 a.m.

Councilor Pence made a motion to reopen the meeting at 11:34 a.m., seconded by Councilor Price, unanimously approved.

Mayor Cotton-Orr stated that no action was taken.

13. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Benita Cotton-Orr, Mayor

Attest:



Karen Fleming, City Clerk

**SKY VALLEY CITY COUNCIL
MEMORANDUM AND AFFIDAVIT OF CLOSED MEETING
PURSANT TO O.C.G.A. §50-14-4**

Date 1/6/2026

Motion to Close Meeting:

[Signature]
Signature of Councilor Jim

Seconded:

[Signature]
Signature of Councilor Beth

Motion to Open Meeting:

[Signature]
Signature of Councilor Beth

Seconded:

[Signature]
Signature of Councilor Jesse

Topic: (Please check one)

☐ To discuss the future acquisition of real estate;
(O.C.G.A. §50-14-3 (4))

☒ To discuss or deliberate upon the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of a city official or employee;
(O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3 (6))

☒ To consult and meet with legal counsel pertaining to pending or potential litigation, settlement, claims, administrative proceedings, or other judicial actions brought or to be brought by or against the city or a city official or employee or in which the official or employee may be directly involved.
(O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2)

Each of the undersigned, under oath, certifies that at a meeting of the city council held on _____, the council closed its meeting as permitted by the Georgia Open Meetings Act. The only matter(s) considered or discussed during the closed portion of its meeting is as checked above.

[Signature]
Mayor Stell Cotton Orr

[Signature]
Councilor Oliver Price

[Signature]
Council President Alfred Pence

[Signature]
Councilor Curtis

[Signature]
Councilor McAfee Brashley

Sworn to and subscribed before me
on the above indicated date:

[Signature]
Notary Public, State of Georgia
My Commission Expires: 3/13/28



[Signature]
Councilor Turner