

HAHIRA CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

FEBRUARY 5, 2015

7:30 P.M.

COURTHOUSE

Mayor and Council met for a Council meeting February 5, 2015 at the Courthouse with Mayor Bruce Cain presiding.

PRESENT: Mayor Bruce Cain, Councils: Mason Barfield, Kenneth Davis, Terry Benjamin and Mayor Pro Tem Ralph Clendenin. City Manager Jonathan Sumner, Police Chief Terry Davis, Fire Chief Dwight Bennett, Public Work Director Donnie Warren and City Clerk Lisa Mashburn. Attorney Rob Plumb was present.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Bruce Cain

ESTABLISH QUORUM: Mayor Bruce Cain

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Mayor Bruce Cain

INVOCATION: Brother Michael Bryant

REVIEW/CORRECTION OF MINUTES:

- A. JANUARY 5, 2015 WORK SESSION**
- B. JANUARY 8, 2015 COUNCIL MEETING**

Mayor Bruce Cain asked if anyone had any corrections or questions regarding the minutes. None noted. **Councilmember Barfield made a motion to accept the minutes as presented which was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin. Councilmember Barfield, Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Benjamin and Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin all voted in favor of the motion.**

PUBLIC HEARING:

- A. WATER-SEWER RATE ORDINANCE (THIRD READING-CITY MANAGER)**

City Manager Sumner said that as discussed at the Monday night meeting that this is the third and final reading of the water-sewer ordinance. He stated that this has been a process where flyers were sent out to residents and public information presented at the October meeting. He stated that we had the first reading in November and the second reading at the December meeting. He stated that \$13.00 will be phased in quarterly beginning April 1, 2015. The ordinance also has a senior citizens discount for those who are 65 years of age and older and who have an income of \$23,340.00 or less per household. This came from the City of Forsyth and from Georgia Power guidelines. If they qualify then their rate will not change from the current rate. The Ordinance also has a provision that will increase the rates 3 per cent each year thereafter beginning January 2016. The Mayor asked if anyone had any questions. None noted. The Mayor asked if anyone wished to speak against the ordinance. None noted. The Mayor

asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of the motion. None noted. **Councilmember Davis made a motion to approve the Water/Sewer Ordinance as presented which was seconded by Councilmember Barfield. Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Barfield and Councilmember Benjamin all voted in favor of the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin voted against the motion. The motion carried with a 3-1 vote.**

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:

Barry Robinson of 6083 Quarterman Road and the owner of the new Huddle House said that he would like to thank the Mayor and Council for their support. He stated that he does not mind the state and local taxes because of the way the funds are used. He said we cannot provide public safety ourselves that we depend on government for that and he would like for everyone to remember that. He said that it is the federal taxes that are too high and that we resent.

Tim Coombs of 8880 Gordon Road and President of the Hahira Historical Society post 218 said that he would like to recognize Johnny McDonald from 1969 and presented a picture of Mr. McDonald. He said that he would like to ask the City to do a proclamation for Memorial Day to honor Mr. McDonald.

REVIEW OF BILLS/BUDGET OVERAGES:

The Mayor asked if anyone had any questions regarding the bills. None noted. **Councilmember Benjamin made a motion to pay the bills as presented which was seconded by Councilmember Barfield. Councilmember Benjamin, Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Barfield and Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin all voted in favor of the motion.**

DISCUSSIONS:

