

# **CITY OF DAHLONEGA**

## **WORK SESSION MINUTES September 20, 2012**

The Dahlonega City Council held a Work Session on Thursday, September 20, 2012 at City Hall. Members present were Terry Peters, Ralph Prescott, Gerald Lord, Sam Norton, Bruce Hoffman and Johnny Ariemma. Also present were City Manager Bill Lewis and City Attorney Doug Parks. Mayor Gary McCullough called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Councilman Norton made a motion to amend the agenda in order to move Item #12 – Hiring a part time code enforcement officer to Item #2, seconded by Councilman Prescott. Motion approved by all members present.

### **WATER SOURCE/SUPPLY:**

City Manager Bill Lewis informed Council that last year a RFP was sent to firms for a study proposal for additional water supply/source for the City and Lumpkin County. After evaluations were completed by the water source/supply committee, W.K. Dickson from Augusta was selected. Mr. Lewis requested that City Engineer Ricky Stewart give an overview presentation. Mr. Stewart informed Council that Mr. Trey Wingate with W. K. Dickson's office in Augusta was present to discuss five (5) objectives which are:

1. Population – Current Master Plan
2. Water Loss – Audits
3. Reservoir – Could be More Water Than Showing
4. Source/Supply – Short Term-Long Term
5. Analysis of Findings

City Manager Bill Lewis informed Council that all leaks must be identified and repaired. Mr. Wingate informed that the first step would be a 2012 data and evaluation of an audit on water being used, metered, flow and what's going in and out must be completed. He further informed by March 2013 an audit must be posted and EPD will monitor how the City is managing their water source. It is extremely important that any leaks are identified and repaired to control water loss and revenue. The economic value of water for any City is to define what is being pumped versus what is being sold. After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to add the water source/supply proposal to the October 1, 2012 agenda for approval.

### **PART TIME CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER:**

Councilman Norton recommended that the City hire someone to help with the duties of the existing code enforcement officer, possibly one or two part time employees. Mayor McCullough informed that he had spoke with Ms. Chris Head Planning Director and Mr. Tim Martin Code

Enforcement Officer and was told at this time, they did not need any help unless the parking management plan is adopted. Councilman Prescott recommended that the City move forward with the parking management of the downtown area. The survey showed that parking management is needed. Councilman Norton informed that the sheriff contract funds that were not used have already been appropriated to hire one enforcement officer downtown. Councilman Hoffman informed that the supervisors have said they do not need the extra help, that it is not needed at this time. Councilman Peters questioned if this was added in last year's budget. City Manager Bill Lewis informed that the position that was budgeted last FY was to support the City Engineer/Public Works Director first and code enforcement second however; this position was not filled. Councilman Prescott informed that the parking committee gave four (4) recommendations concerning parking, but the City has not moved forward with these recommendations. Councilman Ariemma informed that he was not convinced that we have a parking problem and feels it would create a bad environment if we marked tires and gave tickets to our tourist. Councilman Norton asked if any other Council members were in favor of hiring a part time code enforcement officer, Councilman Prescott and Councilman Lord were in favor of the part time officer.

#### **WATER PLANT OUTSOURCING:**

City Manager Bill Lewis informed we had individuals present to speak on both sides of the water plant outsourcing however; they are not present to make any recommendations. Councilman Lord introduced Mr. David Wright with Neel-Schaffer who has assisted several cities and counties with their outsourcing decisions. Also present is Mr. Ronnie Lindsey who is a customer and is here to discuss the contracting process. Mr. Wright stated his purpose was to share information only and was not present to convince anyone to or not to outsource. Documentation was distributed for partially or fully privatized information and they were here to share issues, cost factors, managerial and development. Mr. Wright informed that the City must make sure that the regulatory requirements, bonds and other issues are covered with the contractor. Also there is a concern for staff and the City can make it mandatory for the contractor to hire the existing staff, because this is critical where retirement is concerned. Mr. Lindsey informed that current operations may not need to change but it does not hurt to look at it because outsourcing can help with staff upgrade if current staff cannot perform the job efficiently. Councilman Peters questioned if most contracts were short term for an annual renewal and if so, what are the issues at the end of contract if the City does not renew and brings the operations back in house. Mr. Wright informed he would not recommend a ten (10) or fifteen (15) year contract but rather a two (2) year and then a year to year renewal to monitor the contractors performance. Then possibly a five (5) year contract once a transition period was built. Mr. Wright informed that the approach to this type of contracting should be: First step is to determine where the City is today, how system is running, cost and audit of useful life of assets and the system. Second step is to invite vendors to give ideas to help clients make their systems better and discuss the type of work they would do for the City. At this point, the City can stop if they feel there is not enough reason to consider. Third step is to determine if there is enough reason, then find the best contractor and make sure they will be a significant benefit to the City. The cost of step one and two would be approximately \$15,000.00 dollars. Councilman Hoffman questioned if there is no problem, how can the City's cost to operate the plant be reduced. Mr. Wright informed the City would need to have someone come in and see if they have better ideas than what the City is presently doing. The contractor would do an audit and then come back in with an RFP to show the cost savings.

