

SPECIAL MEETING

The George City Council met in special session on Wednesday, April 2, 2025 in the Community Room, 115 S Main Street, 120 S Main Street, with Mayor Billy Sprock presiding. Mayor Sprock called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. The roll was called by Mayor Sprock. Present were: BJ Gerken, Bob Gruis, Derek Storm and Carola Vivian. Absent: Kris Hamilton.

Gruis made a motion to adopt the agenda. Gerken seconded the motion. All present cast aye votes, motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING: Mayor Sprock opened the Public Hearing at 5:01 p.m. to present the Proposed Property Tax Levy for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. The notice was published in the Little Rock Free Lance on March 18, 2025 and posted to the city website, facebook and posted on the door as required by law. Oral comments: Marilyn Van Gelder Property assessments have increased over the past couple of years. The concern is that these values may not be realistic for George, and it raises questions about what impact this will have on our little town.

Sara Sprock House assessments are based on the sales prices of homes in the area, which are often much higher than what you believe the property is actually worth. The county assessor follows specific guidelines when setting property assessments, and these values are not determined by the city council.

Dennis Winkowitsch Assessments are also based on the cost to build a house, and Lyon County's tax value ranks 91st out of 99 counties in the state—there are 91 counties with higher tax values than us. Once prices go up, it's difficult to bring them back down.

Dick Heidloff The council has a thankless job, and I truly appreciate those who are willing to serve and do the work. I'm not against spending money to get things done that the people want, but I do recognize that this represents a very significant increase in property taxes. My concern is that the levy rate has gone up 45% from last year. Is there a way to gradually increase taxes? Given that many things have been delayed for so long, perhaps some projects could be pushed back another year to ease the financial impact on the community.

Winkowitsch Is there a reason we didn't approach this gradually? We've known that prices have been getting out of hand. I attended a school board meeting, and it's clear that too many kids are open enrolling out of George. We need to support our retirees, but we also need young families moving to George to ensure the community's future. Mayor Sprock We understand that a tax increase is not ideal but as your City Council, we are committed to doing what's best for George. Our community is facing challenges: businesses are struggling to find workers, new businesses aren't moving in, and without action, we risk losing what makes our town great. Floods and other disasters have driven up costs, and unfortunately, these improvements should have been made years ago. But the reality is we didn't, and now we must. One critical issue is our water system. It is currently rated at a 5, with 10 being the best. This rating directly affects your property insurance rates. To improve it, we need better water lines and fire hydrants that can deliver more water, faster, in emergencies. That's why the Virginia Street project is so important. This project will be done the right way ensuring long-term benefits for our residents. Lyon County is covering 66% of the cost to install Virginia Street. We are not just planning for today we are securing George's future. Strong infrastructure encourages growth, supports businesses, and protects our community. Change isn't easy, but together, we can build a stronger, thriving George.

Bernie Groote How are older individuals living on a fixed income supposed to pay for the tax increase? Is there any relief for those people or what can these people do?
Mayor Sprock We fully understand that this will have a financial impact on the elderly in our community. However, if we don't move forward with this project now, it may never happen. Everyone drives on that road. This road was engineered three times before, and the project was cancelled.

Jenn Nissen Can we get more clarity on the details of the project?

Mayor Sprock The first part of the project will focus on the utility infrastructure, including water lines, fire hydrants, storm sewer, and manholes. This is anticipated to begin on April 21. The street will follow once the county sets the bid letting.

Judd Reifers I've been here for 28 years, and I remember this project first being introduced back in 2008. Then it was pushed to 2012, then 2018, and here we are still waiting. I don't like the taxes, and I know it's going to hit me harder than most since I own two properties. But the reality is, this has to get done. We can't keep pushing it down the road.

Gary Haan I'm curious to know who the contractor for this project is.

Mayor Sprock The bid letting for the Virginia Street Utility Project has been completed; however, the council has not yet accepted a bid. The bid letting for the street portion of the Virginia Street Project has not yet taken place.

Pam Klingenberg I read in the newspaper that the amount we will be charged is \$261 per \$100,000 of assessed value to fund the road project. Is that the amount I will be required to pay?

City Clerk This is the maximum amount of tax per \$100,000 of assessed value that will be collected in any given year during the loan repayment period. The taxes collected will be used to pay the General Obligation Debt Loan. For example, if your home is valued at \$200,000, the debt service levy will collect approximately \$522 for the year as these are round estimated numbers.

Lisa Froke Does this tax increase affect residents outside of town? Asking for my daughter.

Mayor Sprock No, this will not affect her, as she does not live within the city limits.

Winkowitsch I understand that you live guys in town, but I own land, and we're seeing investors come in, bidding up the prices. This is affecting both the assessed values and prices of farmland. Just recently, farmland in Sioux County sold for \$26,312 per acre.

Sara Sprock Make sure to check with the county assessor's office to verify that you're receiving all the tax credits available to you, such as the Homestead Credit, Military Credit, and the Homestead over 65 credit.

Warren Tiedeman As a former council member, I understand that this is a big decision. I commend the council for their thoughtful consideration and fully support their decision.

Lisa Froke How long is this project supposed to take?

Mayor Sprock It will take approximately 3 days to install the street, and the work will be completed before school starts and before harvest begins.

The Public Hearing session was closed at 5:48 p.m.

There were no written comments. Gruis introduced the following **Resolution No. 2025-04-465** entitled "RESOLUTION APPROVAL OF FY26 PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX LEVY COMPLIANCE" and moved that the same be adopted. Storm seconded the motion to adopt. Roll call vote –ayes: Gerken, Gruis, Storm and Vivian, –nays: none, –absent: Hamilton. Motion carried.

Vivian made a motion to adjourn at 5:50 p.m. Gerken seconded the motion.
All present cast aye votes, motion carried.

All decisions made by the Council become effective upon publication.

Loralie Wibben, City Clerk

_____Lyon Co. News _____Date

_____Loralie Wibben, City Clerk