



**Blakely City Council
Minutes**

December 9, 2015

County Theater Building

5:00 P.M.

I) Call To Order, Roll Call, Invocation, Pledge Of Allegiance

The City Council, Mayor Howard, Councilman Hutchins, Councilwoman Wimberly, Councilman Middleton and Councilman Smith were present. Also present were members of the SGRITA Board, The County Chair, June Merritt, Commissioners, Taylor Bridges, Ladon Durham and Charlie Sol. The City Attorney and SGRITA Attorney, Tommy Coleman and Consultant Tom Berry.

II) Administrative Committee Reports

Tom Berry spoke regarding SGRITA. He stated that SGRITA was started to serve the unserved and underserved in South Georgia. He stated that SGRITA needs good leadership to get the project where it needs to be. He gave a brief history of internet and growth in other areas due to good internet service. He informed all in attendance of his opinion and stated that he has good hopes for this project and wants to see it happen. Mr. Berry spoke of the comparison to SGGSA. He spoke of the fact that SGRITA is where it needs to be now but that it can improve and will with the right leadership. There were questions from the County Commission and discussion with Mr. Berry. He stated that SGRITA went started to be wireless with fiber as a backhaul. He also stated that having high speed internet is a good component for Economic Development. The Mayor questioned what Albany had done for SGRITA and why did that partnership end. Mr. Berry explained that Albany revitalized this project and that it would have been dead if it wasn't for Albany. He then stated that Albany did not have a vested interest in SGRITA but that our area does because we live in it. He went on to state that the City already has systems in place to work on this project, such as, Electric, Billing and other resources. He stated that it would take about 1500 residential customers to cover expenses. He spoke of employees needed plus possible contractual services. He felt that 4 employees would be good to start. He spoke of finances and how there would need to be an inflow of funds to help cover some areas until the system gets more customers. He stated that he felt it would take awhile but that he believed it would start showing a profit and return. He was questioned about a timeframe regarding assistance to which he answered that it would be needed right away.

III) City Attorney's Report

The City/SGRITA Attorney spoke regarding the contract pieces. He stated that SGRITA and the City had signed a waiver due to the fact that Mr. Coleman is attorney for both. He spoke of the how the contract would need to be. He stated that he felt a contract would be needed between SGRITA, the City and the County, but also a separate contract between the City and the County. He stated that there was a Resolution that would need to be entered into between the three entities but that the contracts would take a little more time to put together. He informed all parties that he would have the contracts done by January 1st. The County Commission voted to approve the Resolution and \$500,000 budgeted funds toward funding SGRITA. The SGRITA Board voted and approved the Resolution presented by the SGRITA Attorney.

IV) New Items Proposed By Mayor And City Council

A motion was made by Councilman Middleton and seconded by Councilman Hutchins to approve the Resolution regarding SGRITA presented by the City Attorney. The motion carried with Councilman Middleton, Councilman Hutchins and Councilman Smith voting "YEH."

V) Adjournment

A motion was made by Councilman Middleton and seconded by Councilman Hutchins to adjourn the December 9th Special Called City Council Meeting. The motion carried with Councilman Middleton, Councilman Hutchins and Councilman Smith voting "YEH."

Anthony Howard, Mayor