

JOINT MEETING

Welcome - Spalding County Commission Chairman Edward Goss convened the joint meeting of the Spalding County Board of Commissioners and the City of Griffin Board of Commissioners July 26, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the Courthouse Annex, Room 108.

In attendance from the County were the following commissioners: Gwen Flowers-Taylor, Bob Gilreath, Eddie Goss, and Eddie Freeman. Also in attendance from the County were Interim County Manager, Tim Whalen; Interim Assistant County Manager Virginia Martin; and County Attorney Jim Fortune. From the City of Griffin were the following commissioners: Doug Hollberg, JoAnn Todd, Dick Morrow, Will Evans, and Ryan McLemore. Also in attendance from the City were Mayor Cynthia Ward and City Attorney Drew Whalen. The minutes were taken by County Executive Secretary, Glinda Robertson.

I. Transfer of City parcels of land west of Old Fairmont High School Building to County Parks & Recreation Department.

This has been in the works for several years. The County wanted the City to transfer to them a couple of lots to go with another project they were planning in the old Fairmont area.

Louis Greene of Spalding County Parks and Recreation stated the master plan called for the county to take the old Fairmont Technical School and convert it into a community center. Along with that the county wanted the two lots that are adjacent to the property on the west side. Additionally, that would serve as a walking trail and green space.

Mr. Morrow asked if this project is moving forward. Mr. Greene stated it's hard to move forward if you don't have the property. Mr. Fortune, the county attorney, is currently working on the title. The property is currently being surveyed. They need that to finalize the deeds. The city has agreed to the transfer of property. The old swimming pool which has previously been covered up is one of the properties. The school system has also agreed to the transfer of school property.

Mr. Fortune stated his understanding was the transfer was going to entail \$1.00 for the deeds. There are no restrictions or covenants to be placed in the deeds.

JoAnn Todd from the City of Griffin read an existing memo that stated the city agreed to sell the property to the county for \$1.00. The City Board of Commissioners previously voted 5-0 to sell the property.

Mr. Fortune stated as soon as the survey is complete, he will get the deed ready to give to the city's attorney to review and have signed by the Board.

Mr. Freeman asked if this includes any buildings. Mayor Ward stated the county was only asking for the two vacant lots. Tim Whalen commented that there are some buildings on the school property.

Ms. Flowers-Taylor stated the county has been approached by two members of the Fairmont Alumni group who want to raise money to help renovate the Fairmont building. Because there have been no transfer of deeds for this property, the county has been unable to move forward.

II. Recreation facilities at City Park – possible acquisition by County Parks & Recreation Department.

According to Mr. Goss this is something that has been talked about over the years. Mayor Ward stated the city has asked the county to consider taking over the swimming pool and golf course.

Mr. Morrow stated that since the county is in the Parks and Recreation business and they are good at it that the county could run these facilities cheaper than the city can. He further commented that the city is good at running trash recycling centers and he believes they can run them cheaper than the county can. His personal belief is that both sides would win on this.

Louis stated there have been several studies done on the Recreation facilities. He had documentation to show what the city is making off the golf course, how many acres it is, etc. He commented that at the end of day, by the time you subtract the profit (if there is a

profit) from the revenues from everything except the pool and the picnic shelters, he believes it will be around \$721,000 the county will need to generate from user fees and taxes. He believes this is pretty close to what the city is spending. He stated this is a little over a million dollar project a year. There is some revenue coming in from the golf course; however, it still needs to bring in more revenue.

Mr. Morrow stated if you add up City Park, the pool and the golf course, the net after income, the city's cost is \$647,560. He stated the number by Mr. Greene is a good estimate.

Mr. Freeman stated he feels like the county needs the same lease the city has in order to maintain it.

It was stated that part of this property is free and clear. The city actually bought the property to the west side of the park. Part of the golf course and the main part of the park including the Recreation Department and the playground area is all under the Camp Northen Conveyance. There is a restriction for the ability of anyone to be able to sell this part.

Ms. Todd stated the city could lease this part to the county for \$1.00. Mr. Morrow added they could make the lease for 100 years. Mr. Freeman believes the county should have the conveyance just as the city did. Mr. Morrow asked if legally this was possible.

