

**HAHIRA CITY COUNCIL**

**2015 RETREAT**

**FEBRUARY 6 & 7, 2015**

**COMMUNITY CENTER**

**HAHIRA, GEORGIA**

Mayor and Council met for a Retreat February 6, 2015 at the Community Center in Hahira, Georgia at 2:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Mayor Bruce Cain, Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin, Councilmember Kenneth Davis and Councilmember Mason Barfield. City Manager Jonathan Sumner, City Clerk Lisa Mashburn, PW Director Donnie Warren, Police Chief Terry Davis, Fire Chief Dwight Bennett and Firefighter David Thompson. Councilmember Terry Benjamin was not present due to family emergency.

City Manager Sumner welcomed everyone to the retreat. He said that we will hear issues from the department heads and that this is not a Council meeting or public hearing. No action will be taken at this meeting. The purpose of the retreat is to circulate ideas and listen to ideas from the staff.

**FINANCIAL OUTLOOK:**

City Manager Sumner presented all with historical performance of revenues and expenditures and the future trends and restrictions. Sumner said that the General Fund is the principal operating fund of the City. This fund is to account for all financial resources not otherwise accounted for in the Propriety Fund. The General Fund is used to operate Administrative, Public Safety, Street and other departments. He presented all with a copy of the 2015 General Fund approved budget. He reviewed the GF expenditure and revenue budget with pie chart. He compared the City of Hahira budget and other cities with the same criteria. The criteria 1.)State of Georgia 2.)Population 1,500-5,000 3.)Not a county seat 4.) Not a MEAG or MGAG city 5.)Must be in an MSA 6.) Must have water and sewer. 9 cities met the criteria. The City of Hahira comparison was presented. The General Fund revenues exceeded our expectations with an increase in fines and forfeitures. The General Fund year end liquid cash position was very healthy for 2014. We have about 107 days operating cash in the General Fund which is \$500,049.00. Sumner explained that if you have fund balance at end of year that you cannot budget to spend that money. The total proposed expenditures shall not exceed the total of anticipated revenue and unappropriated surplus.

The Proprietary Fund covers the cost for providing water, sewer and garbage services to the citizens and are primarily recovered through user fees and charges. The Budget operates under the water and sewer rates that were established by USDA RD to give the City sufficient revenue to operate the system and retire debt service. Sumner reviewed the 2014 Proprietary fund budget, revenues and expenditures and showed a pie chart for both. He stated that we will make up the difference in the tap fees with the water, we broke even. Councilmember Davis said the water/sewer fees charges should make a difference by the end of year for 2015. Sumner reviewed the expenses stating that power is a big expense for the City. Sumner stated that the tap fees decrease is due in part to the economy and we do

not have buildable lots and we are not expanding. Councilmember Barfield asked what it would take to modify the R-10 or R-15 zoning. Is it possible to add a zoning category, could we have R-21? Sumner said he would check on it and send everyone an email. Sumner reviewed the water/sewer fee performance for 2014 which was an increase and the 2014 year end liquid cash position. We only have 57 days operating cash for rainy day in the amount of \$161,789.00. This does not include the \$250,000 in reserve that is required to be held for bond repayment emergencies. Sumner said that the current rate for garbage consumption is \$12.25. Sumner stated that the cost of the inert debris is higher. The materials taken to the recycle center are paid for by the City. It is not a huge amount but it is tracked. He gave an analysis of how many pulls we had for 2014 and the cost per pull averaged to \$7.10 per customer. The cost of the pulls and tipping fees will increase for 2015 and will average about \$10.05 per customer. The water/sewer/garbage combined, other areas cover deficient areas and the inert debris is deficient area. He said that with the rate increase last night we should be ok. He said that in the future we may want to consider raising the fee from \$12.25 to \$13.25 or charge per dump fee of \$10.00, maybe access on each residents monthly water bill for each visit to the recycle center. He said that we can let it ride for another year and see how this come out at the end of 2015. Councilmember Barfield said that he feels we should keep this on the table, most people love having this service and it need to be paid for. The discussion went on to discuss per visit to the recycle center, it will make it fair for those who abuse the use of the recycle center. Some residents take their friends and family to the recycle center with them and dump their trash. It was stated that the dump fee is a good option.

