

At the Regular Council Meeting held on the above date the following members were present:

Mayor Pro-tem: Claire C. Stone  
City Council: Lisa Cook, Patrice Manley, Lemora Moses,  
and Chris A. Paulk  
City Clerk: Lucile Middlebrooks  
City Attorney: Warren Mixon  
Police Chief: Ashley Jones  
Public Works Director: Corneilus Hall  
Fire Chief: Will Towson

The Ocilla Star: Luke Roberts

- First: Mayor Pro-tem Claire C. Stone called the meeting to order and determined a quorum, prayer by Police Chief Ashley Jones, and then the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was pledged and spoken by everyone.
- Second: Mayor Pro-tem Claire C. Stone called for a motion to adopt a relaxed Agenda for Tuesday, September 5, 2023  
Motion by Councilman Lemora Moses and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Council Appointee Chris A. Paulk to adopt a relaxed Agenda for Tuesday, September 5, 2023  
All in favor say I – Voted 4 yes; Opposes none - Motion carries unanimously.
- Third: Mayor Pro-tem Claire C. Stone called for a motion for the approval and adopting of the Minutes from the Regular Meeting of August 1, 2023 and from the Public Hearing and Called Meeting of August 31 2023.  
Motion by Councilwoman Patrice Manley and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilwoman Lisa Cook for the approval and adopting of the Minutes from the Regular Meeting of August 1, 2023, from the Public Hearing and Called Meeting of August 31 2023 with correction.  
All in favor say I - Voted 4 yes; Opposes none. Motion carries unanimously.
- Fourth: Introduction of New Employee  
Police Chief Ashley Jones stated that he has a new employee, but she was not at the meeting. Her name is Officer Tasigua Marsh.
- Fifth: Old Business  
Mayor Pro tem Claire C. Stone stated that Commander Sean Fitzgerald resigned from the South Central Drug Task Force.

Sixth: Pat McKinnon  
Mayor Pro-tem Stone introduce Pat McKinnon of the Unity Way of Tifton.  
Ms. McKinnon proposed to the Council use the remaining balance of the ARPA funds (which would be after all projects have been completed) and divide that amount among the utility bill customers.  
No vote was necessary.

Seventh: Employee Health Insurance Renewal – Mrs. Terri Ferguson of Partners Benefit Group  
Mayor Pro-tem Claire C. Stone called on Mrs. Terri Ferguson of Partners Benefit Group. Mrs. Ferguson presented the City’s Employees Health Insurance Renewal. The renewal with Blue Cross Blue Shield would increase by 86.99%. The presentation is as follows:



**Proposal for:** City of Ocilla  
**Effective date:** October 1, 2023

### CONTACT

Partners Benefit Group  
1476 Carpenter Road  
Tifton, GA 31793

**Agent:**  
Skip Hill

**Account Executive**  
Terri Ferguson  
tferguson@partnersbenefit.com  
Phone: 229.238.3140  
Fax: 229.382.1222



# City of Ocilla

October 1, 2023

## Market Survey

### Medical Carriers

In order to offer you the best possible options, Partners Benefit Group, LLC went to the market with all applicable carriers to find a plan that best fits your organization.

Below you will find the results of our discussions with these carriers, continue to the next page for an item-by-item comparison of the offered plans.

Market Survey	
Carrier	Results
	Current: \$16,387 (\$3,250 Ded., 80% Coins.)
	Renewal: \$30,642 (\$3,250 Ded., 80% Coins.)
 We want you to know®	Cannot quote due to City
	\$18,281 (\$3,500 Ded., 80% Coins.)
	\$19,809 (\$3,500 Ded., 70% Coins.)
	\$25,353 (\$3,500 Ded., 70% Coins.)