Drew Whalen stated he did not think this was possible without going back through the legislature and get a bill through to transfer this property. He further stated this was given to the city in trust to be used for recreational purposes with a clause which prevents the sell of the property without going through a referendum which has to have 2/3 of a majority.

Mr. Morrow asked what difference it makes whether or not the county has the conveyance. Mr. Freeman stated it looks simple now, however if another Board comes in and wants to break the lease, the county will be right back in the same boat before they even take it.

Ms. Todd stated the City is operating under agreements that previous Boards made in the 80's and 90's and they still honor those commitments whether they were good or bad. Ms. Todd asked Mr. Greene what income he has coming in to offset some of the expenses in operating all the parks. He stated there is very little income. There are fees from the picnic shelters, adult softball and basketball, and football for kids. The soccer association does not pay anything because they are running the program which saves the county from hiring staff, buying uniforms, etc. It's a tradeoff. Mr. Greene stated there is very little money to be made in Parks and Recreation.

Ms. Todd stated it's an amenity for the citizens of the community. It has a lot more value than the price tag. Mr. Freeman stated it's a service the tax payers have paid for. Ms. Todd stated that the county has one of the more superior Parks and Recreation Departments in the state. She further stated that the citizens of this community do not want to loose the golf course or the swimming pool.

Mr. Gilreath asked if the county would be limited as to what they could do with the property if this comes about. Ms. Todd stated the golf course would have to remain as such. She stated the swimming pool property could possibly be leased if the county could build another swimming pool. It was stated by Mr. Gilreath and confirmed by Ms. Todd that a portion of the property could never actually belong to the county since it does not belong to the city. Mr. Gilreath asked for a map showing exactly what the city owns. The city stated they would provide Mr. Gilreath with a map.

Mr. Freeman stated the gold course is just not a money making project. He asked if the city would be willing to subsidize part of the deal.

Ms. Flowers-Taylor stated if she understands correctly the only restrictions on the land grant for the city park (the portion in the grant) is that the park be used for recreation. She further stated this is park land in the center of Griffin; Spalding County government does parks and recreation better than the City of Griffin; so, she asks why would the county turn down free land. She does not want to mix this up with the solid waste issue. She believes they should be treated as two different issues.

Ms. Todd stated the city gave up an impact fee so as to support the county's impact fee. She asked if part of the impact fee was part of recreation and didn't the county renovate the gym at City Park under the impact fees that were charged to builders. Mr. Greene stated that the only impact fee money the county received that they could spend was for the

playground at Airport Rd. and Thomaston Mill Village Playground. The other projects have not collected enough money to move forward. This is only for capital improvement.

Ms. Flowers-Taylor stated this is beautiful park land that needs to be used in the best way possible. She asked the county attorneys if there is a part of the LOST negotiation that covers the services of Park and Recreation. It was stated that it's based on population. It states the county will operate the active Recreation programs county wide and the city will only have passive parks. Ms. Flowers-Taylor asked the attorneys to look into this.

Ms. Flowers-Taylor went on to say she does not see the county making money but believes this is an investment well worth looking at.

Mr. Morrow stated that the city's budget the coming year shows another big drop in income at the golf course because of the recession. Ms. Flowers-Taylor asked if the city had ever made money on the golf course. Ms. Todd stated she does not know that they have.

Ms. Todd stated she believes that taxpayers need to have something returned to them and that is recreation in one way or another. She commented that fees at the golf course could probably be increased. She further stated the city is doing a financial audit of the golf course now. They are going to be adding alcohol at the golf course. This should help the revenue.

This is an 18-hole golf course. Mr. Gilreath asked if it could be changed to a 9-hole golf course. It was stated it could be changed if the county wanted to.

Ms. Flowers-Taylor stated people she knows that play golf at this location say the course is not good and the grass is bad. She believes at some point you just have to practice acceptance. She would rather do 9-holes beautifully than to have 18-holes that do not look good.

