

**CITY OF EUHARLEE
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
AUGUST 04, 2026 – 6:00 PM**

Mayor Craig Guyton called the meeting to order with the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present were Mayor Craig Guyton; Council Members Tim Abbott, Greg Free and Jayson Frederick; City Manager James Stephens and Community and Economic Development Director Katie Gobbi.

UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

Tree Removal Bids – Marshall Aiken

Marshall Aiken, Public Works Director, presented tree removal bids for city parks and downtown areas following an inspection by Mr. Aiken, City Manager, James Stephens, and Leisure Services Director, Becky Rumsey, after a complaint regarding potentially hazardous trees. The inspection identified 25 dead trees requiring professional removal and 2 stumps requiring grinding.

Three bids were received: Stanley Tree Service, \$9,850; AJ's Tree Service, \$13,475; and L&W, \$17,500.

Council Member Jayson Frederick asked about the price differences. Mr. Aiken stated that all contractors were reputable and that Stanley Tree Service submitted the lowest bid grouping nearby trees by location. The work includes trees at Joe Cowan Park near Five Forks, Frankie Harris Park, behind the library and cow shed, near the old ruins, near the bridge beside the creek, and at the lower area of Osborne Park entrance on Covered Bridge Road. One tree at Joe Cowan Park will require crane removal. Additional trees not requiring professional removal will be handled in-house.

Council Member Tim Abbott asked whether Tree Amigos or Georgia Tree Masters had been contacted. Mr. Aiken stated he left a message with Tree Amigos but did not receive a response and focused on companies the city had used successfully in the past.

Council Member Greg Free asked whether Stanley Tree Service's bid included crane work and whether the city could use wood chips from the removal. Mr. Aiken stated that all bids included debris removal and stump grinding and confirmed that Stanley Tree Service was licensed and insured. He noted that the city had recently received mulch and that untreated chips could introduce leaves and weeds into mulch beds.

Millage Rate Advertisement – James Stephens

City Manager James Stephens presented the millage rate advertisement and recommended advertising the rollback rate. He explained that the preliminary rollback calculation was 1.410 mills and the final digest increased the rollback rate to 1.45 mills, compared to the 2025 millage rate of 1.66 mills. The rollback rate provides approximately \$300 more than the budget requirement for the tax levy.

Mr. Stephens explained that the rollback rate is calculated by the tax assessor using a formula that separates new growth from reassessment increases. New growth helped keep the rollback rate close to the prior year's rate.

Mayor Craig Guyton clarified that property owners with unchanged assessments should see a decrease in the city portion of their tax bill, while those with slightly increased assessments may pay approximately the same amount at a lower millage rate. Mr. Stephens confirmed. The intent of the rollback rate is to maintain the prior year's tax levy level and avoid increased assessments resulting in increased city taxes.

Council Member Jayson Frederick expressed concern about property taxes on unrealized gains while acknowledging the city's need for revenue and asked about alternatives such as increased sales tax.

Council Member Greg Free noted that most residents' tax bills come from the school system and county, with the city's millage rate being comparatively low. He also noted that the 8.45% figure shown for 2026

reflects digest growth, not tax increase. Mr. Stephens confirmed that using the rollback rate does not constitute raising taxes and that most homeowners should see a slight reduction in the city portion of their tax bill.

Council Member Tim Abbott discussed the city's limited revenue options, noting Euharlee's small size, lack of industrial/manufacturing zoning, and absence of city utilities. He supported the rollback but emphasized the need for continued fiscal oversight because smaller expenses, such as tree removal and repairs to historic properties, can strain limited city revenues.

Retirement of Police K-9 – Police Chief Jody Matthews

Police Chief Jody Matthews presented a resolution to retire Police K-9 Blue from the Euharlee Police Department. The resolution stated that Blue, a male German Shepherd acquired in January 2022, was trained for drug detection and police patrol. Blue's handler, Sergeant Andy Page, requested to keep him and provide continued care and housing. The resolution approved Blue's retirement and authorize the city attorney and city manager execute a contract transferring ownership to Sergeant Page, with Sergeant Page assuming future care costs and holding the city harmless for future actions of Blue. Ownership may transfer once the contract is signed.

Council Member Jayson Frederick asked about future K-9 plans. Mayor Craig Guyton stated the department will not have a K-9 in the short term and has no immediate plan to acquire one. The Bartow Sheriff's Office has a K-9 unit available if needed.

Discussion included the approximate cost of replacing a trained narcotics K-9 with handler training, estimated at about \$8,000, and Chief Matthews confirmed that no other current officers have K-9 training. Council Member Tim Abbott noted he would be open to considering a future K-9 unit for school presence and enforcement purposes.

Mayor Craig Guyton acknowledged Sergeant Page's family and their support of Sergeant Page and Blue during Blue's service.

Public Comments

No public comments.

Adjournment

Council Member Jayson Frederick made a motion to adjourn. Council Member Greg Free seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

With no further discussion the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:18 pm.

CITY OF EUHARLEE CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES AUGUST 04, 2026 – 7:00 PM

Mayor Craig Guyton called the City Council Meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

Public Comments – Agenda Items Only

No public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Council Member Greg Free motioned to approve minutes for the work session and the city council meeting from July 7, 2026, as written Council Member Jayson Frederick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve Tree Removal Bids – Marshall Aiken

Mayor Craig Guyton referenced the presentation by Marshall Aiken during the work session, which included three quotes for the removal of 25 trees and stump grinding. The lowest quote was from Stanley Tree Service for \$9,850. Council Member Greg Free motioned to approve the bid from Stanley Tree Service for \$9,850 for the removal of trees and stump grinding. Council Member Tim Abbott seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve Millage Rate Advertisement – James Stephens

City Manager James Stephens recommended that the council approve the rollback rate at 1.45 mills and the advertisement as presented in the work session. Council Member Jayson Frederick motioned to approve the rollback rate at 1.45 mills. Council Member Greg Free seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve Retirement of Police K-9 – Police Chief Jody Matthews

Mayor Craig Guyton asked the council if they wished to have Chief Jody Matthews read the resolution again. The council indicated they were familiar with the content. Mayor Guyton summarized that the resolution retires K-9 Blue and transfers ownership to Sergeant Andy Page. Council Member Greg Free motioned to approve the resolution for the retirement of police K-9 Blue and transfer ownership to Officer Andy Page. Council Member Jayson Frederick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mayor Guyton thanked Sergeant Page for his service with Blue and noted that the schools and community would miss Blue during school visits. Council Member Tim Abbott's earlier comments about missing Blue's presence were referenced.

Adjournment

Council Member Jayson Frederick made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Greg Free seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

With no further discussion the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:05 pm.