Mayor McCullough introduced Mr. Elmo Richardson is the owner of Elmo Richardson Engineering in Macon and holder of many distinguished awards. Mr. Richardson informed he had worked with many cities and counties and consulted with engineering firms. He further informed he had the opportunity to see the Dahlonega Water Treatment Plant and it was a nice three (3) year old plant which produces approximately 1mg daily in which the City has a bond debt service with a system of only 2,200 customers. Most systems O&M is less than 50% of operating cost and the City's is much higher due to the debt service. Mr. Richardson further informed that most systems are not privatized and operates very efficiently. It is hard to recruit good employees and there are usually problems with environmental issues and preventative maintenance in outsourcing. When you give up your day to day control if there is a problem, the City is still held accountable. When he visited the City plant, he did not see any areas that cost could be cut and the employees have pride in the plant. Councilman Norton questioned if the O&M cost for the City was in line with other cities. Financial Consultant Sabrina Cape informed yes, and there would not be any change whether we were adequately staffed or over staffed. Councilman Lord questioned if the City pumped 4 mg daily could this not be done with one (1) eight (8) hour shift. Mr. Richardson informed no, because there is not enough storage capacity due to tank sizes and the elevation.

City Manager Bill Lewis presented his report on outsourcing and privatization of water plants to the City Council. He asked Council to review and let him know if they had any questions.

Mayor McCullough thanked everyone for their presentations and asked Council to review all the information they received and make decision if the money should be spent for the audit of the water treatment plant in order to consider the outsourcing process.

#### **PAYROLL DISCUSSION:**

Ms. Sabrina Cape Financial Consultant informed Council that staff was recommending that payroll be brought back in house. She further informed that because of the upload process from outsourcing, the procedures are more time consuming for staff than preparing payroll in house. The payroll software interfaces with the general ledger and works very well. As far as penalties for late filings, Ms. Cape informed that current staff is very responsible for payments to be made timely. She further informed that staff had procedures in place to have direct deposit an option by April 2013 and will submit to Council at that time the procedures to implement a bi-weekly payroll. It was the consensus of Council that payroll should come back in house.

#### **SHERIFF CONTRACT:**

Mayor McCullough informed Council that the Sheriff contract for the downtown area had been approved in the 2013 budget therefore; Council needed to discuss renewal of the contract. Councilman Hoffman informed that he had spoken with the Sheriff and Captain Ramsey and the City can adjust the hours and zones of the downtown officer. Also more communication with the officers and the City Manager can take place. For example if someone is out, the City Manager should be notified. Councilman Peters informed that in the past the contract was used in its entirety however, in the past few years the contract has not used all funding available through the contract. Sheriff Jarrard informed that he does not bill the City for entire sum of contract but only for the officers when they are on duty. City Attorney Doug Parks informed Council that Dahlonega and Lumpkin County formed a de-facto consolidation a long time ago so there would be no overlap and the City eliminated the City police department. In order for no duplication we have a unified law enforcement structure. Other cities handle this through LOST instead of a separate contract. Mr. Parks further informed that he had received a letter stating the City owed

the cost per day for housing inmates however, the invoices were never submitted to the City for payment. The Sheriff submitted these invoices to the County Commissioners and a newspaper article was run stating that other cities have similar contracts however, the City Attorney stated upon checking with these other cities, they do not have similar contracts. Mr. Parks requested his staff member Missy Wiggins who is GCIC certified to give a presentation on more accurate numbers concerning the staffing of inmates, including arrest dates, sentencing and only municipal cases. The newspaper article stated the City owed approximately \$300,000.00 dollars and Ms. Wiggins proved if the invoices had been sent the correct cost would have been \$7,245.00. Mr. Parks further informed that the County had submitted an additional contract for the inmate housing and read some of the language which he could not recommend for approval. After further discussion, Mayor McCullough requested that Mr. Parks write a new contract and send to County for review and approval.