B. BILLBOARD (CITY MANAGER)

City Manager Sumner said that as discussed on Monday night that the billboard on I-75 was put up years ago is up for renewal and that is paid out of BHT or the downtown program. Sumner said that he would like for Brandi Dame the Downtown Coordinator to come up and discuss her thoughts on the billboard renewal. Brandi stated that she has a marketing background and that she saw the billboard on I-75 one time and the light was out on it. She said that she feels that this is a waste of money, and that she feels that the \$2200.00 could be used in other ways to promote Hahira. She said if you want a billboard we can recreate it and place it at another location or you have options of a TV commercial or radio commercial. She said that she does not think the current billboard brings anyone into town. You could put the billboard in the Valdosta Mall area for more exposure to get more for your money. City Manager Sumner said that staff has come up with options to redesign the billboard and renew it or look for location in Valdosta, find out the cost of relocation and or redesign. Brandi Dame said that for about \$500.00 we can advertise on 95.7 or hot 102.7, this would run every 2 hours for 7 days a week. Sumner said that he would like to see a marketing plan and make it ala carte. Councilmember Barfield said yes he would like to know what we can do with that money, to either increase things or enhance things we are doing now. He said that we need more buzz on a regular basis. Brandi stated that she wants to help the businesses. Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin asked have you talked to the businesses and would the businesses partner with us. Sumner said that before

they wanted to help with the billboard but then the City had to pay for it all. Brandi said that she wants to do heavy advertisement on radio for events and change up the advertisement. Sumner said that if we discontinue the billboard then we can come back in March with marketing plan. Councilmember Barfield said that he thinks the billboard is not working. He said that Hahira is our business and we need to partner and all work together and promote for all. Brandi said that she would like to see us like downtown Thomasville, she wants us to do something different. Councilmember Davis questioned the billboard effectiveness and said that he does not see the purpose of continuing the billboard and use that money for other options. **Councilmember Davis made a motion not to renew the billboard contract which was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin. Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Barfield, Councilmember Benjamin and Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin all voted in favor of the motion.**

DEPARTMENT REQUESTS:

C. SAFER GRANT (CHIEF BENNETT)

Chief Dwight Bennett said that we have a chance for potential FEMA safer grant. The grant will pay 100% of salaries for two years if we decide to apply for the grant. He said that after the two year period the City would have to pay the salaries. He stated the grant information would need to be submitted by late February or early March and he wanted to bring this to your attention. Councilmember Benjamin asked if it has always been two years for the grant, he though it used to be five years and pro-rated. Bennett stated that it is for only two years now and is a lot less complex. Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin asked if the price would be \$125,000 and asked how many apply for the grant. He also asked if we would have to do a 2 mil increase for the millage rate to cover the expense as discussed on Monday night. City Manager Sumner said it could be up to 2 mil and that it is difficult to project. Councilmember Barfield said that all the way back to 2008 a lot of the projections are out the window because of the economy. Sumner said that it is difficult to project taxes, fines and LOST due to the economy the 2 mil was the figure estimated when I put the budget together. Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin said that is a possible \$100.00 per year and more tax increase per resident. Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin said that it is difficult but that we need to watch expenditures. Chief Bennett said that everyone that has lost a life you can match that with a life saved. Councilmember Barfield stated Chief this is one of those moments that we are talking about water/sewer increases and we wish we had heard of this 4-5 months ago. I wish we had more time to ponder how to fit this in the budget and make a decision. It is essential but struggling with handle on what we are committed to do and not to overcommit. Maybe we should put it off for a year to make me feel more comfortable. Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin said that he agrees with what Councilmember Barfield just said. Councilmember Barfield said that this has all been good information. Councilmember Benjamin said that he would be remised for District One if he did not state that we are a town that does not have equipment across the tracks. He stated that 4 years ago Chief Bennett made strides to protect with 24 hour coverage but that there is only so much that he can do. We made a promise to District 1 and we do not have time to stall out. Councilmember Barfield said that the grant would increase personnel furthering our scope and then we can positon equipment on this side of the tracks. You can't keep passing it along. It is a tough decision and he understands the concerns but we need to have faith. We put money in the bank but we

