

**MINUTES OF THE CITY OF SKY VALLEY REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON A TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026 AT 10:00 A.M.; LOCATION WAS 3608 HWY 246 (CITY HALL) & VIA TELECONFERENCE (ZOOM) SKY VALLEY, GEORGIA**

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

**STAFF PRESENT:** City Manager Streetman, City Attorney Kidd, City Clerk Fleming, Building Inspector Pyburn, Public Work Superintendent Shope, Water Coordinator English, Police Chief Baumes, Officer Clark, Safety Coordinator Henslee, and Communication Specialist Van Camp

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Cotton-Orr called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. City Clerk Fleming did a Roll Call; Councilors Allred – present, Beasley – present, Curtis- present, Pence – present, Price – present, Mayor Cotton-Orr – present.

**2. Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance**

Councilor Pence led the Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**November 07, 2025 - Council Work Session**

**November 10, 2025 - Public Hearing #1 @ 10:00 a.m.**

**November 10, 2025 - Public Hearing #2 @ 6:00 p.m.**

**November 18, 2025 - Public Hearing #3**

**November 18, 2025 - Regular Council Meeting**

Due to the outgoing council members, Councilors Allred and Curtis were the only two members present for these meetings. Councilor Curtis made a motion to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Councilor Allred, unanimously approved.

**January 06, 2026 - Organizational and Special Called Council Meeting**

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

**4. Adoption of Agenda**

Councilor Curtis made a motion to amend the agenda adding three items to the agenda: Marketing Committee Funding, Sewer Grant, and Committee Resolutions, seconded by Councilor Beasley, unanimously approved.

**5. Mayoral/Council Remarks**

Mayor Cotton-Orr thanked the Public Works Department, City Staff, and Police Department for the work they performed last weekend, keeping the roads safe, during the wintery event.

Councilor Beasley thanked the ones that have reached out to her in the past two weeks, giving their feedback as it has been helpful. She also addressed the negative comments that have been received and stated that we need to all work together as there is much work to do.

**6. City Manager Report**

City Manager Streetman stated that the 2025 taxes are rapidly coming in. \*Approximately \$667,000 of the 1.1 million set amount or 60% has been received. \* February 2<sup>nd</sup> is the due date for the property taxes. \*Renewal of our designations with the Fire Wise Community and Tree City. \*In April we will be planting a tree for Arbor Day. \* The first installment of our five-year SPLOST funding has been received and the newly passed TSPLOST should start coming in around April. \*Next month a financial report will be given for FY2025 as bills are still being paid and revenue being received for

2025. \*Preparations are underway for this weekend's predicted ice storm. \*Blinds are being installed at City Hall soon which will add beauty and also help with the glare in the Chamber Room. \*He acknowledged the continual service of Councilors Allred and Curtis as well as acknowledged the newly elected Mayor Cotton-Orr and Councilors Beasley, Pence, and Price.

## 7. Departmental Reports

Public Works Superintendent Shope thanked the residents for their patience and stated that his department is busy making brine for this weekend's winter weather. \*Time Shares of Sky Valley is providing accommodations, if needed, to the City workers. \*Culvert replacement is underway which some can be completed in-house but some will need to be contracted out. \*The City's traffic signs are being cleaned as well.

Water Coordinator English stated that there were no EPD violations in 2025. \*The EPD will be conducting a Sanitary Survey around mid-year. This will entail them reviewing all the paperwork and conducting well sites inspections. \*Quotes will be obtained for the cleaning of the City's water tanks which has to be completed every five years. \*The recent water samples that were taken came back with no exceedance of any lead or copper. \*PFAS, (polyfluoroalkyl), aka "forever chemical" testing will consist of bi-annual sampling. The first sample went out last week for testing. \*The rebuilding of the pressure reducing pits is still underway. \*He urged residents to cut the water off when leaving for any extended time to keep the water lines from freezing. If any residents need the City to cut the water off or on they can call City Hall to arrange for the service. \*Annual EPD lead/copper testing will be conducted several times a year due to the exceedance that came back during last year's sampling. The Rural Water Association came upon request, to view the results and stated that a very small amount is in the City's water system which comes from homeowners' pipes. When a household water sample comes back positive the homeowner is notified so they can address the issue on their end.

Acknowledgement was given to Dustin Henslee as he received his class III water license recently.