#### **MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS:**

City Manager Sumner reviewed the Mission and Vision statement for the City of Hahira and the values/goals. He reviewed the strengths of the City, good schools, friendly small town atmosphere and low crime area. We have good financial condition, quality of water and services. The appearance and location are ideal. The opportunities for the City of Hahira are increase in revenues due to the race track, residential growth development, partnership with the County, I-75 interchange, business development, downtown and the railroad property.

We do have threats of the encroachment from Valdosta/Lowndes County, uncontrolled growth, overburdened infrastructure, closure of MAFB, and appearance of new businesses, rapid or sudden decline of state and federal funding and bars coming into the City.

#### **ANTICIPATED CAPITAL REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES:**

Sumner discussed the capital purchases with SPLOST VI which started in 2007 has span of 6 years with anticipated collections of \$4,000,300, with the actual collection of \$2,874,138 which is 72% of estimate. SPLOST VII started in 2013 and has a span of 6 years with anticipated collections of \$3,765,000, with the actual collection of \$3,121,704 which is 83% of original estimate. He went over the referendum areas for each SPLOST VI and SPLOST VII.

#### **POLICE DEPARTMENT:**

Chief Davis reviewed the Mission and Vision statement for the police department. He gave an updated short term goal list. We purchased a Windows based records management system and are currently almost fully staffed. Our staff continues to receive training with the mental patients as it becomes available. A lot of the mental hospitals closed down in our area and they are moving into house in the area and we need to know how to deal with them. He stated that they can have up to 6 people in a house and they do not have to get a license because of the Americans for Disability Act. We have a few houses in town and a lot of times they are left alone which can cause a risk with cooking and everyday functions. Our policy and procedures manual has been printed and issued to our force, we are currently training on new policies. Chief Davis reviewed the current short term goals. We would like to obtain a new warrant system, we currently use Lowndes County and pay annual fee of \$2,200.00. He stated that we will look at the current Incode system in a few weeks and see if we can integrate windows based program with Incode system. Lowndes County Magistrate Court implemented a new warrant system. Warrants are obtained via the internet and the system costs \$7,000.00 per agency. This system allows a video conference with the judge at night, weekends, holidays, etc. We would like to replace in-car cameras and radars. We currently have two cars that have in-car cameras that work and all officers have body cams for now which work fair at best. Our current in-car cameras are over 15 years old and cost \$4,200.00 per unit. The handheld radars are \$600.00 each and the moving radars are \$1,800.00 each. We currently have 4 that are working. We would like to have funding to increase starting pay for officers, current starting pay is \$10.00 per hour which is the lowest in South Georgia. Davis stated that he has a position to fill now but that the qualified officers that he offered the job to cannot take it because of the pay. The average starting pay for certified officers in the area are \$28,200 to \$34,000.

Chief Davis stated the long term goals for the Police Department are to build new building to house the Police department, we are currently in a 900 square foot building that was built in 1971. We have limited space for records storage, no room for interviews/interrogations or to separate victims from suspects while working a crime. At a minimum we need 3 times the space we currently occupy. We would like to hire and train additional staff, obtain a full-time probation officer and full-time Investigator. We currently have Lt. Kingston who does patrol and investigations.

Chief Davis talked about the police department weaknesses, inability to retain officers due to pay, small office building with no room to grow and State program funding cuts, you must have a certain amount of crime to get these grants. We have implemented a community oriented policy where we work to get positive rapport with citizens and business. We had a community wide BBQ at Gateway Pines and had a great turn out. We strive to have a positive rapport with other agencies. Chief Davis review the current chain of command and proposed chain of command. Chief Davis reviewed the growth concerns for the City of Hahira.