need to get out of this cycle, look at the liability side of things, it would just take one death. Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin said that he knows fireman are essential but where do we get financing. City Manager Sumner said that SPLOST citizens need not be burdened with facilities, SPLOST pays for it 100%. Water/Sewer will fund itself 100%. When you look at staffing it has to be from the General Fund. Councilmember Barfield asked the opinion of the Mayor and City Manager. What is your gut feeling? What would you speculate. IF we go with this in two years where would we be? The Mayor said that in the past few bad years the department heads have handled things during the worst time and we still worked to put \$250,000 in CD. The Mayor said the first thing would be to get approval for Safer Grant, this is not a guarantee. He said it is a process and then you would have to do the hiring process, this will take some time, and you are talking about three years from now. Councilmember Barfield asked in two years are we coming back to ask for more or does this take care of our needs. Chief Bennett said we would have two people on the truck most calls or for tough calls and 10-12 people on scene for house fire. We would be better prepared with two. Councilmember Davis said we have different perspectives, we have needs and benefits and I am sold on it. We need to increase fire protection, it needs to come further. We have the opportunity to gain \$250,000, we cannot let that go and continue on for another year. We are talking \$125,000 in 2018, the City Manager mentioned a 2 mil increase and that is one way to do it, we may have other options. Councilmember Davis asked what the worst case scenario is, we get the safer grant and in three years we have to pay \$125,000 per year for salaries. We will have a fund balance and take care of it, or if you had to go back to what we had. Are we willing to accept the worst case scenario and for this he would like to do it. The Mayor asked if anyone had any more questions. **Councilmember Benjamin made a motion to move forward with the Safer Grant which was seconded by Councilmember Barfield. Councilmember Benjamin, Councilmember Barfield and Councilman Davis all voted in favor of the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin voted against the motion. The vote was 3-1.**

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A. GMA ANNUAL CONVENTION**
- B. FIRE SPRING CONFERENCE**
- C. JUVENILE FIRE-SETTER REHAB PROGRAM**
- D. PUBLIC WORKS ADMIN BUILDING FLOOR SPLOST VII-MR. HUERTA, \$1,800 LOW BID**
- E. POLICE SUMMER CONFERENCE**
- F. CITY CLERK/FINANCE CLERK SUMMER CONFERENCE**

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin to approve the Consent agenda as presented which was seconded by Councilmember Benjamin. Councilmember Benjamin, Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Barfield and Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin all voted in favor of the motion.

REPORTS:

Councilmember Barfield stated that as our last discussion that this is why he likes what we do. You read the information sent by Chief Bennett and listen to Councilmember Benjamin who has history and learn

how it has been a subject for a long time. The fact that Councilmember Benjamin said that we need to have faith and how hard that is these days to have faith in the system. We live in a unique place in the world and as Councilmember Davis said the worst case scenario is not so bad and we will still be ahead. He said that he had reservation because we have so much catching up to do and that he commends those who came before us. They have put us in a good position.

Councilmember Benjamin thanked everyone for coming out and for the opportunity to serve District I. He thanked the staff, we put a lot of demands on the staff and that we use the City Manager in the way that he should be. He said a lot of Cities have doubled the millage rate and we have lowered ours, it is the lowest in history. We have put money in the bank and that goes back to staffing. We all try to do what is best for the citizens and it is a hard job. TO each person up here it is our job to be sure that each department has what they need to do their job. This is home and we need to take care of home, we need to continue to improve and preserve Hahira.

Councilmember Davis said tonight's discussion was involved and we all go and try to look for information and he is encouraged by the process. We all have different sides and different opinions. He said please come to us if any questions and listen to what is said. We all work hard and it takes it to make all services work.

Mayor Pro Tem Clendenin said that he appreciates everybody coming tonight. He said the amount of taxes will be raised even if we keep it the same, the tax will increase. Thank you for coming.

City Manager Sumner thanked the Mayor and Council for the opportunity to serve and for all the kind words. He said that it is a source of inspiration and he thanked everyone for being involved. He congratulated Tim Coombs on his American Legion Award.

The Mayor said that he is happy with what has been said tonight, thank you for all the hard work. HE thanked the City Manager for all his help and the City Clerk and Finance Clerk. He thanked each and every one of the department heads who work on a day by day basis to get things done. He thanked the Public works and said if you see the dust clouds down on Church Street that they are grinding the sidewalks and he appreciates their hard work.

The Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

ADJOURN.

Mayor Bruce Cain

City Clerk Lisa Mashburn