Building Inspector Pyburn stated that in December two ordinance violation citations were paid. The violations were due to tree debris left after contractual tree removal projects. One violation was for \$1,500 and the other \$6,280. \*Three new homes are currently under construction. \*He gave the stats for December concerning how many permits were issued. \*Two hundred and fifty-six permits were issued in 2025.

Lou MacNaughton asked if the City still allows tree topping? Pyburn answered yes but it is usually done by knowledgeable contractors but topping is discouraged.

Susie Piontkowski asked if a retaining wall still needs to have engineered plans before constructing? Pyburn answered yes if it is over four feet high. Piontkowski then asked why wouldn't the culvert project on Sky Valley Way required to have engineered plans? Pyburn answered that the culvert project will be discussed later in the meeting.

Michelle Hershel asked if there is a fee for cutting down a dead tree and Pyburn answered yes per Ordinance. Pyburn goes out and makes sure that it is truly dead and all is clean up after taking it down. The permit fee is \$25.00.

Police Chief Baumes stated that his department is working on getting their advance certifications through Post. \*Two thousand more residential checks were done in 2025 than 2024 and 5,500 more business checks performed. \*National Night Out planning is underway and will be held in August. This will be open to the public to help connect with the police department.

A commendation was given to Officer Clark for her performance during a traffic stop which led to the arrest of an individual with warrants and were in possession of firearms and drugs.

Fire Chief Sigler stated that there were 193 calls in 2025 with 70 of them being in Sky Valley. There were 95 medical calls versus 125 medical calls in 2024. \*Sigler stated that the fatality rate for fire-fighters are increasing and that the biggest culprit is working traffic wrecks. He urged everyone to slow down when approaching an accident and please don't call the fire station to ask for the details of the accident. \*The public is welcome to come to the station to view their equipment and vehicles. \*A meeting is scheduled for February 5<sup>th</sup> to review the 2026 budget, and the public is welcome to attend.

Terrie Allred commended the fire department for doing a fine job and Mayor Cotton-Orr stated that the City is looking forward to using their facility.

#### **8. Committee Reports**

None were given.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **9. Consider various Mayoral Committee member appointees/\*Committee Resolutions (amended agenda item)**

Mayor Cotton-Orr handed off to Mayor Pro-Tem Pence her mayoral position while she stepped down to the podium addressing the attendees. She thanked the council for the thoughtful conversation concerning the advisory committees and is asking them to approve the Resolutions and members that are formed. More time is needed to fill the remaining seats on the other committees. Her goal is to have a range of different perspectives and to give the opportunity for people that want to help to do so. Once the other committees are complete, she will bring back to the council for approval. The committees that are complete are Finance and Administration Advisory Committee with Councilor Pence as Chair and Councilor Curtis as second councilmember. The citizens on this committee will be Steve Mason, Jr., Michelle Hershel, and Jim Phelps. The City of Sky Valley Advisory Committee is also complete with Councilor Pence as Chair and Councilor Allred as second councilmember. The citizens for this committee will be Kelsey Price, Rudy Masi, and W. Nelson Lewis Jr. She thanked those that agreed to serve and stated that the Resolutions were voted on and passed on January 6<sup>th</sup> but the citizenry didn't get a chance to review the Resolutions before the vote so they were held for viewing and also for the City Attorney to reword the description concerning residency. She asked the council to approve the "sunsetting" of the Mayoral Committee and stated that the Landscaping, Marketing, Planning and Zoning, and Special Projects Committees will be discussed in next month's meeting. Mayor Cotton-Orr would like for the council to approve that the Public Forum part of the meeting to be placed as first part of the meeting so they can hear from the citizenry before taking action. She thanked Mayor Pro-Tem Pence and stated that she would be resuming the Chair.

Mayor Cotton-Orr asked for a motion concerning the approval of the Resolutions and Councilor Pence made a motion to approve the Finance and Administration Advisory Committee along with the City of Sky Valley Advisory Committee Resolutions and members slated for each, seconded by Councilor Allred. Councilor Beasley stated that she didn't support the advisory committees except for the Emergency Preparedness, as the committees were not open to the public for volunteers. She doesn't support the committee's structure and feels there is too much redundancy. She previously stepped down from the Chair of the Community Connections Advisory Committee. Councilor Allred stated that it is an executive decision to form the committees and he supports the Mayor. Councilor Curtis feels like it is a lot of committees for such a small city but is in favor of the two committees being discussed.