City of Ocilla

*Council chose ↓*

Medical Plan Analysis		Anthem	Anthem	Allstate  BENEFITS	Allstate  BENEFITS
		Current	Renewal	Option 1	Option 2
Provider Network		Blue Open Access POS	Blue Open Access POS	Cigna OAP	Cigna GAP
Calendar Year Deductible					
Individual		\$3,250	\$3,250	\$3,500	\$3,500
Family		\$6,500	\$6,500	\$7,000	\$7,000
Out of Pocket Max (includes copay and deductible)					
Individual		\$5,500	\$5,500	\$5,500	\$7,900
Family		\$11,000	\$11,000	\$11,000	\$15,800
Co-Insurance					
		80%	80%	80%	70%
Office Co-pay					
Primary Care Physician		\$30	\$30	\$40	\$40
Specialist		\$70	\$70	\$60	\$60
Hospital Services Inpt					
		Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins
Outpatient Services					
Hospital		Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins
Freestanding Surgical Center		\$350 Copay	\$350 Copay	Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins
Urgent Care		\$75 Copay	\$75 Copay	\$75 Copay	\$75 Copay
Emergency Room		\$350 Copay after Ded.	\$350 Copay after Ded.	Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins
Preventive Care		100%	100%	100%	100%
Maternity Services		Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins	Deductible & Coins
Prescription Drug Coverage					
Tier 1: Generic		\$5 / \$20	\$5 / \$20	\$20	\$20
Tier 2: Preferred		\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50
Tier 3: Non-Preferred		\$85	\$85	\$75	\$75
Tier 4: Speciality		20%	20%	N/A	N/A
Monthly Premiums		Current	Renewal	Option 1	Option 2
Election (Counts)					
EE Only	21	\$712.47	\$1,326.48	\$776.25	\$739.91
EE + Spouse	1	\$1,424.94	\$2,785.61	\$1,979.39	\$1,886.77
EE + Children	0	\$1,318.07	\$2,586.64	\$1,513.65	\$1,442.82
Family	0	\$2,030.54	\$4,045.76	\$2,561.56	\$2,441.70
Total Monthly Premium		\$16,386.81	\$30,641.69	\$18,280.64	\$17,424.88
Total Annual Premium		\$196,641.72	\$367,700.28	\$219,367.68	\$209,098.56
Percent Change from Current			66.93%	11.56%	6.33%

Mayor Pro-tem Stone called for a motion.

Motion by Councilwoman Patrice Manley and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilman Lemora Moses to move the employees health insurance coverage to Allstate Benefits option 1. All in favor, say I Voted 3 yes Opposes – None, Abstained 1 (Councilwoman Lisa Cook) Motion passes.

Eighth: Police Chief Request for New Computer Server

Police Chief Ashley Jones ask the Council to approve the purchase of a new computer server in the amount \$12,000.00 The old server was damage during the Hurricane Idalia.

Motion by Councilman Lemora Moses and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Council Appointee Chris A. Paulk to purchase the police department server in the amount of \$12,000.00 from SPLOST funds

All in favor say I – Voted 4 yes, Opposes none – Motion carries.

Ninth: Reports from Council Districts

District 1 Councilwoman Lisa Cook – trees that need to be remove

District 2 Councilwoman Patrice Y.W. Manley - there is a tree that needs to be removed at Ms. Scott’s residence

District 3 Councilman Lemora Moses – there has been an increase in speeding and check the old water meter in the Alphonso Owens estate area.

District 4 Council Appointee Chris A. Paulk – make sure everyone is following procedures. Applause to the Public Works, Fire, and Police departments for working together with storm cleanup. Need to edge sidewalk of 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

Police Chief Ashley Jones – gave everybody a police report. He would not be able to do his job without the other employees.

Fire Chief Will Towson – everybody done good. He would like to give his Captain the pay raise to equal his status  
Mayor Pro-tem Stone called for a motion.

Motion by Council Appointee Chris A Paulk and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilwoman Patrice Manley to give the Captain the raise Chief Towson requested.

