**HAHIRA CITY COUNCIL**

**2014 RETREAT**

**AUGUST 8-9, 2014**

**COMMUNITY CENTER**

**HAHIRA, GEORGIA**

Mayor and Council met for a Retreat August 8-9, 2014 at the Community Center in Hahira, Georgia.

**PRESENT:** Mayor Bruce Cain, Mayor Pro Tem Terry Benjamin, Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Barfield, Councilmember Clendenin. City Manager Jonathan Sumner, City Clerk Lisa Mashburn, Fire Chief Dwight Bennett, PW Director Donnie Warren and Police Chief Terry Davis.

City Manager Sumner welcomed everyone to the first retreat in 4 years. He said that we will hear issues from the department heads and that this is not a Council meeting or public hearing. No action will be taken. The purpose of the retreat is to circulate ideas and listen to staff.

City Manager Sumner then went over the Mission and Vision Statements, Values, Goals and SWOT.

City Manager Sumner started with discussion of the Special Revenue Accounts stating that the SPLOST IV and V have been closed out and SPLOST VI having anticipated collection amount of $4,000,300 with collected to date at $2,874,138 which is 72% of original estimate. He then went over the SPLOST VI expenditures stating that the 2004 pumper truck has just been paid off. He said the debt retirement must be spent after all other areas are met and that it will need to be reclassified. SPLOST VII anticipated collection amount is $3,765,000 with 3,062,059 collected to date which is 81% of original estimate. He then went over the SPLOST VII referendum areas. Sumner said that the department heads will bring forth what is needed for Capital Improvement plan for the next 5 years.

City Manager Sumner reviewed the growth concerns of the City with total population up 68.02% from 2000 to 2010.

Chief Davis represented the Police department and reviewed the mission and vision statement. He listed the previous goals of 2008 as purchase new windows based records management system and hire new officer. He stated that both of the goals have been met and that we have a good records management system now. The short term goals of the police department are to purchase a windows based records management system, that the staff continues to receive training with the mental patients as it becomes available and our policy and procedures manual has been review and amended; it is printed and issued. The current short term goal list is to obtain new warrant system, this is now being done through new Lowndes County warrant system which is $2,000 annually. The next item is to replace in-car cameras and radars, some of the current cameras are 15-20 years old. This will be paid out of the 2015 Capital budget. The police department would like to purchase Tasers for the officer’s safety recommended by GIRMA, and to lower work-comp claims. This has been done and the Tasers have been purchased. The police department would like to seek funding to increase starting pay for officers, currently starting pay is $10.00 per hour, which is the lowest in South Georgia. The Chief thanked the Mayor and Council for the 3% COLA raise that was voted on Thursday night. Chief Davis said the two biggest things for his department is the salaries and the building. He said the salaries are the lowest as noted and that officer’s work for a while and then move on to better paying jobs. He also said that they are out of room where they are at. We are currently in a 900 square foot building was built in 1971. He stated that they have limited space for records storage, no room for interviews/interrogations or an area to separate victims from suspects while working crimes. He said that at a minimum we need three times the space we currently occupy. Davis said the long term goals include the ability to obtain mobile data computers for patrol cars, create recruitment plan to hire and retain employees and create citizens academy. Chief Davis said that the police department is currently fully staffed, the traffic division has been created and is working well but that as the case load grows they would need a full time investigator and probation officer. Chief Davis told of the closure of the Southwestern Crime Lab in Moultrie and the closure of Southwestern State Mental Hospital in Thomasville.

Chief Dwight Bennett represented the Fire Department and presented his 5 year plan. He thanked the Mayor and Council for the raises and said that it is hard to retain staff due to the salaries and thanked them for the commitment to the fire department. He stated that at present the Fire department now has funding to staff one firefighter on duty 24 hours a day with a second firefighter on duty for the weekends. With our growing population and calls for service that not having adequate staffing in the evenings and nights is becoming difficult. He stated their goal is to correct this threat and add staff during these times. Chief Bennett stated that Hahira had 7 fire deaths in last 30 years which is over the national average. He stated the ISO in 2000 was 9, 2002 it was 7, 2004 it was 4 and now they are waiting for the results of the July ISO review. Mayor Pro Tem Benjamin pointed out how ISO rating has been reduced in last few years. Councilmember Davis stated that with continued growth in the City in the next 5 years will mean a major impact. Chief Bennett said that he would have to keep up with the growth and keep good coverage. He stated that in 2015 he would like to increase the 24 hour staff coverage and create 3 positions. This would allow 2 firefighters per shit 24-7, and would require an increase of the annual salary line of approximately $125,000.00. The goal for 2016 is the construction of fire station #2 in the area of the Industrial Park and stated that this will minimize the chances of a train affecting our response to the West side of town. This is estimated cost of $130,000.00. He said that he would also like to hire a part time administrative assistant with annual salary of $15,000,000. The goal for 2017 would be to hire a fire prevention officer/firefighter to do fire inspections, plan review and public safety education. For 2018 he would like to create a fulltime Captain Position to carry out daily training for staff and oversee the operations side of the department, this would be approximately $35,000 per year. He said they would also like to purchase training building-3 conex boxes at the cost of approximately $30,000.00. Chief Bennett said that the Fire Department is a professional organization.