Suzie Piontkowski asked if the Community Connections Advisory Committee could be restructured into individual item specific groups, that could be focused on one item at a time instead of a year long commitment.

Mayor Cotton-Orr called for the vote, Councilor Allred, Pence, Price, and Curtis for, Beasley nay. The motion carried 4-1

**10. Consider approval of various quotes from local contractors to replace two (2) culverts on Sky Valley Way**

City Manager Streetman stated that there is a state grant (LMIG) that can be applied for and is based on miles of roads in the city. These grant funds have aided in the funding of the Morley Bridge, Sky Valley culverts, replacement of stop signs, and underground trashcan removal. This culvert is located at the pickleball courts. He proceeds with showing pictures of the culvert. Three quotes have been received (Curbow Construction, Precision Paving, and Colwell Construction) but the last one from Colwell Construction came in late due to edits on the proposed amount. Public Works Superintendent Shope stated that the culvert above this one, on Knob Drive has already have been replaced. He showed a picture of the culvert with the water flowing halfway up on it. If two 48" culverts replaced the existing 40" culvert they would carry the water more efficiently and aid in preventing flooding in that area. There are sink holes in the road above the culvert indicating issues in this area. Water Coordinator English stated that approximately \$45,000 will be received from LMIG with the City's required 30% match would pay for most of the project and the rest would be taken out of the TSPLOST fund. The quotes include extending the backside of the walking path for the maintenance vehicles, which can also be used during the culvert replacement, if needed. Phase I was the Morley Bridge and Phase II was the culvert replacement near the Sky Valley Chapel. The homeowners beyond the culvert and up on the hill will be notified approximately two weeks in advance before the project begins. He went on to say that every time it rains heavily there is a "swirl" that develops because the culvert cannot handle the flow and that is what is causing the sink holes in the road. Public Works Superintendent Shope also brought up the dam for Mud Creek and the issues going on with it, along with the buildup of silt in that area. Councilor Curtis stated that this culvert is in much need of replacement with larger culverts as it is in a critical place and is just constricting the flow of the water. Councilor Beasley stated that she didn't receive the map that was shown or a copy of the letter. Streetman stated that what was shown was just part of the LMIG application. Beasley asked about the TSPLOST budget and Streetman answered that the budget will be presented later but currently there is approximately \$300,000 in that fund and during the March Planning Retreat, prioritized projects will be discussed that will be funded by TSPLOST. Councilor Beasley asked several other questions such as how do you pick contractors, do you look at the reviews and check to see if there are any lawsuits against them, when were the different phases approved, have engineers weighed in, urgency of LMIG application and deadline for it. City Manager Streetman answered her questions: We have history with the contractors that have submitted bids and compare apples to apples, as a small city it is difficult to get bids in. We don't get that deep into their personal finances such as lawsuits. The first phase, Morley Bridge, was approved in 2021 or 2022, second phase, SV Way by Chapel, approved in 2023. These were projects that were deemed necessary and not labeled "phases". The application was received in November but was deferred due to the election until the elected Mayor could sign. Councilor Price asked the question, since changing the size of the culvert and adding one more do we not need engineering plans? City Manager Streetman answered, historically, the City doesn't get engineered plans unless there is something new going in such as a new road or bridge. Councilor Beasley stated that she would like to receive more information and would like for the vote to be deferred. She also stated that supporting plans from an engineer could help the contractors with their estimated cost. Councilor Curtis stated that usually engineers don't design culverts but draftsmen's do which he does feel things should be done right the first time. Contractors know how to design these projects and he doesn't think that an engineered plan is necessary.

Lou MacNaughton asked if future development is considered when replacing culverts?

Water Coordinator English stated yes as the bridge and other replaced culverts replaced on SV Way is holding up well.

Questions were asked about if there were any considerations on box culverts or larger sized culverts and the response was yes but box culverts are considerably higher in cost and larger culverts would mean there would be a hump in the road, which you also have to consider the

utilities.

Robert Smalley asked about the silt in the pond before the dam and thought there were environmentally constraints on removing it and wouldn't larger pipes increase the water flow/pressure on the dam?

Councilor Allred answered yes that Mud Creek has been deemed a trout stream and therefore cannot be disturbed as there are special regulations.