#### **FIRE DEPARTMENT:**

Chief Bennett thanked everyone for last night. He stated that he has worked for the City of 12 years and it was inspiring this last year. He said that he knows the Mayor and Council care about the safety of the citizens. He reviewed the five year plan (2015-2019) for the Fire department. He reviewed the strengths of the fire department as excellent fire equipment, one firefighter on duty 24-7 and depth of staff experience. We have opportunities for FEMA grants, better fire prevention programs and lower ISO ratings. Our weaknesses are we do not have enough staff to handle medium to large incidents. We

do not have enough time for administrative paperwork and we do not have responding Engine Company within 1.5 miles in all areas of the City. The threat is encroachment of county subdivisions adjacent to Hahira, with increased call volume, we have a lack of staffing which equals the inability to effectively save lives and property. At present the fire department has funding to staff one firefighter on duty 24 hours a day with a second firefighter on duty on weekends from 8a.-5p. With our growing population and calls for service, not having adequate staffing in the evening s & nights is becoming difficult to ensure all emergency calls are handled properly and safely during these hours. In 2015 we would like to increase 24 hour staffed coverage, create 3-24 hour shifts, and hire 3 fulltime firefighters which would allow 2 firefighters per shift 24-7. This would require an increase of the annual salary line item of approximately \$125,000.00.

In 2016 the goal will be the construction of fire station #2, in the proximity of the Industrial Park. This will minimize the chances of a train affecting our response to the West side of town. This will also give us a responding engine company with 1.5 miles to all areas of the city which is an ISO requirement. The estimated cost would be \$130,000.00. We would also like to hire a part-time administrative assistant which would cost around \$15,000.00 annually. It was suggested by Councilmember Barfield that we try to get an Intern to help with the part time administrative duties.

In 2017 the goal is to hire 1 full-time fire prevention officer/firefighter 8am-5pm Monday-Friday. This position would be to conduct fire inspections, plan review, public safety education, C.O. inspections and be utilized to respond to emergencies. In 2018 the goal is to create a fulltime Captain position that would implement a dedicated training division to carryout daily training for staff and oversee the operations side of the department, this would be approximately \$35,000.00 per year. We would also like to have training buildings with 3 conex boxes. In 2019 the goal is to hire 3 fulltime firefighters at \$125,000.00 per year and this would allow us to staff 3 firefighters.

Councilmember Barfield said that he would like to see a 5 year revenue projection and the departments do the expenditures. Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin said that this is what he was asking for at the Thursday night Council meeting.

#### **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT:**

PWD Warren presented the 5 year plan for the public works department. The City has experienced an enormous growth in recent years, public works is prepared to face the challenges of a developing community by focusing on maintaining and improving the existing system rather than expanding systems to serve future growth. We will concentrate on responding to citizens in a timely manner.

He stated that we need to find a way to manager the overflow of the ponds. We need to find a way to expand the ponds or remove the water. One possible solution is to upgrade the UV light. Another way to manage this would be to install another lift system. It was suggested that we get the engineers to do cost estimate after the current I & I is taken care of. This would be an SPLOST VII expense. The Inflow & Infiltration (I & I) is in progress with a find and fix. The budget is \$210,000.00 and it will be to fix the clay pipe on West Main Street and the clay pipes in the basin that drains to the 122 East pump station.

The short term goals include sewer capacity improvement. We can install a new ultraviolet light system at the cost of \$500,000.00. The City engineer has proposed site visit which includes design cost of

\$35,000.00. The Long term goals for the sewer capacity improvement are to have sewer line to the County, sewer to a new LAD or sewer to the Little River. The sewer to the County has about \$425,000 invested and 250,000 gallons of capacity was bought in the Counties line. Negotiation broke down seven years ago because the County wanted fresh water in exchange. The City Engineer estimated that it will cost approximately \$175,000 to connect our system to the County's. The ongoing cost estimate of \$1.85 for every 1,000 gallons sent to the County's system (and they would pay \$1.25 for every gallon of fresh water). I was suggested that we contact Bill Slaughter County Commissioner and have a discussion with him about this. Sewer to a New LAS would require getting land in Lowndes County which is not cheap and the City Engineer estimated this cost at \$3,000,000 however he feels that this is a low cost estimate, it would only yield modest gains in additional capacity. Sewer to the Little River would require a pump station and force main 4 miles out to the river. The prospects for gallons per day yield are comparatively limitless and the cost would be around \$2 million.

