

City of Dahlonge

Work Session Minutes

The Dahlonge City Council held a Work Session on Thursday, February 21, 2013 at City Hall. Members present were Ralph Prescott, Gerald Lord, Johnny Ariemma, Bruce Hoffman, Terry Peters and Sam Norton. Also present was City Manager Ron Thomas and City Attorney Doug Parks. Mayor Gary McCullough called the Work Session to order at 4:00 p.m.

HOTEL/MOTEL TAX DISCUSSION:

Mayor Gary McCullough informed Council that surrounding cities are charging eight (8) percent hotel tax and would like for Council to discuss the possibility of increasing our existing rate of five (5) percent. Councilman Ariemma stated that he felt eight (8) percent was aggressive however, he would be agreeable if the County would also increase their tax rate to eight (8) percent. Councilman Prescott also felt that eight (8) percent was aggressive and questioned what the City's plan with the additional funds was. Councilman Hoffman informed he had met with Tourism Director Jay Markwalter and he had explained, by law there is a formula in which states the percentage the Chamber will receive and the City can use the remainder for signs and other projects. City Attorney Doug Parks informed Council if they wish to do the increase and decided to do a routine enhancement; a Resolution and a draft bill could be prepared and submitted so that it could be adopted before the end of the legislative session. Councilman Norton informed that the City needs to be competitive with neighboring cities. He further informed that this type of tax would only affect visitors and not our citizens. After further discussion, City Manager Ron Thomas recommended that staff be allowed time to complete information on different percentage increments to present to Council and then discuss the possibilities of reasonable projects with the additional revenue. Mayor and Council agreed with the recommendation from Mr. Thomas and will hold another Work Session to discuss.

AUDITOR CONTRACT RENEWAL EXTENSION FOR FY 2012-13:

City Manager Ron Thomas informed Council that the auditors had concluded the FY 2011-12 financial audit. He further informed our audit contract expired with this audit and with pre-audit procedures beginning in August, there was not enough time to prepare an RFP. Mr. Thomas asked Finance Director Kimberly Stafford to obtain quotes from our current auditing firm Rushton and Company for a one year and three year contract. Their response was to offer the same fees as incurred in the 2011-12 audit of \$28,340.00 for the financial audit and \$3,000.00 for the single audit report, if required. Additionally, they proposed to extend the same fee for FY 2013-14 and 2014-15, if the City signs a three (3) year extension. After further discussion, Council was in agreement that they have been pleased with Rushton's quality of work and appreciated their on-going relationship however; they felt it was best to go with the one (1) year extension and then follow-up with an RFP. Mayor McCullough requested that this item be placed on the March 4, 2013 Council meeting agenda for approval.

BANKING CONTRACT RENEWAL EXTENSION:

City Manager Ron Thomas informed Council that the City Banking Contract will expire on June 30, 2013. He further informed that he has approached United Community Bank and asked if they would consider a three (3) or four (4) month extension, in order to complete a new RFP and they were in agreement. This will allow for an RFP to be completed with additional services, such as direct deposit. After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Council for Mr. Thomas to draft an RFP for banking services and extend the contract with UCB for the additional time needed.

CHESTATEE STREET/MORRISON MOORE PARKWAY TURN LANE PRESENTATION:

City Engineer Ricky Stewart informed Council the City has approached the Department of Transportation for assistance in adding a lane on South Chestatee Street at Morrison Moore Parkway. They have committed to assisting with the funding of the project with two (2) sources. One source will be grant money which will be for the turning lane and the second source is the State Maintenance Crew will do the curb and gutter on the South side. He further informed the existing lanes will be reduced from 12 feet to 11 feet in width. By narrowing the lanes, another South bound lane can be added, as well as installing curb and gutter and a sidewalk. Mr. Stewart gave a slide presentation to show the results of a traffic count and how the new lane will aide movement of the traffic. Currently, approximately 20 cars will go through every 45 seconds however; with the combination lane to turn right or go straight approximately 35 cars will go through. Councilman Norton questioned if each project would be done separately or which lane will be completed first. Mr. Stewart replied the North side lane will be started first. Councilman Peters questioned if the design will be completed in house. Mr. Stewart replied that it will be and then sent to DOT for approval. City Manager Ron Thomas informed Council that once the letter was submitted to DOT and bids are received, all information will be brought back to Council for approval. Mayor McCullough thanked Councilman Lord for the idea of this new lane and all others involved.

At this time, Mayor McCullough informed Council he would like for staff to construct a stamped brick sidewalk beginning at Butlers and going past Pueblo's parking lot. The merchants have asked for this in order to bring visitors further down Main Street. He further requested that the City also put a crosswalk from Pueblos across to North Grove Street. City Manager Ron Thomas informed Council that the primary concern for the Street Maintenance Crew at this time is storm water repairs. Once the storm water project is complete, they will begin on the construction process for the sidewalk and crosswalk. After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to construct the sidewalk and start the process with DOT on the crosswalk. (The City Attorney asked for input regarding this sidewalk because of a recent oral ante litem notice to the City regarding a citizen slipping and falling at this location and also because of EPD monitoring wells located within the proposed sidewalk area.)

TRAIL FEST TENT SIZE DISCUSSION:

Mr. Robert Fuller informed Council that the food and beverage tent for Trail Fest will not be located on the grass in Hancock Park. It will cover the concrete portion on the pavilion and go to the roof. The established tent size approved for Hancock Park is a 10 x 10 and Trail Fest is requesting approval of a 14 x 40 tent. This will allow seating inside the tent, which will also be anchored with sandbags or water barrels on the grass at the end of the concrete. Councilman Hoffman questioned if the tent would be put up on Friday and removed on Sunday. Mr. Fuller

replied that it would. Councilman Norton informed that he had no objection to the request, as long as it was not placed on the grass and no stakes were used. After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to add this item to the March Council meeting agenda for approval.

DISCUSSION OF LETTER TO L. C. COMMISSIONERS ADDRESSING POTENTIAL SETTLEMENT OF LOST LITIGATION:

Mayor McCullough informed Council he and City Manager Ron Thomas had written a letter for review and if Council concurs, it will be sent to the Lumpkin County Commissioners. City Attorney Doug Parks informed he would like to add some different items to the letter due to litigation. Mayor McCullough informed the letter would not be sent until Mr. Parks added his comments and asked Council to review and give their comments also.

Mayor McCullough adjourned the Work Session at 5:25 p.m.