

**MINUTES – CALLED MEETING  
CITY OF CAMILLA, GEORGIA  
MARCH 22, 2022**

The Called Meeting of the Mayor and City Council of the City of Camilla was called to order at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 22, 2022 by Mayor Owens.

Roll call indicated the following present: Councilmember Tucker, Councilman Burley, Councilman Morgan (arrived late), Councilman Pollard, and Councilman Palmer.

City Clerk Cheryl Ford was also present.

**OPENING PRAYER AND PLEDGE**

Mayor Owens gave the invocation and the Mayor and Council led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**CITIZENS AND GUESTS**

Sign-In Sheet Attached.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

On motion by Councilman Pollard, seconded by Councilman Burley, the motion to approve the Called Meeting agenda for March 22, 2022 passed by a 4-0 vote.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION - PERSONNEL**

Mayor Owens asked for a motion to enter Executive Session for a personnel matter. A motion was made by Councilman Burley and seconded by Councilman Pollard to enter Executive Session. The motion passed by a 4-0 vote. Mayor Owens announced to the public they would be entering Executive Session for a personnel matter and the live feed for Facebook would stop. Upon adjournment of the Executive Session the live feed on Facebook will resume.

Upon adjournment of Executive Session, Mayor Owens stated they are continuing the Called Meeting of the City of Camilla. They just came out of Executive Session where no action was taken. He stated they will continue with today's agenda as presented and he would be asking for a motion to consider a letter of reprimand for City Manager Steve Sykes. For the purpose of the minutes and the public he will read the letter and ask for a motion from the floor. Mayor Owens read the letter [attached] addressed to City Manager Sykes. He stated the letter will be made a part of Mr. Sykes' employment file and the letter will be signed by him. He asked for a motion to approve the letter of reprimand as presented with authorization for the Mayor to sign. A motion was made by Councilman Morgan and seconded by Councilman Pollard. Councilmember Tucker stated she would like to comment on the letter just handed to them a few moments ago and their first time seeing it. In reviewing the letter she made notes and comments to the City Council: this is the most vindictive attempt she has ever seen by a city council to disgrace the character of a 30+ (thirty plus) year local government professional. City Manager Sykes has had an exemplary

career with the City of Thomasville and the City of Camilla. The actions by Mayor Owens is only to continue his narrative of his personal displeasure with the city manager. She is strongly opposed to this approach and finds it in very poor professional taste by this Council. When the vote is taken she requests her name be noted on the letter as being in opposition. Each time it mentions City Council, it is less Councilmember Tucker's vote. She wants it to be clear to all the City of Camilla has lost a very seasoned city manager due to Mayor Owens' inability to let the city manager do the job he was hired to do. Councilman Palmer added he wrote absolutely no to this and it is a witch hunt on behalf of the Mayor and has no intentions being a part of it. He wants the record to show he votes no and agrees with Councilwoman Tucker, this is an embarrassment to the City of Camilla. Councilman Morgan stated it is a sad day when accountability in government is labeled as a witch hunt and he wants the public to know this Council is taking the operation and business of the city, and all things that include our budget, very seriously. The letter of reprimand is being used only as a level of accountability as they begin to submit their final budget numbers to the State. While they appreciate the service of the city manager, years of experience do not prevent individuals from making mistakes. As they can see, it has happened and the Council is doing their due diligence correcting and addressing the mistakes that happened. Mayor Owens stated they have a motion and a second to approve the letter of reprimand for City Manager Steve Sykes as presented with authorization for the Mayor to sign. Voting in favor of the motion: Councilman Burley, Councilman Pollard and Councilman Morgan. Voting in opposition of the motion: Councilmember Tucker and Councilman Palmer. He stated they had a vote of 3-2 and as required by the Charter, the Mayor votes in the event of a tie or when a majority is needed for or against an issue. In this case the Mayor votes to approve the letter of reprimand for City Manager Steve Sykes. The motion passed by a 4-2 vote.

#### ADJOURNMENT

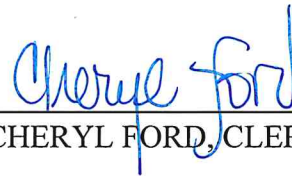
On motion by Councilman Pollard, seconded by Councilman Morgan, the meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

BY:



KELVIN M. OWENS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



CHERYL FORD, CLERK

# CITY OF CAMILLA, GEORGIA ~ SIGN-IN SHEET

DATE: MARCH 22, 2022 TIME: 11:00 ☒ A.M. ☐ P.M.

MEETING: ☐ COUNCIL ☐ WORK SESSION ☒ OTHER: CALLED

	NAME	ADDRESS	SPEAKER		TOPIC OF DISCUSSION
			NO	YES	
1	Mike Palmer	211 Maryland Dr	✓		attender only
2	Dana Clark	5065 Rye Ridge Rd.			Press
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March 22, 2022

Mr. Steve Sykes  
c/o City of Camilla  
P. O. Box 328  
Camilla, Georgia 31730

Dear Mr. Sykes:

Pursuant to a majority vote of the City Council of the City of Camilla, this is a written reprimand for your conduct as City Manager for the City of Camilla. It is the considered opinion of the City Council that you have willfully attempted to disregard the requirements of the City Charter, resulting in your misconduct and insubordination.

In April, 2020, you entered into an unauthorized and ill-considered contract with Tyson Foods, Inc. This contract committed the City of Camilla Police Department to provide enhanced security services for a private company. This arrangement, which constituted a contract, was not presented to the City Attorney as required by Section 6.31(2) of the Charter nor was it authorized by the City Council and entered upon the minutes of the City as required by Section 6.31(3) of the Charter. Further, you executed this contract. The duties of the City Manager are provided in Section 2.31 of the City Charter. They do not include the execution of contracts. In fact, section 2.34 of the Charter reserves that duty for the Mayor of the City.

The City Council finds your conduct regarding the Mayor's signature insubordinate and your unilateral agreement with Tyson Foods to be misconduct. It is the view of the City Council that the Tyson Foods, Inc. agreement exacerbated the already difficult challenge of overtime. In fact, your failure to deal with this in your budget proposal resulted in a deficit requiring correction by a budget amendment during March of 2022. You failed to adequately inform the Council of the Tyson Foods arrangement and failed to adequately provide for these overtime expenses in your submission of the operating budget as is required by Section 6.25 of the Charter.

It is the considered opinion of the City Council that your misconduct with regard to the approval and execution of this contract before the Council created an atmosphere of mistrust and conflict among members of the Council and the staff as well as the public. The continued debate surrounding this matter has placed you at odds with the Mayor and members of the Council.

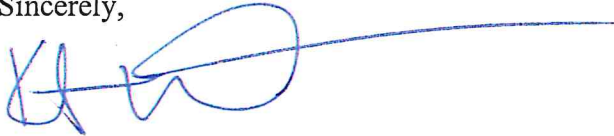
This conflict has affected other matters facing the City of Camilla and has lead certain members of our community to question the integrity of our government.

It is the intention of the City Council to operate City government in an open and transparent manner. Your misconduct with regard to this and other matters has led to skepticism and suspension of our intent to operate our government in the best interest of the citizens of our community.

The Mayor and Council acknowledge your contributions as City Manager. However, the matter of contract administration and specifically your misconduct with regard to the Tyson contract requires this letter of reprimand.

You are advised this letter shall be made part of the minutes of the City of Camilla Called Meeting on March 22, 2022 and placed in your employment file.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Kelvin Owens', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kelvin Owens  
Mayor