PWD Warren said that we have roads that have rapid deterioration, wear and tear from continuous traffic and road erosion from growth of tree roots. The streets are Barfield, East Coleman, North Hall, South Nelson and Sargent Street. It was discussed the E. Coleman is dangerous due to pulling out on Hwy 41 and maybe it should be made into a one way street. The next discussion was rubber mulch for the parks. The rubber mulch provides a soft surface to help keep children safe on the playground and creates a pliable resilient surface to help reduce the stress on joints and bones. It is easy to install and has little to no maintenance. It is ADA approved and it inhibits growth of molds and fungi, which reduces allergy risk. It is five times heavier than wood mulch and rubber mulch will not float, absorb water or erode during heavy rain and flooding. It does not attract termites, carpenter ants or other harmful insects. Warren stated it would cost approximately \$4,200 for the City Park and this would come out of SPLOST VII.

PWD Warren discussed the recycle center. He said that we need to bring in revenue to cover the cost of the operation. As discussed during the financial portion this will be reviewed at later time. We need to wait and see what the County will do and see how 2015 work out. We need to improve some of the ditches around town. HE presented a picture of Lawson Farm ditch and recommended installing some pipes to cover the ditches and help with drainage.

The Public works department needs raises and the public works facility needs to have work done to pave the work area that get muddy during heavy rain. The area underneath the main shelter is unpaved. The Public works admin building has a new roof and improved ceiling but these are patches to the building.

In 2012 the watershed protection plan was completed. The WPP requires continual monitoring activities as part of its implementation required by EPD. In 2014, EPD designated Hahira an MS4, the MS4 is the designation requiring higher levels of monitoring for run off impacts along streams around Hahira. Hahira must submit an MS4 permit which occurred in September 2014 and the permits cost \$40,000.00. The permit will require inventory activities and other public education events. Annual cost are anticipated at \$20-\$25,000 which must be paid from the General Fund operating expense, it cannot be paid for with SPLOST funds. The City Engineer has offered to come present to the Council concerning Storm water Management fee structures. Surrounding communities such as Valdosta have established these fees to defray cost and impact to taxpayers. A study for a proposed rate structure may be required, the fee could be attached to each water bill.

Hahira needs infrastructure mapping, the water and sewer maps are 15 years out of date. A comprehensive mapping plan needs to be produced through GPS, some of the infrastructure, such as hydrants have already been done by the Fire Department. We still have new mains, cutoff valves and force mains that need to be mapped. Also, the MS4 requirements in the new permit will dictate that all storm water infrastructure in the city must be contained in a GPS file before the end of the 5 year permitting period. The proposed cost of this is in excess of \$50,000.00. We could perform these activities internally but it will take time and manpower to complete.

The City has sidewalks that need repair. They have roots growing and breaking the concrete. The request to fix the sidewalk in front of the Baptist Church has been worked on by the Public works department and it has been ground down to help with the uneven sidewalk. The Community Center needs additional furnishings, tables and chairs.

City Manager Sumner said that the Administration has ongoing projects. We need file imaging system, a-la-carte benefit system, salary study and the web site development is almost complete. The new web site will be hahiraga.gov. 2015 Administration short term goals are to reactivate Downtown Development Authority and initiate bi-monthly newsletter. We need code organization and adoption, to purchase new City vehicle, rewrite the subdivision ordinance and rewrite the personnel policy.

Administration long term goals are to continue to work with property owners and GDOT on development of Hahira Interchange properties and advance plans for redevelopment of downtown buildings. Facilitate strategic planning to establish a comprehensive five year plan both internally and externally. Revitalize the Odom Building, City Center and New Police Department headquarters. The recommendations for the Odom Building are to donate the building to a downtown development authority and have the DDA receive low-interest loans and grants that could renovate the building in phases. A DDA could perhaps attract an angel investor or interested business to finish out the building. The Administration could secure a facility and provide more first floor space for work area, break area and meeting space. It would provide a larger Council chambers/area for Executive sessions. In 2011 JGG Architects produced a Master Plan document for the railroad property. The Master plan assumed acquisition of the property, after the acquisition the project was divided into four phases. Phase I would be demolition of the warehouse and grassing which is estimated at \$160,000. Phase II would be the development of the Central Park from Lawson to Main, perimeter sidewalks and relocation of Caboose and Fire truck. The estimated cost would be \$480,000.00 and the demolition of Lawson Street is estimated at \$55,000. Phase II would be the City center which would include a new City hall with the cost estimate of \$1.8 million.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

---

Mayor Bruce Cain

---

City Clerk Lisa Mashburn