PWD Warren thanked the Mayor and Council for the raise and said that we have a lot of growth with ponds on infrastructure. He said that the City has experienced enormous growth in recent years but that Public Works has faced the challenges and has focused on maintaining and improving the existing system. Warren said the biggest challenge at this time is managing the overflow of the ponds. With the increase in rainfall, we have had a continuous overflow in our ponds. We need to find a way to expand the ponds or remove the water. Warren said that we need to come up with a way to get rid of 6 months of water out of the year. He said that we did not get a new UV light and said that to install a new UV light would cost half a million dollars. Warren said that if it does not rain that we are in good shape but that if it rains it overflows and if it rains Warren said that 90% of the time he is out there checking for overflow. Warren said that we currently have three pumps running. Mayor Pro Tem Benjamin stated that 15 areas were identified by Stevenson and Palmer in the past. The Mayor said that we rehabbed the manholes and fixed them but that now we need to fix the lines. Warren noted the inflow & infiltration to find and fix would be budget of approximately $200,000, which would be the Clay pipe on West Main Street and the Clay pipe in the basin that drains to the 122 E Pump station. He stated that the pipes on W Main Street are so old and they have cracks in the lining and that they do not have the rubber gaskets. HE said the solution may be to slip line them. Sumner said that the slip line will fix some of the problems. PW Warren then discussed the Sewer capacity Improvement for short term. The short term is to purchase a new Ultraviolet light system which would cost about $500,000. The city engineer has proposed a site visit which includes a design cost of $35,000.00. Warren said the long term sewer capacity improvements would be to run sewer to the county, sewer to the nursery, sewer to a new LAS or run sewer to the Little River. The Mayor said that people do not want to ask for the money to fix these things until it is a lot of money to fix the problem. He stated that he is glad we are having this retreat so that the new members see what is going on. PWD Warren said the current UV light that we have cost us $6-7,000.00 per year to maintain. If we get the new UVL we can maintain it ourselves. The UV light kills the bacteria so that the overflow can go to the creek. The suggestions for sewer capacity improvements for the long term were discussed. PWD Warren said the pumping of water to the little river seems to be best solution; the gallons per day are limitless but the cost is about 2 million. The next discussion was the roads that need paving. It was listed as Barfield Street, North Hall Street, East Coleman Street, South Nelson Street and Sargent Street with Sargent Street high priority. PWD Warren discussed putting permanent rubber mulch at the parks. Sumner said this would be a SPLOST VII expense and ask Warren to find out the price per ton. This rubber mulch provides a soft surface for the kids and is safer on the playground. It is easy to install and maintain and reduces the growth of mold and fungi. It is heavier than regular mulch and will not float away. It does not attract termites, carpenter ants or other harmful insects. PWD Warren then discussed the recycling center, the city ditches that need improvement and the paving of the Public Works Facility driveway that is dirt. He wants to fix the administration building, put on new roof and fix the floor that is falling. PWD Warren said that in 2012 the Watershed Protection Plan was completed and the WPP requires continual monitoring activities as part of its implementation, required by EPD. In 2014 EPD designated Hahira an MS4 which is the designation requiring higher levels of monitoring for runoff impacts along streams around Hahira. We must submit an MS4 permit in September 2014 at a cost of $40,000. The permit will require inventory activities and other public education events. The annual cost are anticipated at $20-25,000 a general fund operating expense that cannot be paid for with SPLOST funds. The Stormwater Management fee comes from the Federal Government; City of Valdosta has established fees to defray cost and impact to the taxpayer. Infrastructure mapping for the Hahira water and sewer are 15 years out of date, the new MS4 requirements in the new permit will dictate that all stormwater infrastructure in the City must be contained in a GPS file before the end of the 5 year permitting period. The proposed cost of the GPS file will exceed $50,000.00. Warren then discussed the sidewalks that need to be repaired around the City which are mostly due to tree roots. IT was then discussed for new furnishing for the Community Center.

City Manager Sumner then presented his prior goals which included a paperless agenda. He then asked the Mayor and Council how successful is this system? Councilmember Clendenin said that he has a problem with Google Drive. Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Barfield and the Mayor all said they have navigation problems but the google drive is good. The next discussion was the update of the City web site. EZ site has been chosen and once it is all in place we will have a demo period after the September Council meeting so that everyone can test the ease of use and navigation. Sumner then discussed the 2014-2015 short-term goals. Reactivate Downtown Development Authority, Initiate BI-Monthly Newsletter, Coed organization and Adoption. Sumner said the last code was adopted in 1985 and he is working with MCC and it is 80% complete and can be uploaded to web site. He then said he would like to purchase a new city vehicle. The current vehicle is not dependable and he said this would be a capital purchase and can be paid from SPLOST VII funds. The Mayor made a lot of changes to the Subdivision ordinance and he needs to get with Matt Martin P&Z so that he can review and then put in form of an ordinance amendment.

City Manager Sumner said the Administration long term goals are to continue to work with property owners and GDOT on development of Hahira interchange properties, advance plans for redevelopment of downtown buildings and seek opportunities with the Valdosta-Lowndes County Development authority and Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority. HE would like to facilitate strategic planning to establish a comprehensive 5 year plan both internally and externally and form a committee to re-write the Personnel Policy. He would like to revitalize the Odom building, apply for grant to stabilize the building and use for possible commercial development. The City Center was introduced in 2011, JGG Architects produced a Master Plan document for the Railroad Property assuming acquisition of the property and then the project would have four phases. The first phase would be demolition of the warehouse and grassing, development of the Central park from Lawson to Main; perimeter sidewalk and relocation of Caboose and Fire Truck. Phase II would be a new City hall with back lot drainage improvements and develop the City Center.

Councilmember Barfield discussed landscaping options for downtown. He said that he would like to create different types of greenery for the downtown and suggested hanging baskets off of the lamp post. He said that in regards to the tree removal downtown he would like to have a plan to replace with something better be it an ordinance or policy and said that he knows we have safety issues; when we take down a tree we need to define place to put the trees and what will replace the trees. He suggested that we create a Landscape ordinance. He said that we have a tree board and are designated as Tree City USA but that they have no part in the removal of the trees.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 9, 2014.

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Mayor Bruce Cain

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City Clerk Lisa Mashburn