

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF SKY VALLEY, GEORGIA
APRIL 19, 2016
TUESDAY, 10:00 AM
FELLOWSHIP HALL, 817 SKY VALLEY WAY**

MINUTES

Mayor Goodgame called the meeting to order.

Those present: Mayor Goodgame, Council President Lively, Councilors Carr, Howard, MacNair, and Steil, Attorney Dickerson, City Manager Lapeyrouse, Chief Mason, and City Clerk Cantrell.

Helen Kleiber gave the invocation. Mayor Goodgame led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilor Carr made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 22, 2016 Regular Council Meeting, 2nd Councilor Lively, unanimously approved.

Councilor Lively made a motion to adopt the agenda, 2nd Councilor MacNair, unanimously approved

MAYOR'S REMARKS

Mayor Goodgame said that we have a busy agenda, so he will keep his remarks brief. He said that he is glad to see such a large crowd and encouraged people to see City Clerk Cantrell after the meeting if they would like to volunteer to help with the many projects in the city.

Mayor Goodgame gave an overview of the City's Rules of Procedure Ordinance highlighting the format of the meetings. He is Chairman, Attorney Dickerson is the Parliamentarian, Officer Baumes will be the Sergeant at Arms.

Verizon Wireless is doing their final walk-through of the cell tower, and it will be operational very soon.

The Visitor Center is now staffed fulltime and open six days a week.

Mayor Goodgame said that he and City Manager Lapeyrouse spoke with an engineering firm regarding sewer services.

We are working on the idea of developing a community park in conjunction with the Timeshares of Sky Valley. The Community Activities Committee met week before last, and we put out a survey to the community requesting input on what activities people would like to see available at the park.

There is an exciting project in the works at the old lodge, and Council President Lively will give a report.

We have a craft beer festival and a 5K race over Memorial Day Weekend. This is the second annual event. It was successful last year, and we have been able to secure sponsors for this year.

We are going to have a cleanup day before Memorial Day and will soon be sending out information for volunteers to help.

The Planning & Zoning Commission met and is working on tweaking ordinances that have been difficult for staff to interpret and enforce.

COUNCIL REMARKS

Councilor MacNair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He said that he wants to clear up a rumor that he has heard since the last meeting stating that the Council did not vote to terminate Officer David Edwards and added that the Council does not have hire/fire power.

Councilor Howard welcomed everyone to the meeting. He said it was great to have this many in attendance to participate in their government.

Councilor Steil said that every day we get to live in Sky Valley is a great day. He expressed his gratitude for being able to be a part of Sky Valley.

Council President Lively said that about two months ago, the Community Bible Church in Highlands started a satellite service in Sky Valley. They have been working with Harrison Merrill on an agreement to see if opening the lodge is a feasible option for the church. Mr. Merrill has been agreeable, and they are working on this as a way to keep the lodge. It can be used for the church's services and also for other activities.

Councilor Carr said that she is so excited about the potential use of the old lodge and that she appreciated the staff's work and community involvement to keep Sky Valley beautiful.

CITY MANAGER & DEPARTMENT REPORTS – EXCEPTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Cleanup Day is set for May 26th, and we need to schedule a time.

Tickets are currently available for the Craft Beer Festival and 5K. City Manager Lapeyrouse said that she has included stats from the Visitor Center in her report and highlighted visitors who had stopped by and stats for the Facebook page and website.

NEW BUSINESS

- Mayor's Proclamation – National Public Works Week

Mayor Goodgame read the Proclamation Declaring the week of May 15 – 21, 2016 as National Public Works Week.

- Appointment of Police Chief

Mayor Goodgame said that the City Charter states that the City Manager, in conjunction with the Mayor, has authority to hire and fire employees and that for hiring a Department Head, the Council has 90 days to approve the hiring decision. For the Police Chief position, City Manager Lapeyrouse posted the open position and job description. We had 22 resumes and eliminated 16 based on location and salary requirements, then the interview committee performed interviews, and RC Mason was selected.