All in favor say I - Voted 4 yes; Opposes none – Motion carries

Public Works Director Corneilus Hall – thanked the Fire and Police Chief.  
Director Hall requested to reinstate Jeremy Drawdy with the Public Works

Department because he did not deserve what happened to him.  
Motion by Councilwoman Lisa Cook and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilman Lemora Moses to  
reinstate Jeremy Drawdy with the Public Works Department.  
All in favor say I – Voted 4 yes Opposes None. Motion Carries

City Clerk Lucile Middlebrooks – stated that she had two things dealing with ARPA money. The first thing is a request for the Council to give a dollar for dollar amount for the use of the APRA funds for the City’s projects. She did not have a new budget report for the Council; however she has given them a report with how much is in each fund along with the request to transfer ARPA funds to the General, Water, Sewer, Sanitation, and Gas funds due to the fact we are running low and the City needs money to do payroll and to pay bills. The amount is \$300,000.00 to be distributed as needed. She requested that the Council look at it. She stated that as she sat there listening to Ms. McKinnon thinking she had said the same exact thing; however, at that time the Council did not want to entertain her idea and did not want to come up with a plan. The Council did not want to pay customer’s utility bills. To have someone come from the outside to proposed something that she had already proposed to the Council was hurtful and the Council is not being fair to her on so many levels.

Mayor Pro-tem Stone interjected that she thought it would be applied to the debt. She reached out to Ms. McKinnon to come up with a plan moving forward.

City Clerk Middlebrooks stated that when any bill goes out today it becomes debt until it’s paid and the Council still did not take the time to come up with a plan.

Councilwoman Manley stated that she did not know where the ARPA money was spent except for the amount that the Council voted to give the employee bonuses.

City Clerk Middlebrooks stated she thought she had given the Council an ARPA Fund report. She will get them another report. Before the Council dismissed, City Clerk Middlebrooks printed the ARPA financial report and gave a copy to each Council member and the Mayor Pro-tem.

Mayor Pro-tem Stone stated that the reason she did not put the request on the agenda is because she wanted to make sure the ARPA funds could be use for the City Clerks request. The funds were sent for generational purposes.

City Clerk Middlebrooks stated that she had gone through the APRA training and now the funds could be use for anything that the City needed it for; however, it could not be used for payroll after June 30, 2023.

Council Appointee Chris A. Paulk stated that we need to get out there and get that amount out there that is delinquent. We need to make a payment plan and stay hungry in getting that amount that is delinquent. He apologizes if he is looking critical, but he isn’t.

Tenth: Public Comments – 3 minutes

Mr. Billy Leverett – the tree across the road from his house

Mr. Waymond Harris – asked where the ARPA funds went.

Mr. Jonathan Abel – he needed assistance with his property.

Mrs. Addie Mae Young – there was a high-speed chase through her neighborhood on Alder Street. It is very dark in front of her house and she need some street lights.

Rev. Anthony Dixon – address the reason why the Police Chief has not hired Officer Ronald Dixon since the police department needs officers.

Mr. Ronald Dixon – he has been here all his life.

Rev. Melvin Harper II – Two of the people that made the decisions about the how the APRA money was spent is not here. Moves are made in executive decisions and not everyone is present. If the Lord be GOD, in a few days we are going to find out where the money was spent.

Mr. Lemond Hall – he has been back home for awhile and he is constantly hearing how the City is being ran.

Ms. Middlebrooks mention an idea and her idea was shutdown. He is not saying that it's racial. When he makes a suggestion and it is swept under the table. Then someone from the outside comes in and make a derivative of my suggestion – it's the holy grail. You destroy the moral within your institution. He has seen that tonight in this meeting.

It is crazy that you would not have a plan for spending money.

When you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

Ask Ms. Middlebrooks what is her plans to recoup some of this money, because it is not all on her.

He has seen the articles in the paper. Speaking her mind and protecting her team then facing repercussions is not right.

All I see her is letting you know there are bills to be paid. The Council should be getting her the money.

Your spending \$12,000.00 on a police server. Wasn't the server insured or on a ups to protected.

The company that did unsatisfactory work for us especially on Sixth Street.