Mr. Gilreath stated the Spalding County Board of Commissioners need to know exactly how many acres the golf course is, how much it cost the city to maintain and operate it, and what the county can do with it if they take it over.

Mr. Morrow stated the city brought a copy of their budget they can share with the county. He further stated that the City Park this year is going to cost the city \$273,020. The pool is going to cost \$63,370. The golf course will cost \$311,170. That is a total cost to the city of \$647,560. These are projected costs. He also has the 2009 costs. Mr. Morrow believes the county is looking at somewhere around \$700,000 net cost.

Mr. Gilreath stated he would love to have the golf course however, if it puts a strain on the taxpayers of Spalding County he does not want to do it. Mr. Gilreath asked Mr. Greene how many more employees he would need to take on this project. Mr. Greene stated he would probably need three employees or inmates for the park, about three for the golf course, and about three for the pool. He stated some of them would be part-time.

Ms. Flowers-Taylor asked about the people that keep up the City Park presently. She asked if the operating amount includes salaries and benefits for the individuals that cut grass and maintenance. Mr. Morrow gave the following figures for the pool:

Personnel services and benefits - \$31,350

Contracted Services - \$6,790

Supplies - \$11,300

Departmental Charges which include insurance - \$13,930

There was \$60,000 for repairs spent on the pool two years ago. This was a mandated change. Mr. Greene stated pools have a life time. These are repairs that the county had recommended. He commented that sooner or later the pool is going to cost for upkeep.

Mr. Gilreath stated since the city has owned and operated the golf course for a number of years, they should have some idea of what it would take to make it a more profitable venture. He asked if any members of the city board have any ideas on this.

Ms. Todd stated the city's fees are too low. They should probably increase the per game fee. The city is currently charging \$12 to \$14 less than other golf courses. Mr. Smith stated they have tried to keep the prices in line with courses in the area.

Mr. Morrow felt like right now they probably cannot raise fees because of the recession but maybe two or three years from now that could be considered.

Mr. Gilreath stated that in a conversation with Mr. Hollberg, Mr. Hollberg told him that the city would give the county several thousands of LOST tax dollars if they did this. Mr. Gilreath asked if they county could depend on this. The other City Board members were not in agreement with this.

Ms. Flowers-Taylor asked about the city's commitment to help with taking care of the pocket park in the area of cutting and watering grass, providing electricity and other maintenance. The city acknowledged they were still going to do this.

Ms. Virginia Martin stated the county needs some guidance from the city as to who is going to take care of the administration of this park. Ms. Ward stated it could probably be handled through the Main Street Program.

III. Discussion of City managing Solid Waste services of County.

Mr. Gilreath stated the county already knows the City will make money off of solid waste because the city is already set up to do it, however, the county doesn't know if they can break even on the golf course.

Mr. Morrow stated that in the county budget, the five solid waste recycling centers cost slightly more than a million dollars this year to operate. Tim Whalen commented it is \$924,000. Mr. Morrow further stated that the county's solid waste business is costing a little under a million dollars now. The city's best estimate is they can run it for \$801,000 in loss. They will sell recyclables. The city believes they can run solid waste more efficiently than the county can.

Mr. Gilreath asked if the city would keep the locations where they are currently. Mr. Morrow stated they probably would. Kenny Smith stated if the city takes it over it will be their property and they will do what they are going to do with it.

Mr. Freeman stated the citizens will expect those centers to remain where they are. Mr. Gilreath stated the city would just be getting the business, not the property the business is on. Mr. Morrow stated the location at Carver Road could be consolidated a half mile down the road to the city's transfer station. He said they would make efficiencies but not drastic changes. His believes the city can save money running solid waste and the county can save money and do a better job with Parks and Recreation.

Ms. Flowers-Taylor stated that if the city took on solid waste and the county took on the park, the county would only be incurring a \$750,000 debt instead of a million dollar debt.

Mr. Goss asked if the city takes over the solid waste, what the city anticipates the county residents will be charged. Mr. Morrow stated he didn't think they would charge anything. Mr. Smith also stated he did not figure a charge. Mr. Gilreath asked if the city would have it placed in the agreement that they would not charge the county residents. Doug Hollberg stated that other counties around charge a small fee. There was a discussion as to how charging could possibly work.