Councilor Steil made a motion to appoint RC Mason as Police Chief, 2nd Council President Lively. Mayor Goodgame said that he will still be under the 90 day probationary period. Councilor Howard asked for

clarification on the process. City Manager Lapeyrouse explained that each employee hired has a 90-day introduction period. Within 90 days of hiring a department head, the Council votes to appoint the person selected by her and the mayor. If the Council appoints a department head within the 90-day period, the person is still under the regular probation period. The motion to appoint RC Mason as chief passed three to two with Councilors Carr, Lively, and Steil voting aye and Councilors Howard and MacNair voting nay.

- LUCAS 2 Update

Chief Mason said that he has spoken to the Dillard Police Chief and the EMS Director regarding having a LUCAS 2 placed on the ambulance assigned to the north end of the County. They all agree that it would be an asset and would need to be used by the paramedics because they are better trained. The EMS director is checking to see if they can get it at a lower cost, but the pricing he has seen is around \$15,000. He has also asked about other groups contributing to the purchase. Mayor Goodgame said we will continue to pursue the LUCAS 2 and see if other groups will be willing to contribute to the purchase.

- Lease of Mud Creek Falls Trail

Mayor Goodgame said that six volunteers cleaned up the trail to make it passable. He said that the trail still needs a good bit of work, and that we approached Harrison Merrill requesting a lease to this property so that the City can maintain it and make improvements as needed. Councilor Howard made a motion to approve the lease, 2nd Councilor MacNair. A resident asked who assumes liability for the trail. Mayor Goodgame said that the City has liability coverage that includes any leased property. The motion passed unanimously.

- Street Lights

Mayor Goodgame said that we have been asked to have additional street lighting on Sky Valley Way. City Manager Lapeyrouse explained options to have additional lighting installed and monthly costs for electricity. She said Georgia Power can install light poles on Sky Valley Way for \$290.53 each and the monthly bill will be approximately \$11. The lights would continue from the entrance down Sky Valley Way toward the last curve before the Timeshare on-street parking area. Council President Lively made a motion to go with Georgia Power's street lights, the actual number of light poles to be determined for even spacing, 2nd Councilor Carr. The motion to have the additional lights installed passed unanimously.

- Equipment Shed

Mayor Goodgame said that we included funds to build an equipment shed in the 2016 budget. This is to protect the City's equipment and will be located at the city hall shop. Councilor Howard made a motion to approve Olympia Steel, 2nd Councilor Carr. City Manager Lapeyrouse said that it included a 40 year warranty. Ray Becker asked if we have considered building the equipment shed in the valley instead of at city hall location. Mayor Goodgame said that we did look, but that we do not have another location that would be agreeable to residents. The motion passed unanimously.

- June Council Meeting Date

Councilor Carr requested to change the date to the 14th, the second Tuesday of the month. Councilor Lively made a motion to approve the meeting date, 2nd Councilor Steil, unanimously approved.

EDWARDS TERMINATION APPEAL

Mayor Goodgame said that the Charter calls for the City Manager and the Mayor to perform hiring and dismissals, and that is also allows for appeals by the employee. Attorney Dickerson will handle these items.

Attorney Dickerson said that the first item will be a Liberty Interest Hearing. He said that this hearing does not allow for any public input or action by the Council. The second item is a termination appeal. Attorney Dickerson said that during this appeal, Mr. Edwards can state his appeal and also call witnesses who will submit a sworn statement. The City will have this same opportunity, and then Mr. Edwards will have the final closing. Dickerson explained that we need to give Mr. Edwards due respect during this process.

Changing order – Liberty Interest first followed by the Termination Appeal to allow better flow.

Attorney Mike Cummings said that he has known Mr. Edwards for years and he is doing this for no charge. Mr. Edwards asked him to speak on his behalf as he said he was not a speaker but a public servant. Mr. Cummings stated that Mr. Edwards' wife has collected about thirty letters from Sky Valley citizens and they have been compiled to be given to the council and the city manager. Mr. Cummings wanted to give some highlights of the letters and said he would not give names of the people who wrote in but there were several couples involved so when he said thirty people it is probably closer to fifty people. Mr. Cummings began to read some of the highlights from the letters. The following are the highlights he read.