We have a contract and we could sue them.

Councilman Moses – acknowledge the family members of the Talton Family and they would like to get 9<sup>th</sup> Street named after Rev. Elford Talton.

Mrs. Talton stated that Street is dark and need a light.

Eleventh: Executive Session if required  
Motion by Chris A. Paulk and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Councilwoman Lisa Cook to go into executive Session.  
All in favor say I – Voted 4 yes, Opposes none – Motion carries.

City Clerk Lucile Middlebrooks was not present during the executive session.  
Executive Session Minutes received via email from Mayor Pro-tem Claire C. Stone:

1. Chief of Police Ashley Jones discussed advancing vacation days for employee Renea Young

**Motion** made by Lisa Cook not to advance vacation days. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Patrice Manley.

**Vote:** Favor- Cook and Manley. Opposed- Lemora Moses and Chris Paulk. Tiebreaker- Claire Stone voted against. **Motion does not pass.**

**Motion** made by Paulk to accept the hours in advance. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Moses.

**Discussion:** Paulk says he wants to accept because of the shortage for police officers. He acknowledged that Young rolled the dice. On record "we are setting a precedent and we have to be careful. Council needs to look at a procedure for this situation." Moses also stated that there was a lack of police and we need all the help we can get. Paulk also said it's up to the Chief to hold her accountable as her supervisor to make sure she makes this up. Paulk would like a report for how the hours are going in order to hold her accountable. Chief Jones says he will make it clear to her to work extra shifts/comp time for the hours.

**Vote:** Favor-Moses and Paulk. Opposed-Cook and Manley. Tiebreaker- Claire Stone voted in favor. **Motion passes.**

Chris Paulk brought up documents left behind by Director Corneilus Hall.

2. Discussion on water pumps

Mr. Mixon said that we had to have bids. Questioned urgency. Council decided to wait for Mr. Hall to be present for more information for a decision. **No motion made.**

3. Discussion on patch for Oak Street



4. Duckie Dee's Construction offered the lowest bid at \$2500. There was question on quality and measurements. Mrs. Manley wants a contract so that it is done properly. Council members brought up need for quality due to semi-trucks driving down Oak Street. Stone quoted Director Hall's statement that this needed to be done by Sweet Potato Day.

**Motion** made by Moses to accept Duckie Dee's Construction bid upon it being a minimum of 6" depth. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Manley. No discussion.

**Vote:** Favor- All in favor. **Motion passes.**

5. Discussion on the three bids offered for a new lawn mower for Public Works

**No motion** made so that Council could hear more information from Director Hall

Council members Manley, Moses & Paulk encouraged better care and possible reparations on current equipment.

6. Chris Paulk presents 2021 correspondence between Former Mayor Matt Seale regarding a pay raise that he had seen going through his emails. Ms. Lucile Middlebrooks was making \$70,200 at the time of the email and was asking for a \$6/hour pay raise. Paulk describes how the email discussed that salary had already gone from \$54K to \$70K. In the email, Seale explained purpose of pay raise. Middlebrooks brings up Police Chief salary (as a department head). In the email, Seale explained that he had given the raise because she was given more duties (dealing with funds, accounting, bookkeeping, being clerk). Seale stated in the email that he could not give her a \$6/hour raise based on conversations and requests made that weren't fulfilled. He could not justify raise but would offer the general 3% raise that was being given. A signed offer was given on October 1, 2021 for hourly pay to go from \$33.75 to \$35.45 but Middlebrooks turned the offer down to take chances with the personnel committee. The personnel committee met around November 4, 2021 and recommended the 3% raise.

In January 2022, Mayor Horace Hudgins was in the mayor seat. Middlebrooks presented the raise to Hudgins with "due to delay in processing the raise, the raise will be retroactive July 1, 2021," which was before his term began and approved something that did not go before council. Paulk also brings up a copy of Middlebrooks' schedule for personal raises where it shows that the goal was \$113,152 by her 36<sup>th</sup> year. Paulk quotes personnel book, in reference to raises, where it

says the employee should have annual evaluations prior to raise and approval of Mayor and Council. He adds caveat "if there is a schedule established by Council and Mayor, then the mayor has the right to give raises" but this schedule was not approved by mayor and council to his knowledge. After discussing raise from Seale for the extra duties, Paulk says it was not her fault that the mayor approved such without council.