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE:**

City Attorney Doug Parks informed that the State created a chain of command concept by which is a certain level of emergency procedures and this document describes these at the City level. There are some changes from prior in the wording in reference to firearms. Mayor McCullough requested this item to be added to the October 1, 2012 agenda for approval.

**EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT BENEFIT DISCUSSION:**

Mayor McCullough informed Council that a recommendation had been made to decrease the multiplier from 2.25% to 2.00% and new hires only would be at 1.8% with a ten (10) year vesting instead of five (5) years. Councilman Ariemma recommended leaving benefits as is for existing employees and change for new hires only. Councilman Peters informed that Council agreed at the retreat to have a comprehensive study to determine the changes needed for insurance, retirement and the lack of employee contribution because the percentage of employee benefits are high. Councilman Hoffman informed that he would agree with decreasing the multiplier to 2.00 % and 1.8% for new hires however, he would like to see a 30 year retirement option in order to balance taking something away and giving something back to the employees. After further discussion, Mayor McCullough informed the items of 2.25 to 2.00%, new hires 1.80% and a 30 year retirement or age 62 and 10 year vesting for new hires be added to the October 1, 2012 agenda for approval.

**ZONING/MASTER PLAN UPDATE:**

City Manager Bill Lewis informed Council that the City and DDA have spent \$120,000.00 on the Downtown Master Plan and have not yet proceeded to incorporate the Master Plan into the Comp Plan. City Attorney Doug Parks informed Council that it will be less expensive to qualify the specific areas for rezoning than rezoning the entire town. This update is needed to stay in the same category and keep regulations in the same Master Plan. After further discussion, Mayor McCullough informed that this item will be added to the October 1, 2012 Council meeting agenda for approval to send a RFP.

**SECURITY FOR EVENTS SERVING ALCOHOL ON CITY PROPERTY/OTHER STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS:**

Councilman Hoffman informed that it had been previously recommended by Councilman Lord that a requirement be added when a special event license is issued. The requirement is when an

event is to be held on City property, where alcohol is being served, the event holder is responsible to have off duty security at the event. Councilman Peters also recommended that a requirement be placed on the special event license that someone twenty-one (21) years of age or older must check I.D.'s. After further discussion, City Attorney Doug Parks informed Council an amendment to the alcohol ordinance will need to be made in order to mandate off duty security however; the requirement for checking I.D.'s can be added to the special event alcohol license application. At this time, City Manager Bill Lewis requested Council recommendations on what type of events should the City allow to be held in Hancock Park. He informed that the City has invested a lot of money in the irrigation system, sod and the maintenance requirements. Councilman Lord recommended that no tents, chairs, tarps or vehicles should be allowed on the grass. Mayor McCullough informed if tents were allowed they would drive stakes in the ground, which could possibly hit the irrigation system. Also discussed was events painting the sidewalks or streets with spray paint. Mr. Lewis requested that the applicant be required to have an insurance bond for any event that is held on City property. After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Council that for any special event on City property that insurance be a requirement, no tents, and no stakes could be driven in to the ground.

#### **ZONING/SIGN ORDINANCE:**

City Attorney Doug Parks informed Council these were only updates to the HPC Ordinance to include no regulating of content. Councilman Peters informed that the City regulations do not cover political content but, only size. Ms. Chris Head Planning Director informed that the updates also included some changes in the banner stipulations which had been discussed prior. Councilman Norton questioned how does this type of update go through the proper procedures to be able for Council to discuss before final decisions are made. He stated that he would like to look at the entire sign ordinance with Mr. Parks and Ms. Head. After further discussion, Mayor McCullough informed that the sign ordinance updates will be added to the October 18, 2012 Work Session for further discussion.

#### **ELIMINATION OF A COUNCIL SEAT:**

Mayor McCullough requested discussion concerning the elimination of a Council seat. There was no discussion brought forward from anyone present.

City Manager Bill Lewis informed Council that the County had contacted the City and informed they no longer wanted to take our recyclables. They further informed that too much trash was being included in the recyclables and too much time was being spent separating. Mr. Lewis recommended that the City no longer furnish bags for the recycle bins therefore the City employees can see what has been put into the containers and can leave at curb if trash is included. Mayor McCullough informed that Gary Osley had spoke with staff about picking up the City recyclables however; there would be no revenue from the recyclables but felt the City should discuss the issue with Mr. Osley again.

The Work Session was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.