I'm appalled that this could have happened and I'm asking you as a city council to thoroughly question exactly what happened to cause a good and trusted man to lose his job. We have lost two outstanding officers in our police force, Scott Dills and David Edwards. David has built a close relationship with residents and his dependable police presence is appreciated by all of us.

David knows the community and the residents appreciate him and trust him.

David came to my rescue and called a tow truck and stayed with me until they arrived. I'm still to this day grateful for his help. He goes beyond his duties to be there for the residents of Sky Valley. Hope he stays with us.

We know David Edwards to be honest, reliable, loyal, trustworthy, competent, hardworking, as well as a devoted father, husband, and devout Christian. It's extremely rare to find someone of his principles and integrity to serve our community. I have found him always to be helpful and polite in all situations. I pray this will be resolved for we need David Edwards back.

David Edwards is the kind of person who represents law and respect within Sky Valley. I cannot imagine his dismissal.

I hope this can be resolved and he can be reinstated. He is a kind, caring family man and an asset to Sky Valley.

We've had the good fortune to know David the last nine years. He is an excellent ambassador for Sky Valley. He goes beyond just being the good officer. He goes out of his way to be helpful.

I have been in business for over fifty years and only wish that my employees had his people skills.

He is a person of integrity and has a passion for the community. We only hope that we can see him back in Sky Valley.

I've always found David to be professional, think he has the best interest of Sky Valley in mind when he is on duty.

He has been so kind and helpful to me and I'm upset to know there's a problem. He has been a great source of security and a life stone for Sky Valley. Maybe the mayor needs to find another job. We realize we are in control and not him as we pay his salary too.

We always knew that David had our back. We have found him to be honest and hard working in our community. By his presence he made our community a safer place.

I called him to report a fire and he responded in three minutes. When he arrived I was in the house with no lights, smoke, fire, and I was hysterically looking for my dog. After he saw that it was safe he went back into the burning house to get my pocketbook and my car keys and move our cars. It was nice to have someone there within minutes, if not my dog and I may both have not survived.

I had twenty years as a city staff chaplain, councilor in Coral Springs, Florida police department. I was exposed to hundreds of law enforcement and public safety personnel, some good and some bad. David Edwards is just what I look for in a person to be next to in a crisis. I watched him put his own safety at risk and direct traffic in an accident when no other law enforcement was present. He did it for hours without complaint or even a meal break. He went into a house to rescue a woman who had become confused in the smoke and bring her out and then returned into the house. I was personally present in both of these situations. Character, courage, compassion, and an unending desire to assist are just a few of the words I would use to characterize David Edwards. It took years to develop this relationship of trust with the people of this city. To lose it would be pathetic. The decision to remove him would directly affect public safety.

Mr. Cummings stated there were more comments but said that the question that arises is what did this good man do to lose his ten years he put in at Sky Valley. What egregious, horrible act did he commit to cost him a job he cared so much about?

Comments are directed toward liberty interest and appeal.

Mr. Cummings said that apparently a gentleman named Mr. Garrett came to the police station on March 11, 2016 with an old revolver that was found in the assisted living center where his mom was a resident. He brought the pistol in as he did not want it anymore. He had heard that you can deposit pistols with police officers or with a police department and they would dispose of it. David Edwards looked at the pistol and said, "Well I will buy it from you" and the man said, "No, but I will give it to you." To which David Edwards said, "Okay." So the question I had when I heard that part of the story was what's the problem with that? Is there a problem with that? What David told me and I'll ask him

