



Blakely City Council Minutes

June 29, 2021, Early County Commission, 6:00 P.M.
Joint Meeting with Early County Commission

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

Let the record show that Mayor Travis Wimbush call the City Meeting to Order. Mayor Travis Wimbush, Councilmember Margaret Davis, Councilmember Ray Jarrett and Councilmember Brad Clenney and Councilmember Al Hutchins were present. Also present was the City Clerk Melinda Crook. The City Attorney Tommy Coleman was not present

Present for the County was Chairman Hank Jester, Commissioner Charlie Sol, Commissioner Ladon Durham and Commissioner Taylor Bridges. Also present was County Administrator Craig Hughes and County Clerk Tandie Merritt. Mike Newberry gave the invocation. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Economic Development

Chairman Jester stated that the County Commission had discussed the Development Authority and the need to have a full time Economic Development employee. He stated that the Commission feels that there is a need for a full time Economic Development employee. He stated that \$50,000 had been placed in the County budget toward the position and requested that the City contribute \$50,000 as well. He then stated that the intergovernmental agreement would need to be reworked and put back in place. Chairman Jester stated that himself or designee, the Mayor or his designee and the Development Authority Chairman or his designee would be the ones to hire the Economic Development employee. Chairman Jester explained how the Development Authority was set up. Commissioner Sol stated that he wanted everything to be fair and suggested that the decision could be made by everyone, and the County appoint the employee.

Mayor Wimbush questioned why a \$5,000 increase was being proposed for the City's contribution. Chairman Jester stated that it was felt that \$100,000 is what it would take for salary and travel expenses. Commissioner Sol stated that he feels the City should have a decision/representation regarding hiring. Mayor Wimbush questioned who the members of the Development Authority. Chairman Jester responded stating that the board members were Mike Newberry, Steve Singletary, Eric Harris, Sam Hattaway, Dee Grist and Web Boyd. The Mayor then questioned the term limits to which Chairman Jester stated the term limit was six years. The Mayor questioned when the Commission would want to take effect due to the City taking Economic Development out of their budget. Chairman Jester stated that he would like someone in the position as soon as possible. The Mayor questioned the Council about review of the contract. Councilmember Hutchins questioned if anything had come to the City or County when Jamey Crozier was in the position. Mike Newberry spoke of several projects that

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came about toward the end of Jamey Crozier in the position. He then spoke of three projects that were being worked on presently. Councilmember Hutchins again addressed the fact that the City would not be putting their next budget into effect until January. Chairperson Bridges asked Mr. Newberry how many of the pending projects were inside the City limits. Mr. Newberry stated that none were inside City limits and then spoke of several projects that had been done that were inside City limits. The Mayor questioned if any proposed figures had been worked up if the City was to amend their budget. Chairman Jester stated that he felt the salary needed to be around what Jamey Crozier was making along with travel expenses and again stated the \$100,000. The Mayor asked if there would be yearly evaluations and if there was displeasure would all three entities be involved with recommendations to the board. There was discussion about verbiage in the agreement and that there was nothing in the previous agreement that stated anything about this subject. The Mayor stated that in the financial position of both entities wouldn't everyone be in agreement to keep the arrangement on finances the same. Chairman Jester stated that due to the Commission decreasing the Chamber funding and the City staying the same than leave the amounts the same for the two entities regarding Economic Develop with the County contributing \$50,000 and the City \$45,000. The Mayor questioned the Council what they might want to see in the agreement. There was discussion between the Commission about the members of the board and City representation on the board and that presently none of the members live within City limits. Chairman Jester stated in closing that anything the Development Authority brought would benefit the City and the County. The Mayor stated that it isn't that the City isn't interested but the current Councilmembers are clear and agreeable for what they are responsible for regarding the agreement. Chairman Jester stated that the County would pay the legal cost to rework an agreement.

Chairman Jester spoke about the duplication of services regarding 911. He stated that they are trying to conserve in their budget and then questioned if the service was consolidated it was questioned if the four individuals the Sheriff currently has would be able to be kept. He spoke of the possibility of picking up one or two additional counties to help funding for more employees. There was discussion about the surrounding counties and which ones might come aboard. The Mayor questioned if it was being looked at if consolidated the employees coming aboard with the City. Councilmember Jarrett stated that currently 911 was short one full time employee and Matt Hromalik stated that they could always use part time employees. There was then discuss if any were eligible for retirement. The Sheriff stated the number of employment years but that they were not looking at retiring. The Mayor asked if any figures had been worked up regarding where expenses currently are to where they would be if consolidated. Chairman Jester stated that there hasn't been. The Mayor stated that the funds would impacted both entities because the salaries are split 50/50. The Mayor stated that ultimately the City doesn't want it thrown in their lap. Chairman Jester stated he was asking for

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that just the number of employees the City felt they could take. Matt Hromalik stated that he was looking at retiring in January which would open up another full-time employee. There was more talk about the number of years of the Sheriff's employees and retirement. The Mayor also stated that no one was looking at cutting anyone's jobs. There was talk about speaking to surrounding counties about joining 911. Everyone agreed to let Councilmember Jarrett discuss with surrounding counties. Councilmember Jarrett explained why he was questioning retirement.

Chairman Jester stated that he wanted to through one more thing out of the City possibly contributing toward the hospital. The Mayor questioned the amount the county was requesting to which Commissioner Durham stated half of \$708,000. Chairman Jester stated that the Commission is open to all suggestions or offers. Commissioner Bridges stated that the Commission funds were given for indigent care. Councilmember Hutchins questioned if this hasn't be asked before why is it be asked of the City now.

Commissioner Sol stated that Gwen Houston had asked if the Commission was willing to help with funding for senior meals due to funds getting low. He also stated the Gwen had asked about the housing portion of the Comprehensive Plan and that she needs a copy of page 27 to which Chairman Jester stated she just needed to call Tandie or Craig Hughes.

The Mayor questioned if the Commission had discussed Public Safety due to Commissioner Haynes mentioning it to him. The Mayor stated since all entities were together there could be discussion about re-consolidation. Commissioner Sol stated that he agrees with re-consolidating and that he knew it would save both entities funds. Councilmember Davis asked the Sheriff his opinion and he stated that he felt it would save funds due to services being duplicated. The Mayor questioned if everyone felt the situation of the breakup could be mended. There was discussion between the Council and the Commission about what is best for the City and County. Commissioner Bridges stated that it would be more of a burden on the City to re-consolidate Public Safety and it is more of what the City needs to talk about and decide than the County. The Mayor stated that the topic was brought to him and no one is trying to make a decision. He stated that since all entities involved are present this is just for dialogue to see if there is interest on all sides. The rest of the Council were asked if they were interested. Councilmember Clenney stated that he felt the best interest of the citizens of a service standpoint. He stated that money could be talked about, but he did not want to make a comment after discussing for minutes. Councilmember Davis stated that she didn't feel it was broke before it was broken apart. Councilmember Jarrett stated that enough is not known about it to comment at this meeting. Councilmember Hutchins did not have any comment.



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There was discussion regarding the agreement on Economic Development. Chairman Jester stated that since an offer had been made and if the City made a decision on funding they would commit then it would be presented to the attorney to draw up an agreement. The Mayor stated he felt that was fair. There was then discussion of taking the previous agreement marking it up with City suggestions and once both sides agree it would be sent to the attorney to draw up. The Mayor was in agreement

Adjournment

A motion was made by Councilmember Hutchins and seconded by Councilmember Davis to adjourn the joint City and County special called meeting. The motion carried unanimously by Councilmembers present

Travis Wimbush