Mr. Morrow stated if you start charging county residents to drop off their trash, they will throw it out on the road. The commissioners all agree residents should be encouraged to recycle. Mr. Morrow commented he could not support a charge for the county residents to dump their trash.

Ms. Flowers-Taylor stated that it sounds like the county does not have a problem with the city running the recycling centers; and it sounds like the city does not have any concerns about the county taking over the park areas; instead of each entity trying to micro manage the other, it would make more sense if the city has a proposal regarding how they would run the solid waste/recycling areas and the county could come up with a proposal as to how the parks should be run. These proposals do not have to be adhered to, however they could be used as guidelines. The legal people can then figure out how it can be done.

Mr. Freeman stated he can understand the city's position on wanting to take this over, however the county represents people in the city and county. He knows this is going to be of grave concern to citizens of Spalding County. They don't want another bill from the City of Griffin at some point. It was stated there are still a lot of details to be worked out. The decisions have to be well thought out.

IV. Other Discussion

Mr. Morrow stated that last week at the Airport Advisory Board meeting it was discussed that a gentleman went to the FAA with a complaint saying that the airport was in violation of the FAA chartering grants at the airport due to the Kiwanis Club not paying fair rent. He claimed they have been paying \$1.00 a year for airport property. Mr. Mohl told the FAA that was not true because that was settled years ago and the Kiwanis pay a ground lease just like anyone else. They pay a daily rate for the fairground property when it's being used. However, there are two leases in existence which are not fair market rates and violate the FAA rules. The first one is the Sheriff's helicopter hangar. They are paying \$1.00 per year. The FAA says that is a violation of the FAA rules. The other one is for the airport walking track which sits on airport property paid. The airport walking track is in violation of the FAA rules.

Mr. Gilreath asked if Mr. Morrow was asking for those sites to be closed down. Mr. Morrow stated this was not the case, he was simply stating what the FAA is saying. Mr. Morrow commented that if the hangar for the Sheriff were to pay a ground lease equal to the other hangars at fair market rate, it would be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$30,000 to \$34,000 a year annual rent to meet FAA requirements.

If the airport working track were to pay a fair market rate, that rate would be somewhere around \$84,000 a year paid to the airport to meet the rules of the FAA.

Mr. Gilreath stated it might be best if the county just closes down the walking track and gives it back to the city and move the Sheriff. Mr. Morrow stated they need to sit down together and figure out a way to deal with this.

To satisfy the FAA rules, it would be in the neighborhood of \$120,000. These monies would go to the airport fund which would cut the loss at the airport considerably which would take less subsidy.

Mr. Gilreath again stated it would be best to move the Sheriff out of that building and rent it out and give the walking track back to the city. Mr. Morrow stated he did not think this was realistic.

Mr. Morrow stated there have been no sit down meetings as of yet with the FAA to try and negotiate this. They wanted to tell the county first.

Robert Mohl from the airport was present to address this issue. He stated the grant assurances say that you can't have discriminatory practices such as this where people pay different amounts, such as municipalities. The FAA is saying these two leases must be terminated; otherwise, come February or March when the airport asks for next year's grants, the grants will be in jeopardy.

According to Mr. Mohl, the FAA has advised us of these violations as a courtesy. There has not been a formal investigation as of yet. Mr. Gilreath asked does this mean the airport is in violation and not the county. Mr. Mohl stated yes, the airport is in violation. The Board members quickly pointed out that the city and county jointly owns the airport.

Ms. Flowers-Taylor asked if the county attorney could get back with the Board as to where the county stands with this issue. Mr. Mohl stated there is a contact person with GDOT that can handle any questions the Board members might have.

Mr. Gilreath wanted to know the name of the individual who went to the FAA. Mr. Morrow would not say without going into closed session. Mr. Gilreath asked Mr. Mohl for the name. He too said he would only give the name in closed session. Mr. Gilreath wants to go and speak with the gentleman. Mr. Gilreath stated he would find out his name by tomorrow.

V. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Chairman

County Clerk

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