here in front of you.....Mr. Cummings then asked Mr. Dickerson if Mr. Edwards needed to be under oath. Mr. Dickerson said it would be appropriate to do so. Mr. Cummings swore in Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Cummings asked Mr. Edwards if he has ever known officers under any of the Chiefs, Woods, Andrews, Harris, Brown or Dills in the City of Sky Valley to accept guns from citizens. Mr. Edwards said yes. Mr. Cummings asked if he ever knew if Ralph Woods accepted guns from citizens. Mr. Edwards said that he doesn't know that he was given one as a gift but there were gun transactions. Mr. Cummings then asked about Scott Dills. Mr. Cummings asked Mr. Edwards if Dills ever accepted guns. He said yes. Mr. Cummings asked Mr. Edwards himself if he had been given guns by citizens. Edwards said yes. Mr. Cummings asked if Terry Brown was an officer here. Edwards said he was and Cummings asked if he ever accepted or traded guns while he was here. Edwards said he traded guns, bought and sold guns. Mr. Cummings asked Edwards since he had been fired from his job has he asked other Police Chiefs in the county about accepting guns. Edwards said he had. Cummings asked if he had talked to Andy Strait. Edwards said that he had talked with Strait and he said they buy and trade guns at the police department regularly and he also advised a situation very similar to this one had occurred and the officer had kept the gun there. Cummings then asked about Shane Watts, the Chief from Dillard. Edwards said that Watts said he regularly trades guns on duty. Watts had advised that he had people pull up to him sitting on the side of the road with guns that they did not want anymore and he had taken them.

Mr. Cummings asked Mr. Edwards that when he accepted the gun from Mr. Garrett did he do it in return for any sort of favor or any action on inaction and tell him you would or would not do any certain things. Mr. Edwards said absolutely not. Cummings asked if the gun was part of any sort of investigation, crime scene, or anything of the sort. Edwards said no. Cummings asked Edwards where he was when Mr. Garrett came in with the gun. Edwards said he was in the code enforcement office at city hall. Cummings asked Edwards who was there with him. Edwards said Bob Powers was there. Cummings asked if Chief Mason came in shortly thereafter. Edwards said he came in within just a minute or two. Cummings asked where Mr. Garrett was when Mr. Mason got there. Mr. Edwards said Mr. Garrett was either getting in his car or pulling out of the parking lot. He was just leaving city hall. Cummings asked if Mason saw the gun. Edwards said yes. Cummings asked if Mason asked Edwards about the gun. Edwards said he offered it up and showed it to Mason very forthcoming. Cummings asked who was there when he and Mason were looking at the gun. Edwards said Bob Powers was there. Cummings asked Edwards if he told Chief Mason that he had a discussion with Mr. Garrett. Edwards said yes. Cummings asked Edwards if he told Mason that he asked Mr. Garrett to buy the gun. Edwards said yes. Cummings asked if Edwards told Mason that Mr. Garrett gave the gun to him. Edwards said yes. Cummings asked where the gun went at that point which was on the afternoon of March 11, 2016. Edwards said initially we left it there and continued our conversation outside and went into the police department. In just a few minutes Bob Powers brought the gun into the police department and handed it to me. Cummings asked Edwards if he has seen a statement written on April 4, 2016 by Bob Powers. Edwards said he has. Cummings asked Edwards to tell everyone who is Bob Powers. Edwards said Powers is the code enforcement officer for the city. Cummings said according to the statement given by Mr. Powers you two were in one room at one point and then you and the Chief were in another room at a different point. Edwards said correct. Cummings asked Edwards how big the room was that he and the Chief were in. Edwards said 10x16 maybe. Cummings asked two or three desks. Edwards said two desks, mine and his. Cummings asked if Mr. Powers brought the gun back into the room. Edwards said he did. Cummings asked did Chief Mason see the gun or could he have seen the gun? Edwards said yes. Cummings said according to Mr. Powers he says

