

CITY OF DAHLONEGA

WORK SESSION MINUTES July 19, 2012

The Dahlonega City Council held the regular monthly Work Session on Thursday, July 19, 2012 at City Hall. Members present were Terry Peters, Bruce Hoffman, Ralph Prescott, Sam Norton, Johnny Ariemma and Gerald Lord. Also present were City Manager Bill Lewis and City Attorney Doug Parks. Mayor McCullough called the Work Session to order at 4:00 p.m.

City Manager Bill Lewis informed Council that the roof on City Hall needed to be replaced. He requested Council approval for staff to move forward with proposals to replace the roof. Council was in agreement for staff to begin the proposal process and bring back to them for approval.

RECOMMENDATION FOR 2015 WATER/SEWER DEBT:

Financial Consultant Sabrina Cape informed Council that staff had looked at other alternatives other than the refinance option for our debt solution in FY 2015. She further informed that staff had looked at every area to find available cash. There are funds that are due from solid waste back to the water and sewer fund. Some of these funds can be set aside and used in 2015 for a onetime cash injection and the remainder can be used for the meter change out program. Councilman Peters questioned accounting wise, would our debt ratio still be ok. Ms. Cape responded yes, due to prior accumulation. Councilman Norton questioned if these funds would be set aside in a separate fund. Ms. Cape responded that a resolution would need Council approval in order for staff to move the funds. After further discussion, Mayor McCullough requested City Attorney Doug Parks to prepare a resolution for Council approval.

BUDGET PROCESS DISCUSSION - ESTABLISH DATES:

Financial consultant Sabrina Cape informed Council that we had not received the final numbers from the Tax Commissioner in order to advertise the five (5) year levy. She further informed we will still try to stay on schedule with our Budget adoption prior to August 31st. At this time, City Manager Bill Lewis informed Council that a Budget Work Session needs to be scheduled to review all other departmental funds such as, SPLOST, DDA, Streetscape, Hotel/Motel and the Grant Fund. Council was in agreement to schedule a Work Session on Thursday, August 9th at 5:00 p.m.

BRUCE ABRAHAM PRESENTATION – BROADBAND/WIRELESS:

City Manager Bill Lewis asked Mr. Bruce Abraham to come forward and give his presentation concerning the broadband/wireless network. Mr. Abraham thanked the Mayor and City Council for their support in order for citizens to have this technology. At this time, Mr. Abraham asked representatives Mr. Paul Belk and Billy Wise to come forward and answer questions as to what the process would be in order for this service to be available. Councilman Prescott questioned if the City would have the potential to sell this service for revenue. Mr. Belk informed that small-medium businesses were going to wireless however, larger businesses are staying with hard wiring therefore; this could make it difficult to generate a lot of revenue for wireless service only. After further discussion, City Manager Bill Lewis informed in order to make this profitable, the City must expand into different areas. He further informed if Council wanted to provide this service, the City might want to consider joining with NGCSU for this project. Mayor McCullough thanked Mr. Abraham for presenting this option to the City and requested that he provide contractor information to the City Manager to look further into our options.

DIRECTION AND SCOPE OF EMPLOYEE BENEFIT ANALYSIS:

City Manager Bill Lewis requested direction from Council on specific benefit analysis that they had requested. He further informed that GMEBS representatives were to present three options for retirement benefits. These options were the Rule of 75 which is an early retirement plan, a thirty year (30) retirement and a 2 percent ten (10) year vesting. After further discussion of other benefits, it was the consensus of the Council to look at each benefit comparison separately. Mr. Lewis informed of three specific dates that the GMEB representatives could meet with Council to discuss the retirement plan options. The date chosen for the work session will be on August 15, 2012 at 9:00 a.m.

GOLDEN AVENUE PROPERTY:

City Manager Bill Lewis requested that City Engineer Ricky Stewart present this information to Council. Mr. Stewart informed Council of the changes that address Council concern with the request that was submitted by Mr. Vic Dover. Most of the property was included in the stream buffer and the City would only be able to utilize approximately one-half (1/2) of the property. The City had asked for other property options and to re-adjust so that the property would not be in the stream buffer and also retain the easement. The City can locate utilities in the stream buffer but, no structures. With the new Council request, structures will be allowed. Councilman Norton also informed that businesses can operate also if utilities are present. After further discussion, Mayor McCullough questioned staff if a follow up with Mr. Dover and Mr. Doug Sherrill was needed. Mr. Stewart stated if this was Council's desire to move in this direction, City Attorney Doug Parks would need to verify legality of moving the property.

WIMPY MILL ROAD PARK – PHASE 1:

City Manager Bill Lewis requested that City Engineer Ricky Stewart present information to Council on the cost of implementing Phase 1 for the Wimpy Mill Road Park. Mr. Stewart informed Council the estimated cost of \$25,200.00 included gravel, boardwalk, wooden deck, picnic tables and landscaping. Councilman Ariemma questioned if anything was going to be done to manicure the banks. Mr. Stewart informed if the banks were cleared, this would encourage fishing which would lead to erosion problems. Councilman Hoffman informed this project was not included in this year's budget and if the project is not postponed until a later time, the cost must be taken from fund balance. After further discussion, Mayor McCullough requested that this item be placed on the August agenda for approval.

WATER AND SEWER BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Councilman Lord informed Council with the recession that we are in and the money the City has invested in the new water plant has made it difficult to meet our debt service. To meet our needs the City must increase revenue or decrease expenses. Councilman Lord further informed he did not feel that the City could charge the citizens anymore for services therefore, he felt other alternatives to decrease expenses must be considered. He stated he was not happy to make a recommendation that would make employees loose their jobs or cut salaries but, he was requesting that Council consider contracting the operations of the water treatment plant. He further requested that City Manager Bill Lewis prepare an RFP for contracting this service. Mayor McCullough informed Council that he was totally against this recommendation. He further informed this would affect five (5) long term employees and the City will not save any money to contract this service. City Attorney Doug Parks informed Council that this type of contract required a lot of monitoring. After further discussion, Mayor McCullough requested that City Manager Bill Lewis research for information concerning privatization of the water plant.

City Manager Bill Lewis informed Council that CASA has requested to place approximately fifty (50) signs around the sidewalks downtown for one day and for a certain amount of hours. This is to represent the kids in foster care. After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Council for the request to be denied.

Work Session was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.