Paul Wheeler asked if the head walls would be similar to ones at Morley Bridge and what size would they be? Water Coordinator English answered that they would be similar to ones used below the Chapel which would be wing walls instead of head walls. Recommendations from the contractors will be used. Blake Curbow from Curbow Construction stated that two feet wing walls will be used and if large culverts are used it would put a hump in the road. Mr. Wheeler asked who did the engineering for Evergreen and City Manager answered that there wasn't an engineer involved.

Councilor Curtis made a motion to approve the proposal of Curbow Construction in the amount of \$63,100, seconded by Councilor Allred. Councilor Curtis stated that he had went line item by line item of the two proposals and it appears that Precision Paving has a greater markup. Mayor Cotton-Orr called for the vote. Councilors Allred, Pence, Price, and Curtis in favor of, Beasley nay. The motion carried 4-1.

#### **11. Marketing Meeting Funding (amended agenda item)**

Councilor Curtis made a motion to approve \$5,000 contribution from the City. He went on to say the Marketing Committee is crucial for helping the property values to stay home. Being largely a second home community, this will help home purchasers with getting a mortgage and also aid when selling. The Marketing Committee helps to bring first time visitors into Sky Valley. Councilor Pence stated that the \$5,000 has already been approved as it is in the budget. City Manager Streetman stated yes the allocation for \$5,000 was in the budget which was approved in November and typically the Marketing budget would be approved in January. Councilor Allred seconded the motion when the motion was brought up again. Councilor Beasley stated that the motion should be for the continuation of the Marketing Committee itself before voting on the funding.

Michelle Hershel asked since there were four entities contributing why would there be a need for a committee. Councilor Curtis answered so they can continue using the services of Doug Hollingsworth, Georgia Golf Trail, to help bring people into Sky Valley to show different aspects of this community. Gordon Brand stated that AI confirmed that marketing is essential for the economic growth, extending the tax base, and supporting restaurants. Sky Valley has benefited from the Marketing Committee.

Councilor Pence stated that the motion needed to be modified. Councilor Allred stated that the council did not have to approve the committee. Councilor Price stated that he was against the City contributing to the Marketing Committee as we don't have stats to show how much it helps, especially since the Club pulled out. Councilor Beasley thinks that the Committee should be re-vamped and would like to see the Mission Statement and Goals from this Committee.

Paul Wheeler called "point of order" stating the City formed the Marketing Committee and the members were approved by the Council each year.

Rudy Masi thinks that the Council needs to see the Mission Statement and Goals before voting.

Councilor Curtis amended his motion to continue the Marketing Committee and funding of \$5,000 from the City, seconded by Councilor Allred. Mayor Cotton-Orr called for the vote, Councilors Allred, Pence, Beasley, and Curtis in favor, Councilor Price nay. Motion carried 4-1.

#### **12. Sewer Grant (amended agenda item)**

Councilor Curtis stated that the previous study showed Ecoli in the lake water with two spikes which he believes came from leaking septic systems in the valley. Some of the systems are 40/50 years old. What the report doesn't show is the possibility of animal waste being a contributing factor after a heavy rain. Councilor Pence asked if another study is needed? Councilor Curtis answered that there is five million on the table but a lot of preliminary work needs to be done. Councilor Beasley made a motion to postpone vote until there is a Work Session, in the next 30 days, to discuss details, seconded by Councilor Curtis, unanimously approved.

**13. Public Forum**

Mayor Cotton-Orr stated that speakers do not have to state their addresses.

Al Piontkowski stated that on the discussion for the SV Way culvert there were no "request for proposal". How does the contractor and council know what is being asked for? With no engineered plans how can this be approved without expertise as the City staff doesn't have it. The City can provide \$5,000 but cannot afford an engineer's design? Councilor Pence thanked Public Works Superintendent Shope and Water Coordinator English along with the contractors for their expertise.

Gail Greenfelder stated that the City is liable if these projects collapse without having an engineer involved.

Rudi Masi likes the idea of having citizenry input before voting on items. Does not understand why so much money is being spent on marketing.

Trudy via Zoom wanted to know the status of the two grants. City Manager Streetman stated that the two grants are active as the last grant's criteria were met, for they just received the Mayor's signature.

**14. Executive Session**

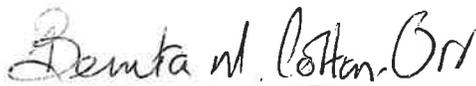
None

**15. 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 12:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Benita Cotton-Orr, Mayor

Attest:



Karen Fleming, City Clerk