he took the pistol next door to the police department and gave it to David and RC. Cummings asked who RC is. Edwards said that's the new Police Chief. Cummings asked is it true that the Police Chief saw you with the gun and asked you about it. Edwards said correct. Cummings then asked if the Police Chief saw the gun be brought into another room. Edwards said correct. Cummings asked how long did the Chief stay before he left. Edwards said ten to fifteen minutes maybe. Cummings asked Edwards how long he was on shift that night. Edwards said until 7pm. Cummings asked about what time was this. Edwards said about 12:30ish so six or seven more hours. Cummings asked Edwards if he heard anything from the chief that day about logging in the gun, taking the serial number, running a check on it. Edwards said no. Cummings asked Edwards if he heard anything the next day from him. Edwards said no. Cummings asked Edwards did he hear anything the next day after that from him. Edwards said no. Cummings asked what day was it when you heard back. Edwards said it was that Monday the third day. Cummings asked Edwards if he eventually got what's known as a Georgia form separation notice. Edwards said he did. Cummings asked Edwards what day he was fired, did he recall. Edwards said March 22, 2016. Cummings asked Edwards on that separation notice did it say he was fired for violating Sky Valley Police Department standard operations and procedures section 6 S 7.5 . Edwards said correct. Cummings asked Edwards if he knew generally what that is. Edwards said I do now. Cummings asked Edwards if he knew what that was when he got it. Edwards said no. Cummings asked how often you all use your standard operating procedures. Edwards said it's a 400 page book. Cummings said there is a section in there that says general order property evidence collection and storage. Cummings asked Edwards if he has seen that since he got fired. Edwards said since he got fired. Cummings held up a copy of the documents in question and asked Edwards if it was a copy of it. Edwards said that's a copy. Cummings asked Edwards if he was investigating a crime. Edwards said no. Cummings asked Edwards if he was prosecuting a defender. Edwards said no. Cummings asked Edwards if he was using any sort of application of scientific knowledge in methods regarding this gun. Cummings asked Edwards if he was using any sort of laboratory support services. Edwards said no. Cummings asked Edwards if he was turning the gun into some other forensic agency or investigative agency. Edwards said no. Cummings asked Edwards if he searched anyone to obtain the gun. Edwards said no. Cummings asked if the gun was ever on scene of a crime that he knew of. Edwards said not to my knowledge. Cummings asked Edwards once the Chief called you on the 14th what did he ask you to do. Edwards said when he called me he asked where the paperwork was on the gun to which I replied it was a private transaction between myself and Mr. Garrett. Edwards said Mason told him no you can't do that bring the gun. Cummings asked Edwards if he did that. Edwards said I did and within fifteen minutes I was at the office. Cummings asked Edwards if he did a log in of property in evidence. Edwards said he signed the property receipt of assigning custody to Chief Mason. Cummings asked Edwards did Chief Mason before the 14th when he saw the gun the one, two, or three times there in the office, did he ever mention to you that you need to log it in. Edwards said no. Cummings asked Edwards did he ever mention to you there was a policy and procedure book that you needed to follow regarding that gun. Edwards said no. Cummings asked Edwards if he had been told that day that the gun needed to be logged in what would you have done. Edwards said I would have logged it in.

Mr. Cummings ended his presentation. Mr. Dickerson stated the City would have the opportunity to present some more testimony also. Mr. Dickerson told Mr. Cummings he would have the opportunity to make the last comment. Dickerson asked if anybody on behalf of the City wishing to make any comments. City Manager Lapeyrouse said Chief Mason would be commenting.

Dickerson swore in Chief Mason.

