

CITY OF DAHLONEGA

WORK SESSION MINUTES February 16, 2012

The Dahlonega City Council held a Work Session on Thursday, February 16, 2012 at City Hall. Members present were Ralph Prescott, Gerald Lord, Terry Peters and Johnny Ariemma. Also present were City Manager Bill Lewis and City Attorney Doug Parks. Mayor McCullough called the Work Session to order at 4:30 p.m.

LIOCHANG RELATIONSHIP:

Mayor Gary McCullough asked that Dr. Chris Jespersen from NGCSU inform Council concerning a sister relationship with Liochang, China. Dr. Jespersen informed Council that NGCSU started a sister relationship in 2008 with Liochang University. With connections there this has led to the faculty exchange program. In 2011 there were 11 faculty members came to the NGCSU campus and 19 students are going to Liochang for foreign language and culture. He further informed, this has developed a relationship for language initiatives with officials at Liochang and there has been some discussion concerning establishing a sister City relationship. Mayor McCullough informed Council he had received a letter from the Liochang Mayor and this has been discussed only through correspondence. Mayor McCullough further informed NGCSU President; Dr. Bonita Jacobs had indicated they would be willing to designate a correspondent to help with this along with some clerical assistance. He stated the Mayor for Liochang had sent him a gift and he would like to do the same. Mayor McCullough requested DDA Project Coordinator Rebecca Shirley to get more information for Council discussion.

COUNCIL ALLOWANCES FOR EQUIPMENT:

Mayor McCullough informed Council if they were compensated for cell phones or computers, it would only affect those who are elected in the next election. He further informed Council had received an email from the City Attorney stating this type of compensation must be counted as income. City Attorney Doug Parks informed Council that any type of reimbursement for Council expenses are fully exempt from these guidelines and do not have to go through an election cycle. Councilman Prescott questioned if this compensation could be treated in the same regard as a business. Mr. Parks further informed he had spoken with the City auditor, Chris Hollifield and with Sabrina Cape, CPA and they both concurred the allowance would be considered under the applicable Georgia code. After further discussion, Mr. Parks informed Council if the equipment was purchased for their direct use but, owned by the City, all computer and phone records will be subject to open records. He further informed other Cities have policies that would outline this type of agreement which have been adopted and been affective.

INSURANCE QUOTES:

City Manager Bill Lewis informed Council that the City had requested that Mr. Matt Bidwell from MSI Consultants assist the City with thorough and objective quotes for health insurance. Mr. Bidwell informed Council when he had met with them prior he had recommended compiling information to be sent out to several other companies. When this process was complete he received replies and reviews from four (4) top carriers, Aetna, Alliant, Coventry and United Healthcare. Three of the four carriers were higher in premium cost than our existing plan with GMA however, Alliant was 5% less. Mr. Bidwell further informed this was not final rates. In order for the carrier to submit a final rate, individual health statements were needed from each employee. The statements were completed and sent to Alliant which clarified each employee's medical status. After review, Alliant responded with a firm rate which was approximately 20% higher than our existing premium with GMA and benefits were significantly less. Councilman Prescott requested that Mr. Bidwell submit a proposal to Council for consideration to continue his services for this type of survey.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor McCullough adjourned the Work Session at 5:18 p.m.