Mayor Walter C. Rocker, Jr. called the January 2, 2018 Council meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Invocation was given by Councilman William Mangum.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Walker and seconded by Mr. Mangum to approve the minutes from the December 18, 2017 meeting. Mayor Pro-Tem Walker and Mr. Mangum voted in favor. Ms. Doster, Mr. Charles Haley and Ms. Janie Reid abstained because they did not attend the December 18, 2017 meeting. Motion failed with 2 voting in favor and 3 abstaining.

**Public Comments:** Tom Thompson and Cary Walton – Unification/Consolidation

Motion was made by Ms. Doster and seconded by Mr. Haley to hear from those wishing to speak. Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.
**Reading of the Rule for Public Comments:** City Administrator Gary Sanders read the rules for Public comments.

Mr. Tom Thompson requested that he be allowed to speak for five minutes instead of the usual three minutes allowed to make public comments, to which Council agreed. Mr. Thompson read and submitted the following letter to Council.

To: Mayor Walter Rocker, Eatonton City Council, and Citizens of Eatonton January 2, 2018

I have been a resident of Eatonton for more than 70 years. I come before you tonight because of my love for Eatonton and to express my concerns for the viability and future of Eatonton.

Eatonton and Putnam County have a choice: we can choose to continue having our current two separate governments, or we can choose a single, unified government.

A. If we continue the present two government system:

   Eatonton's growth will be at best stagnant, and probably will erode.
   * Why would anyone invest in homes or businesses and pay double taxation?
   * The burden of double taxation will increase due to both inflation and stagnant growth.
   * Current city residents with no strong ties to the community will leave, accelerating the economic deterioration of Eatonton. * Property values will drop.

   It is highly likely that a "City of Lake Oconee" will be formed, making future unification far more difficult and virtually impossible.

   We will continue to have intergovernmental fights over tax collections and shared costs.

B. If we choose to form a Unified Government, where all residents have an equal and proportional voice

   Current residents of Eatonton:
   * Will no longer be double taxed for two governments.
   * Eatonton will be an attractive choice for retirees as well as younger families.
   * Eatonton will be an attractive location for new businesses.
   * Existing businesses will benefit from the healthier economic conditions. * Existing residents will have no incentive to relocate.

   County residents (those living in Putnam but outside Eatonton City Limits):
   * Will only see a fraction of a mil property tax increase due to unification, even without the ultimate cost savings inherent in a single government.

   All Putnam County residents:
   * Will benefit from a healthier county, where "Them vs Us" is removed.
   * Will benefit in attracting industry and small businesses.
   * Will benefit from a new sense of shared community and goals.

Is it possible to form a Unified Government? Certainly.
Will it be easy? No, but absolutely worth the effort.
Who will the naysayers be? Doubters as well as those personally benefiting.

Expect to hear: "It won't work." "It's never been done." Other negative comments.

To: Mayor Walter Rocker, Eatonton City Council, and Citizens of Eatonton January 2, 2018

What needs to be done now? City & County governments need to authorize a study. It is on your agenda tonight for your approval.
The Middle Georgia Regional Commission has agreed to perform this study as well as a pro-forma outline at no cost to the city or county. This binds neither the city nor the county to move forward. If the plan appears to have merit after being studied, details of the proposed unification would be locally examined and approved. Our state legislative representatives would introduce legislation providing for a vote by both county and city residents. Only if the proposed unification achieves a 50% + 1 vote by both city and county residents would any unification take place.

I would respectfully ask you as members of Eatonton City Council to vote tonight to authorize this no-cost study by the Middle GA Regional Comm.
You were elected by Eatonton voters to represent their best interests. I hope you will keep this in mind, setting aside any concerns you might have as to your perception of how this might affect you personally.

We cannot afford two governments any more!

To vote negatively is tantamount to: "Don't confuse me with the facts! My mind is made up!"

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

Tom Thompson

Mr. Cary Walton talked to Council about consolidation and advised he agreed with the statement made by Mr. Thompson concerning consolidation of the City and County governments.

Old Business: None

New Business:

Main Street Report Attachment #6A

A 501-c-3 Non-Profit Corp. Designated by the Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs for the City & County

Main Street Report for City Council Meeting Tuesday January 2, 2018 - December 2017 Recap

Organization
Eatonton Main Street is still looking for applicants to the board. A working board is required by the Department of Community Affairs, as part of the annual assessment to maintain Main Street designation.

The Christmas decorations committee raised around $20,000 in donations for decorating light poles.

Promotion
The Residential Christmas Decorating Contest was won by the Vargas Family. The Commercial Christmas Decorating Contest was won by Tienda Tarimoro. Outdoor Options provided the winning Light Up The Night Float.

Design
There is one facade grant pending for the Facade Grant program.

Economic Vitality
Both The Frisk pub and The Music Store are looking at a January Ribbon Cutting.

Cucos Mexican Restaurant continued to have a good month since reopening.
The lack of handrails on the ramps to businesses with the new sidewalk construction is giving cause for concern.

