**HAHIRA CITY COUNCIL**

**SPECIAL CALLED MEETING**

**NOVEMBER 13, 2012**

**4:00 P.M.**

**CITY HALL**

Mayor and Council met for a Special Called Meeting November 13, 2012 at City Hall with Mayor Wayne Bullard presiding.

**PRESENT:** Mayor Wayne Bullard, Councils: Mayor Pro Tem Cain, Rose Adams, Ralph Clendenin, City Manager Jonathan Sumner, Fire Chief Dwight Bennett and City Clerk Lisa Mashburn. Council member Benjamin was not present.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Wayne Bullard

**ESTABLISH QUORUM:** Mayor Wayne Bullard

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Mayor Wayne Bullard

**INVOCATION:** Mayor Wayne Bullard

**DISCUSSION:**

**FIRE DEPARTMENT PAGERS**

Fire Chief Dwight Bennett stated that as we discussed at the last Council meeting we are looking at alternatives to going with the 911 and their $12,500 cost with undetermined reoccurring costs. He stated that he was working with Federal signal, Hasty’s communication and the 911 center. He stated that as we stand now with the Federal signal option they have proposed $26,000 for their system and that they will give us the option to purchase the system for 90 days on a trial period and see if we like the system. He stated that if we did not like the system and they could not correct the problem that they would refund 100 per cent of the money back to us and that they would put it into writing. Chief Bennett then stated that on the downside of this that they would have to put something at City Hall because that is where the FCC license is at with the GPS exactly on this tower. HE stated that the equipment that would be put on the server would recognize a tone that would capture and broadcast over our pagers and cell phones. He then stated that this seems like it would work but the downside to this is after talking to the 911 center in depth today that they seem unwilling and unable to put a specific tone that this system would recognize the federal signal we are talking about. He then stated that without the 911 center working with them on this that it will not work. City Manager Sumner then asked can they do it or are they stretching the truth. Fire Chief Bennett stated that is the question at hand. Councilmember Clendenin asked if the equipment is capable to do it. Chief Bennett stated that currently they have two or three tones for whatever they are dispatching out and the County fire and Valdosta fire they have a double tone that goes out to alert those stations. They stated that their console is only designed for four distinctive tones and those are being used. They stated that they are 99 per cent that they would not be able to do it. Chief Bennett stated that he finds it hard to believe that with the technology they have they cannot download a specific tone and put it in their system. City Manager Sumner asked they Chief Bennett tell Mayor and Council what Hasty’s told him. Chief Bennett stated he had called Hasty’s about the Federal Signal system that they did not know much about it and they will be the ones contracted by Federal Signal to put it in. They say after looking at the research that it looks like a very complex system and that we need to look at the more complex the system the more problems you can have within that system. They stated that something that is vitally important that they would recommend something simpler and more streamline and go with the County. He stated that he takes that with a grain of salt because Hasty’s makes up 80 percent of their work with the County communication system. Bennett stated the complexity of the system is having too many funnels to go through. City Manager Sumner stated that the Council has had the opportunity to go through the letter that was sent to him by the Administrative Assistant to the County Manager. Sumner stated that for the record it said basically that they had investigated the possibility of ownership and they could not extend that to the City of Hahira because the intent for funding the system was to service the Fire Departments in the County and that the benefits to the Cities was a secondary benefit and was not intended to service us but would be a service that they would extend to us. Sumner stated that is fine but that if we do go with the County we would need an intergovernmental agreement to define portions of the relationship. He stated it is not purchasing a system it is a fee and he would like to make it clear that the understanding is there. Councilmember Adams then stated that means if anything goes wrong it is not our problem it is their problem. The Mayor asked if there is a contract with them. City Manager Sumner stated that we had discussed at the Council meeting having an intergovernmental agreement with all the Cities since our Attorney represents Lake Park and Hahira that he was going to work with Brad Folsom the Attorney for Remerton; he stated he brought that up with Joe when he talked to him on the phone and he had no issue with that and it would formalize the relationship. He stated the key provision that we are looking for is some measure of ownership in the system which would free up the opportunity to use SPLOST VI funds which of course it looks like that cannot happen. He wanted to make it clear that the General fund can absorb that cost and we will do what we have to with respect to that. Councilmember Adams verified that the amount is $12,500 in which City Manager Sumner answered yes. He then stated that the only questions with that is the question of ongoing costs. Mayor Pro Tem Cain then confirmed that the $12,500 would be a one time fee but that we would have an ongoing maintenance fee that we do not know what that cost will be. Councilmember Adams then asked what the maintenance fee we are paying now is and it was stated by City Manager Sumner that they have not been charging us at all. Then discussion was what the fee would be if something goes wrong. Councilmember Clendenin stated he thought it would 10 % which is what we will be paying on the system. Councilmember Adams then stated we are paying 10.8 % for 20 pagers. Chief Bennett stated that he was on the phone with 911 center this a.m. to try and find out some maintenance amount and he stated it would pretty much be the 10% of any cost for the year. Chief Bennett stated that the scary part of this is that we will need to pay the $12,500 to tie into system before they will tell us the amount for annual maintenance. Councilmember Adams asked why they would charge a maintenance fee now if they did not in the past. Councilmember Clendenin stated it is a new system and he is sure they will make changes and he then questioned moving the tower to get signal and that it would be on our buck and that he thinks they would charge us the 10% for moving it. Councilmember Adams stated she would have to see it in writing. City Manager Sumner stated that we have the invitation letter from the County Manager and it does indicate some specifics but there are some details that have not been nailed down and he wants to make sure there is the understanding that there is some vagueness within taking the County option just as there is some vagueness with us constructing our own system. This is the decision that is before you, we have some cost with both options but we have the question of any hidden costs. The other question is the willingness or unwillingness to hook on to the