Chief Mason said that on that day, he stopped by and Edwards did show him the firearm. He said I never would have thought to tell him to do a property receipt and put it into evidence because this is a policy manual which I knew and I had just got here and all officers had signed that they understood the Standard Operating Procedures and the manual. Mason said that's something that you would learn in the first week at the police academy. You do not take any property whether its turned over, handed to you, what have you, without documentation and putting it in storage. Mason said the issue here is Edwards did not know the person. Mason said I heard Edwards was asked if it was involved in a crime or was it involved in anything he was investigating and he said no. Mason asked how could have Edwards known. Mason said the gun was handed over and it wasn't ran for wants or warrants, it wasn't checked, no paperwork was done. Mason said there is no way Edwards would have known if it was involved in a crime without doing checks. Mason said he did not contact Edwards the next two days because he wasn't at work, but he did come into work Saturday and he hadn't yet found the keys for the evidence. Mason said Mr. Dills left it in quite a messy manner where he didn't know where everything was. Mason said things were everywhere. Mason said that Monday when he was able to locate the keys he looked in the evidence locker to make sure that the gun and the property receipt and the report were in there and they were not. He then notified the city manager and contacted Edwards about the reports and had him come in and ask him about where the gun was. Mason said that is when Edwards said it was a personal transaction and that's when he made it clear you can't have any personal transactions because the person pulled in for the sole purpose of making contact with a police officer to have a gun properly disposed of. Mason said therefore the only reason there was contact was because Edwards was a police officer. The man did not pull in to speak to David Edwards, he pulled into speak and turn property over to a police officer. Mason said you cannot benefit in any way because of your badge and your position of authority. This contact would never have happened; it never would have taken place if it weren't for the fact that Edwards was a peace officer. Mason said the property is supposed to be collected even when it's turned in according to policy, a proper receipt done with time, date, case number, person's information, everything and put into evidence. He said the gun can be used by the city department for training issues or a judge can order that it can be sold, but only sold to someone who has a class three ATF license. Mason said the issue here is the gun was never checked, it was never documented and that could have come back on the person who turned in the weapon if it were stolen or lost, or if it were used in a crime in the future and then it came back registered to him the person would say wait a minute, I turned it over to the police department. There's no documentation and that left the city up for liability for the person who may have been injured by the gun in future or the person who turned in the weapon had no proper documentation of that weapon. Mason said he spoke to the man, actually while he was asking Mr. Edwards, he asked who the man was and Edwards said he didn't know but he lived at 101 West Sugarbush. Mason said Edwards didn't even know the man's name. Mason said Edwards took something from someone he didn't even know, he did show the gun to me. Mason said he particularly asked that question because guns had been swapped there before and he asked Edwards had he done that before and he said no. Mason asked Edwards to give him examples of who had done it and he said he couldn't but it's been done before. Mason said just because Dillard or whoever decides to do it, it is not proper, it is not okay. The property has to be turned over to the police department, disposed of properly, or a judge must give an order for it to be sold at auction to someone with a class three ATF license. Mason said in their code of ethics which is in the Standard Operating Procedures which was signed by Edwards, it states there is no gratuities, and gratuities is accepting something solely because you are a police officer, that you benefit or gain from solely being a police officer.

Mason had no further comments. Attorney Dickerson asked if there was anyone else to make comments on behalf of the city. No one else commented. Attorney Dickerson told Mr. Cummings he had the right to rebuttal.

Mr. Cummings said that in David Edwards file there is an email from Herb Garrett. Mr. Cummings reads the following email: Here is my recollection of the events as I remember them. A couple of weeks ago Sue and I rode up to our mountain house at 101 West Sugarbush to spend a couple of nights. I had in my possession a pistol I inherited upon my mother's death. After having it appraised I found it to be very old and unworthy of purchase. I was told the best way to dispose of it safely was to take it to a police agency. On March 12, (Cummings said he had his dates wrong) I stopped by the Sky Valley Police Department to turn in the gun. I walked into a room where the police department was located. Two gentlemen were in there. One wore a police uniform, a badge, and a name tag. I had not met him before but he was quite cordial. After I explained that what I wanted to do he offered to buy the gun. I told him I did not want to sell it the gun but I would be glad to give it to him. I'm sorry that this gun surrender thing has gotten far more complicated than it should have. I hope it levels out and calms down soon. Herb Garrett.

Mr. Cummings reads from page 16 of 399 of the Sky Valley Police Department Standard Operating and Procedures manual: Duty to refrain from accepting money, goods, or services. Mr. Cummings said this is what it says and I believe the Chief is confused. Employees shall not accept money, goods, and services for special consideration as in an inducement to perform or refrain from performing an official act. If the donor of the gift is anonymous, the disposition of the gift will be made by the Chief of Police. Mr. Cummings said he would like to say that on David's behalf that he has loved working for the city and being a city employee, and would love to have his job back. It would mean a lot to him and his family. It's different for different people, I think a lot of us are accustomed to our own income and our own money, but for someone like David, when you take the job away, it takes everything.

Public Hearing/Liberty Interest Adjourned.

Mayor Goodgame asked if the Council wished to take action at this point on the appeal. MacNair made a motion to reinstate David Edwards, 2nd Councilor Howard. No Council Comments.

Laura Gurley said that when the attorney Mike Cummings read the policy, it states the action is taken by the Chief, and Edwards is not the Chief.

