



Blakely City Council Minutes

January 11, 2021, Early County Commission, 6:00 P.M.
Joint Meeting with Early County Commission

I. 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 were present. Councilmember Al Hutchins was not 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, Commissioner Jeffery Haynes and Commissioner Taylor Bridges. Also present by Teleconference was County Attorney William Mills. Also present was County Administrator Craig Hughes and County Clerk Tandie Merritt. Mike Newberry gave the invocation. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Public Safety

County Chairman Jester wanted to state that the County and the City need each other. He wanted to give the Mayor a few minutes to ask questions that the Mayor and Council want to go over. The Mayor started regarding an invoice the City had received for reimbursement for Public Safety for September, October and November of 2018. The Mayor questioned how the amount of the invoice was calculated. Chairman Jester stated that this amount was the monthly amount previously calculated by Public Safety. He stated that the County had agreed to accept this amount instead of the previous amount that was stated at a little over \$400,000. Tandie Merritt explained the monthly invoiced amount sent by Tammy Pfalzgraff to the County and the City in the amount of \$106,319.98 and the total amount due was three months at \$106,319.98 each. The Mayor questioned a contract stating that the City was to pay this amount. Chairman Jester stated that there was a resolution and letter from the City stating that the dissolution wasn't until November 30, 2018. The Mayor again questioned when the last signed contract was. Commission Sol stated that a contract hadn't been signed for several years. Commissioner Haynes then stated that there was an understanding with the previous Mayor to look into merging the City and the County and that the previous Mayor was open to this. Commissioner Haynes then went on to explain that since the Mayor was a Strong Mayor the assumption was that he had final word. Commissioner Haynes further explained that he had warned the County members that the previous Mayor was going to pull out. He further explained what he felt about what had taken place. He continued to explain the pull out of the City and what the County had to do to handle to situation. There was more conversation between the Mayor and the County Commission regarding the contract. Chairman Jester asked that the meeting move forward due to their Attorney, Williams Mills not conceding that there was not a contract. There was further discussion regarding the communication by letter, resolution and contract. The County Attorney again stated that he would not concede there was no contract. Chairman Chairman Jester is going with his County Attorney and asked to move forward. Tandie Merritt explained how the monthly amount was calculated per the Public Safety budget. Chairman Jester asked the Mayor to review this matter with the City Attorney and they would review with their County Attorney. Councilmember Davis questioned why there was previous good working relationship and why were their issues presently. There was then discussion about when this amount had been requested previously. Tandie explained that an audit was requested and what took place during that audit and why it took so long. Commissioner

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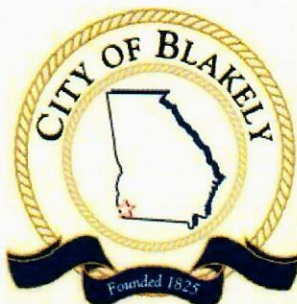
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Haynes then stated that per that audit the amount the City owed was actually \$464,000 and the Commission has decided to only accept the three months of monthly payments for September, October and November. Chairman Jester talked about the funds being put into the City budget. The Mayor asked that it be stated clearly if there were records of what Commissioner Haynes is stating. Chairman Jester stated that the County is stating that there is \$106,000 that was supposed to be paid for three month and was not and that the County put in a bill for the Sheriff's Department and that according to a letter and resolution the withdraw by the City was as of November 30, 2018. Commissioner Durham stated that he was in agreement that there was a contract still in force because the City continued to pay month by month for roughly 20 months. The Mayor asked if it was in the agreement to give 90 days' notice. He then stated that the Commission is assuming that because the City continued to pay, without a written contract, on verbal discussions that this constituted a contract. There was further comments by Commissioner Haynes regarding his opinion on if there was a contract or not to which the Mayor responded. Chairman Jester then stated that this was going no where so he asked that the meeting move to the next item.

III. Economic Development

The Mayor stated that the County submitted a bill regarding an agreement that the County entered into regarding Economic Development with no contract with the City on what they entered into with Craig Hughes. Chairman Jester asked County Attorney Williams Mills to comment. Mr. Mills stated that the agreement he had stated the City was to pay \$40,000 per year but that in the terms the agreement expired December 2018. Mr. Mills stated that it would have expired unless continued by either body and the County does not have anything showing that it had continued. Chairman Jester stated that according to what Mr. Mills stated the County would need to say they were incorrect, at their next meeting. Commissioner Haynes asked if there was an amount that the City included for Economic Development in their 2019 budget. The Mayor stated that the present members were not on that Council. The City Clerk was then questioned if the amount was in the budget to which she stated it was. There was more discussion between the Commission regarding if it was in the budget. The Mayor again asked if there was a current signed agreement. Commission Sol stated that the County puts money in the budget that does not always get used. Commissioner Haynes stated that if monies are put in the budget then there is a reason. There was additional information stated by the County Attorney. Mr. Mills also stated that the issue of contracts needs to be decided and that this can probably not be decided at this time.

The Mayor stated that operations between the City and County are being done on terms that neither board understands and is asking that all agreements be put aside until such time as they can be reviewed and understood by both parties. Mr. Mills questioned if the Mayor had this from the City Attorney to which the Mayor stated that he could get it. The Mayor stated that the County assumes operations are being off of conditions and terms that are not clearly understood by each other. He stated that the City is being billed by the County on items that are not clearly communicated and this is not working in the best interest of the City or County. Chairman Jester stated he wasn't speaking for his Commissioners but it is something they would need to get together and discuss. There was discussion regarding the agreements. Commissioner Haynes stated that he understands the Mayor looking out for the City's best interest but that the citizens could be put in harms way especially with the Fire agreement. The Mayor stated that he didn't state services would stop to which Commissioner Haynes stated that they would have to stop.



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There was further discussion regarding this agreement. Chairman Jester read the Fire Agreement. The Mayor stated that it would be in the best interest that both the City and County review all intergovernmental agreements. The Mayor stated that he doesn't want to stop services he just wants the assumptions to stop and both boards get on the same page of what is in writing. He stated that both entities have a joint meeting to review all agreements so that everyone's understanding is the same. Commissioner Haynes stated that County has been on the short end of the stick and if renegotiated it would not end up that way again. He stated that he feels all the agreements favor the City. Chairman Jester asked that if the City has any questions on the agreements please document and they would be presented to the County Attorney. Commissioner Durham feels that is fair. Commissioner Haynes stated that he feels the County do their do diligence and have a work study done by both parties and then set down and come to an agreement and if one cannot be reached on an agreement then both parties walk away from that one. It was decided that both parties do research and reconvene once complete. New Items Proposed By Mayor And City Council

IV. Public Comments

V. Adjournment

A motion was made by Commissioner Durham and seconded by Commissioner Haynes to adjourn the County portion of the joint meeting. The motion carried unanimously by Commissioners present.

Travis Wimbush, Mayor