system with our own hardware and either way there is unknown. City Manager Sumner stated that it has been set up from the beginning for us to set up with the County and it has been delayed where there is only 45 days left in the year for us to contract with the County. We have to make a decision not knowing all the facts just know what information we have at the time. Councilmember Clendenin stated that if they cannot add a tone for us at the 911 center then there is nothing to discuss. City Manager Sumner stated that we pay for the 911 center with taxpayer dollars so the question is do they have to provide a tone for us and do we want to make them. Councilmember Adams asked if we want to involve Rob and pay him $125.00 per hour. Mayor Pro Tem Cain then asked about the four tones now; and it was stated by Bennett is it a software issue that can be downloaded to add another tone. He then stated that Hasty’s suggested it would be possible and the 911 center indicated it would not be possible. Bennett then stated that Federal Signal indicated that the system should be set up to handle the tone. Councilmember Clendenin stated we should have 911 center and Federal Signal get together and see if they can make it work. Chief Bennett stated that Hasty's does all the communication service at the 911 center and they said they worked it out but now the 911 center is saying no they cannot do that. But Hasty’s says more than likely they can do it. City Manager Sumner stated that we are out of time. He stated he wished it was not this way but that we need to make a decision on which direction we want to move and that there are pitfalls with either way. Bennett stated that the time issue is an issue within itself because the County has yet to order its equipment and they will have to go on a loaner from Hasty’s and this could cut the weak signal that we have now and this is a major concern. Chief Bennett stated he is not comfortable with any of the solutions. Councilmember Clendenin asked when the deadline is. City Manager Sumner stated that we have already extended it by delaying our decision at the Council meeting. Councilmember Clendenin stated that if he was in charge he would call Federal Signal and tell them we are interested in it but here is our problem and let them go work to Hasty’s and tell them if they want to make it work let them handle it. City Manager Sumner stated that he would like to add that he does not think the County will refuse our money and that the option is off the table. Chief Bennett added that he has worked with Federal Signal and they all worked together until the talked with the County. Council member Clendenin stated that it is all just adding computer software. City Manager Sumner stated that constructing our own system is approximately $26,000 plus the 2,700 per year which is the expanded service which would text, email, voice and the ability to have a call to every citizen in Hahira. Chief Bennett stated that this morning he was going to come in to recommend this system to the Mayor and Council. City Manager Sumner stated that if we go with our own system and do not like it, then try to go to County to go on their system that there could be a higher entry fee at a later time like they did Lake Park in the past. Chief Bennett stated that he wanted to come in and give them a recommendation and say this is what we need to do but it is such a complex array of decisions with pitfalls that it is really difficult to come in and make a recommendation. The Mayor then stated that the problem is that we are dealing with everyone’s lives and we need to do what we think is best for the citizens. City Manager Sumner stated that the County holds all the cards. Discussion by all regarding the adding the tone issue. City Manager Sumner stated that the County did not make their decision based on the benefit of Hahira, Remerton or Lake Park and that they are doing what benefits the unincorporated areas and they see us as citizens of the County, which we are but they make no consideration for what the needs or desires are for the citizens of the municipalities might be. Councilmember Adams stated again that if something goes wrong with this it is up to the County; our job is to protect the citizens of Hahira and if the best way to go for now is to go with the County that in her opinion this is what we need to do. She then stated that we really do not have a choice and Chief Bennett agreed. Mayor Pro Tem Cain asked Chief Bennett what his recommendation would be. He stated his recommendation right now, in which he is not extremely happy with it, is to go with the County. City Manager Sumner concurs. Chief Bennett stated he would love to find an alternative because he is relying on the County to do what they need to do. City Manager Sumner stated to shine a light of hope on it we are moving upward in our public safety strategy and that is central in providing services to the citizens and he know the goal of the Fire Department is to have full time staff and when that comes in the future that will nullify the need for paging system. Councilmember Clendenin then stated that if they put the tower on Hwy 84 he thinks we will only receive 50 % of the signal and they will come back to us to pay for. Chief Bennett stated he would recommend going with the County with a lot of reservations. Councilmember Clendenin then stated to put in the record that he bets in 6 months that we will be asked to pay for dedicated line, antenna and installation. City Manager Sumner stated that if we could get a little consideration that we could turn this all around, but that it is not there. Councilmember Clendenin wanted to put wording in contract to not pay over the 10% but it was stated by Sumner that would come later with agreement but that we need to vote to pay the $12,500 to enter into contract. It was then stated that the reoccurring cost are unknown and cannot be budgeted at this time. The Mayor stated that he needed a motion to take the offer from Lowndes County. **Councilmember Clendenin made a motion to accept with** contingencies in the letter; if the system is not strong enough when they are installing it that Hahira would only pay 10 percent additional fee to move the antenna closer and a dedicated phone line. No second. Councilmember Adams stated she is not sure about these contingencies, she stated that if they do not honor all these contingencies that we will have to come back and we need to think of the safety of the citizens**. The** **Mayor then said we need another motion. Mayor Pro Tem Cain made a motion that we accept the Counties offer which was seconded by Councilmember Adams. Mayor Pro Tem Cain, Councilmember Adams and Councilmember Clendenin made a motion to accept**. It was noted that it was the feeling of the Council that there does not seem to be any options, must go with the County. Mayor Pro Tem Cain stated they have us over a barrel and they know it. City Manager Sumner stated that the Intergovernmental Agreement will come back to the Council. **A motion was made to adjourn by Mayor Pro Tem Cain which was seconded by Councilmember Clendenin. Mayor Pro Tem Cain, Councilmember Clendenin and Councilmember Adams voted in favor of the motion to adjourn.**

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Mayor Wayne Bullard

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City Clerk Lisa Mashburn