Barbara Kobacker said that Chief Mason mentioned things were in a bit of disarray and had difficulty finding what he was looking for. Perhaps the training Edwards had received was also a bit of disarray. Here's a mistake you made and take remedial action. There is a different way of handling this.

Betty Hanson asked if the policy said the Chief should handle this transaction, and we did not have a Chief, who should have handled it?

Vicki Maher said I am the one that was talking about the fire, and we have a fine officer in David. We did in Scott too. It is a shame to let Edwards go. The penalty doesn't warrant what he did. She said that with her experience as a supervisor, when someone underneath her messed up, the responsibility fell on her shoulders as their supervisor. She asked the board to prayerfully consider this.

Goodgame said that these types of incidents have to be reported to POST. It has been reported and is under investigation. Cummings said he has represented officers at the POST level, and they investigate every firing. He said this is not a situation where POST has taken any adverse action.

Carl Lynn said that he has owned property since 90, lived since 01. He is also on the board for the fire department – there was an incident on Hwy 246 where he is quite sure SOP was not followed. He said that he believes RC is a good man, and held up a cell phone saying that we should be grateful someone did not have one on site because we would be dealing with that all over the internet. He asked that the same consideration be given to Edwards.

Richard Boyle said that he is a big believer in procedure and he sat on Council for 8 years. He said if the officers in Sky Valley adhered to the policies in that book, half of Sky Valley would be arrested for drunk driving. He said that he hopes we will reconsider this fine man. He worked for the FBI for 25 years, and if it wasn't on paper, it never happened. This officer deserves consideration.

Ray Brooker said he has a 12 gauge shotgun he would like to give to RC.

Matt Belfi said he has owned property here since 1999 and that Edwards brings a lot of small town charm to this community. He doesn't know any other officer who would stop and give his dog a biscuit while out walking. He cited an example where an awning fell at the Attis property, and Edwards was the only one who noticed. This is Rabun County, they trade trucks, everybody's a cousin. Maybe if we were in Atlanta, we'd have something to look at.

Councilor Steil said that he is new as a Councilor and he is trying to understand the process. His son is a class 3 firearms manufacturer and no gun comes into his office without them being tagged and documented. His concern is that until this incident, there was not detailed enough training. We have been too lax for too long. He asked that we have detailed training and reviews of the training, and written protocols. Practiced written protocol is the order of the day. He said this was not a golf club given to the officer, it was a firearm, and we do not need to think lightly of firearms.

Mayor Goodgame asked City Manager Lapeyrouse to give an overview of training. Lapeyrouse said that she would not have been directly involved in training within the police department. She said that according to Mason, officers receive training on how to handle firearms during their standard training. It is also covered in the Standard Operating Procedures SOP manual. She said that the current SOP has been in place since Woods was the Chief. We have signed confirmation sheets on the receipt and understanding of the SOP. Former Chief Dills had policies that were not approved by council, and had to be reminded that the only standing, approved policy was the SOP because that was the only one the Council had approved. She added that an officer that had been here for that long should be familiar with the correct procedures. Moving forward, she and the Chief will be more involved in the training the officers choose to take.

Carolyn Burgess said that she has been around here a long time and what she sees is a lack of respect to our law enforcement officers. They have been fired and mistreated. She was on Council for years and she witnessed Edwards having a difficult time dealing with what happened when Ralph Woods left.

Council President Lively said that emotions seem high, and that this is a pretty important subject we have here. He said to vote on it in a few minutes might be something we want to reconsider.

Chip Durpo said there seems to be issues in interpretation of this procedure. He said that Edwards made a mistake in the eyes of the policy and he appreciated what Mason is trying to do. Everybody makes mistakes, and that we should give the gentleman his job back.

Council President Lively made a motion to postpone the motion on the table until the next meeting, 2nd Councilor Carr. Councilor MacNair said that this good officer that we booted out has been through enough and rather than postponing it, let's put the man back to work on the day shift he was on effective tomorrow morning. Councilor Howard said that he thinks we should consider Edwards reappointment. We can see the public support, and Edwards admits not being familiar with the SOP. How many officers could possibly remember all of the policies and procedures on the spot? Even as Mr. Lynn spoke, there was an incident on the Hwy where the Chief said he made a mistake. He said that sometimes mistakes should be forgiven. This is the first problem that he knows of with Edwards and he is for giving him his job back.