Two buildings were purchased one in June 2016 and one in October 2016. The old Yarbrough Flowers building, and the old Trent Brown law office building. I have been given opening dates of towards the end of 2017, which have now passed. I will provide Council with an update when I have one.

Summary

December has seen an uptick in retail purchases and has also with the introduction of Cucos and The Frisk pub, brought more eating opportunities into the Downtown.

There are a number of store fronts that are either for sale or empty. We do have one that is turnkey ready. The rest are going to need rehabilitation to the buildings.

In general visitor numbers to Arts Festivals are down not just in Eatonton but to many I have visited throughout the year. The parade though increased in floats was also down on attendance numbers. There is a perception that I have heard that it the same thing every year. Clearly this is not the case, but the message of constant change has to be reinforced through partnerships with local media outlets.

The residential and merchant Christmas decorating competition did draw added attention this year. I hope this attention can be built on moving forward. There was a great deal of interest with those not taking part and a suggestion of a map so everyone can see the entrants. I am going to ask the homeowners and merchants permission before moving forward with that idea.

The year of 2017 has shown great interest in bringing businesses into Downtown Eatonton. The challenge for economic vitality is to retain those businesses and watch them grow. I will be looking at ways to increasing their profile and visibility moving forward.

The period of change moving from the branding of Eatonton Main Street to Downtown Eatonton continues. Social Media accounts have now been set up in the Downtown Eatonton name as well as a website. This will provide a more inclusive tone for the Downtown, rather than the perception that everything

2018-2019 Committee Appointments by Mayor Rocker
Motion was made by Mr. Mangum and seconded by Mr. Haley to approve the 2018-2019 Committee appointments made by Mayor Rocker. Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

Proposed Resolution to Designate a Date and Meeting Place for the January 15, 2018 City Council Meeting Attachment #6C
Motion was made by Mr. Haley and seconded by Mr. Walker to approve the proposed Resolution changing the regular Council meeting scheduled for the third Monday in January 2018 to Tuesday, January 16, 2018 at 7:00 PM at the Hut, located at 400A West Marion Street, Eatonton, Georgia, pursuant to Section 31 of Chapter 2 of the Code of Ordinance. Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

Discussion and Possible Action on Requesting Technical Assistance from the Middle Georgia Regional Commission in Conducting a Feasibility Study on Consolidation Attachment #6D
Mr. Haley discussed the letter requesting technical assistance from Middle Georgia Regional Commission to conduct a feasibility study on consolidation for the City of Eatonton at no cost. Mr. Haley advised his City tax bill is higher than his County tax bill. Although we did not raise
the millage this year, the City still has an income problem. If there is a study for zero cost, we should look at it.

Ms. Doster asked if there was any information on how long this study would take or if any details were available.

Mayor Rocker advised Putnam County Commissioners approved working with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia and they asked the City to participate in the study and pay a portion of the $28,000.00 fee for the study.

Ms. Reid asked what is required to do the study.

Administrator Sanders advised that if Council approves the request for technical assistance, the Regional Commission will reach out to the City to discuss the proposed scope and terms of the study. In this instance, the City can ask the RC to attend an upcoming meeting to discuss directly with Council what it is the City expects.

After much discussion, motion was made by Mr. Haley and seconded by Mr. Mangum to approve the agenda item requesting technical assistance from the Middle Georgia Regional Commission to conduct a feasibility study on consolidation. Motion carried by a vote of 4-1. Those voting in favor of the motion: Ms. Doster, Mr. Haley, Mr. Mangum, and Mayor Pro-Tem Chip Walker. Ms. Reid voted in opposition to the request to conduct the consolidation study.

Committee Reports
Mayor Pro-Tem Walker advised he would schedule a Finance and Personnel Committee meeting sometime in the next week or so.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Walker and seconded by Ms. Doster to pay the bills if and when the funds become available. Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

City Administrator Gary Sanders advised Council to remember the date and location of the next Council meeting, and he would send a reminder on Friday prior to the meeting.

City Administrator Sanders advised Council that City Hall will be closed on Monday, January 15 for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday.

City Administrator Sanders advised our application for the Trail Grant has been submitted. We should hear in April if we were selected to submit a 2nd level application.

City Administrator Sanders reported the City crew finished moving the Butterfly Garden to the Trail Park and we have install waterlines on the property. The 1 acre of property donated by the Putnam Development Authority can be used to build permanent structure such as bathrooms.

City Attorney Huskins advised Council to put the December 18, 2017 minutes on the next agenda since the previous motion did not carry. Attorney Huskins advised that it would be
appropriate for Councilmembers to vote to approve the minutes even if they were not present at
the meeting.

Mayor Rocker asked if there was any more business to be discussed before we adjourn. Being
no further business, motion was made by Ms. Doster and seconded by Mr. Haley to adjourn.
Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

Council adjourned at 7:33 P.M.

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Walter C. Rocker, Jr., Mayor

ATTEST:

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Sarah E. Abrams, City Clerk