Stone mentions that Joe Saxon informed her in July that Mayor Hudgins had given another raise recently and mentioned Hall expecting a raise in October.

Mixon is unsure of the relevance of the emails to right now. He did not think it could have been retroactive.

Paulk's math (if correct) makes it roughly \$3,558 backpay. Council did not know of the raise and retroactive raise was news to council.

Stone questions Hatch Act, audits, etc. with attorney.

Stone entertained motion for Executive Session.

**Motion** made by Lisa Cook to go into Executive Session. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Chris Paulk.

**Vote:** Favor-All in favor. **Motion for executive session passes.**

[Executive Session]

8. After executive session, Stone opens the floor for any motions.

**Motion** made by Moses to "Hire a consultant. Once the consultant is here, give 30 days without pay, give reprimands for the two breaches of the Hatch Act. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ms. Manley.

Discussion: Chris Paulk asks questions and Moses adds "once the consultant feels comfortable start the 30-day suspension." Manley asked if the consultant would need Middlebrooks. Mixon stated that he thought that would help the consultant.

**Re-read the motion, with the corrections by Mr. Moses** "Hire a consultant. Once the consultant feels comfortable, Middlebrooks will get a 30-day

suspension without pay, as well as receive reprimands for the two breaches of the Hatch Act."

**Vote:** Favor- Moses and Manley. Opposed- Paulk and Cook. Tiebreaker- Stone votes against due to lack of clarity. "'Feels comfortable' should be more black and white", "too much ambiguity." **Motion did not pass.**

Mixon advises council through the motion to hire a consultant to go through books, take out 30 day/comfortable, consultant needs full access and cooperation.

Stone adds that there should be either weekly or biweekly reports on City Clerk's cooperation.

**Motion** made by Moses to "hire a consultant to go through the books, given full access and city clerk's full cooperation along with reports from consultant on clerk's cooperation along with two reprimands in Middlebrooks' file for breaches of Federal Hatch Act. **2<sup>nd</sup>** by Manley.

**Vote:** Favor- Moses and Manley. Opposed- Cook and Paulk. Tiebreaker- Stone abstains (after checking rules) until there seems to be more agreement. **Motion does not pass.**

**Motion** made by Lisa Cook to terminate. **2<sup>nd</sup>** by Paulk. (to entertain it)

Paulk asks "do we have grounds?" Mixon warns to expect a lawsuit but that's why we had insurance. Mixon personally felt that there was enough evidence to do that.

**Subsidiary Motion** by Chris Paulk to postpone after executive session. **2<sup>nd</sup>** by Manley.

**Vote:** Favor-Paulk and Manley, Opposed- Cook and Moses, Tiebreaker- Stone votes in favor of executive session. **Motion for executive session passes.**

10. [Executive Session]

After executive session, Council returns to original motion to terminate.

**Vote:** Favor-Cook, Opposed-Moses and Manley, Abstain- Paulk. **Motion does not pass.**

Stone entertains previous motion by Mr. Moses to "hire a consultant to go through the books, given full access and city clerk's full cooperation along

with reports from consultant on clerk's cooperation along with two reprimands in Middlebrooks' file for breaches of Federal Hatch Act.

**Motion** made by Paulk. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Moses.

**Vote:** Favor- Paulk, Manley, Moses. Opposed- Cook. **Motion carries.**

8. **Stone entertained motion to adjourn. Motion** made by Paulk. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Manley. **Meeting adjourned.**

MEETING ADJOURNED:

MAYOR PRO-TEM CLAIRE C. STONE

CITY CLERK LUCILE MIDDLEBROOKS