Councilor Steil said he is against postponing. We need to make a decision and move on. We are supposed to be leaders and we need to deal with decisions and move on. We owe it to him and his family to make the decision.

Steve Brett said the question at hand is not whether we rehire Officer Edwards. He agrees that we need to make a decision, and that Edwards and his family have gone through enough. We need to make a decision, and move forward together as a community no matter the outcome.

Mayor Goodgame called for the vote on the motion to postpone. It failed 2:3 with Councilors Carr and Lively voting aye and Councilors Howard, MacNair, and Steil voting nay.

Mayor Goodgame said we are back to the original motion made by MacNair that we reinstate to day shift effective tomorrow. Councilor Howard asked Councilor MacNair to amend his motion so it is not so specific and not dictate that he go back to the same shift but to reinstate as a patrol officer back to the regular rotation. MacNair did not amend his motion. Councilor Steil said that he agrees it needs to be amended so the staff has scheduling control. The motion failed 1 – Nay 4

Mayor Goodgame asked if there are any other motions. Councilor Howard made a motion to reinstate David Edwards as a patrol officer position under the supervision of the Chief, and that any reprimand necessary be recorded, but that he have an opportunity to serve the city as he has in the past. He served exemplary as the citizens have so stated and public opinion is overwhelmingly in favor of reinstatement and he was elected by the people. Steve Brett said that is not a motion. Mayor Goodgame asked Councilor Howard to clarify his motion. Councilor Howard made a motion to reinstate David Edwards as a patrol officer, 2nd Councilor MacNair, unanimously approved.

PUBLIC FORUM AND GENERAL COMMENTS

Dee Moore said that he has also sat in the chairs up front, and his observation is that there is too much power in too few hands. He encouraged the council to look at the charter again because he believes the council should have more say in the operation of the city.

Matt Belfi asked if the church group is looking at leasing or purchasing the lodge. Councilor Lively said that they are currently working on a lease. Belfi asked if it is purchased by a church, would it be tax exempt. Mayor Goodgame said that if it is a lease, it's not tax exempt, but if they purchase it, yes, it would be exempt.

Carol Hughes asked if there will be any requirement to make the lodge look better if it is going to be used. Mayor Goodgame said that we are working on commercial zoning because we don't have any specific standards for that now. Councilor Lively said there is a church between Highlands and Cashiers and it is very nice and that they will want the building to look nice.

Barbara Kobacker thanked the Council, Mayor, City Manager Lapeyrouse and City Clerk Cantrell for how they handle themselves. She said this is an example of how government should work and that maybe other government entities can learn from our example.

Mayor Goodgame recommended people who have an interest to get involved, step up and run for office.

Steve Brett announced a meet and greet for Sheriff Andrews at 5:00 PM at the Lakeside Room.

Ray Becker said he wanted to congratulate Richard Boyle for helping create a new headline in the paper saying that 50-percent of the people in Sky Valley are drunk every night.

Lynn Becker said that she is very happy to see the city working on Sky Valley Way and said she would like to see the work continue up the road.

Lynn Becker announced classes offered by the Sheriff's office where we get to meet the local public officers, including the judges.

Mayor Goodgame said that we are cleaning up on Sky Valley Way from entrance to the Timeshare Office.

Dick Parrott asked who has the liability for the overlook property. Every time he drives by, someone is standing or climbing on the barrier. Mayor Goodgame said that the City's liability insurance covers the lease we have on the overlook, and that if someone is past that property, the liability would be on the property owner.

Laura Gurley said that the Club is hosting a Farm-Tour this Friday. It is a group of travel writers who are visiting Rabun County, and they will visit Tallulah Gorge, Goats on the Roof, and then Sky Valley Club is hosting them for dinner. She said this group has proven to go home and write stories, articles about the places they've been.

There being no further business of the Council, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:



Hughel Goodgame, Mayor

Attested:



Mandi Cantrell, City Clerk