

Columbia County Board of County Commissioners
JOINT MEETING
February 23, 2010

The Columbia County Board of County Commissioners and the Lake City Council met in a scheduled joint meeting in the conference room at City Hall at 7:00 p.m.

IN ATTENDANCE:

County Commissioners Present: Stephen Bailey, Ronald Williams, Scarlet Frisina, and Jody Dupree.

City Council Members Present: Jake Hill, Melinda Moses, Eugene Jefferson, Mayor Stephen Witt.

Absent: Commissioner Dewey Weaver and
Councilman George Ward

Others for the County Commission: County Manager Dale Williams
County Attorney Marlin Feagle
Asst. County Manager Lisa Roberts
Deputy Clerk Sandy Markham

Others for the City Council: Attorney Herbert Darby
City Manager Wendell Johnson
City Clerk Audrey Sikes

ORDER

The meeting was called to order. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and prayer followed. Clerks for the City and the County took roll.

AGENDA

Chairman Williams asked that the issue of Utility Board voting be added to the agenda. With that addition, the agenda was accepted as published.

PRESENTATION

Columbia High School Principal Terry Huddleston gave a presentation: *Logistics of Supply Chain Management and Entrepreneurship Academy Economic Impact*. He discussed Columbia High School's efforts to prepare students for work in this industry. He shared a brief video highlighting job opportunities in the area of logistics. He asked everyone to do their part to prepare for new industry in this community.

REGIONAL UTILITY

Commissioner Dupree said that since he became a commissioner, he has been researching the issue of a regional utility. He said that he has found where a significant amount of

documentation has been shared between the City and the County on the subject. He said what he has not found is where meetings took place to indulge in the matter for the purpose of reaching a final resolution.

Commissioner Dupree explained that the Board of County Commissioners has directed the Utility Committee to consider utility expansion. He said that he believes that part of this process should be reaching a resolution as to whether a regional utility is possible. He asked if the City has any interest in meeting to discuss the possibilities of a regional utility.

Mayor Witt said that during his term, the issue has been talked about “back and forth,” and he’s heard the term “regional utility” used a lot, but never seen an actual plan. He said that he’d like to see the pros and cons of a regional utility. He said that he believes the dialog should begin at the City and County Utility Meetings, or possibly schedule a joint utility committee meeting.

Chairman Williams recalled there being a plan, but said the plan got bogged down and never resurfaced. He said that utilities determine Columbia County’s future, and he would like to see the two bodies work together on utilities. He said if that is not possible, the County will press forward on its own, because the County could not continue “treading water” with this approximately 4 year old issue. He suggested that before a meeting takes place that the City and the County should both generate a list of questions that needs to be asked, and that the engineers, directors, attorneys, etc. should all be in attendance to help answer these questions.

Councilman Hill and Councilman Jefferson agreed that everyone should work together to consider a regional utility and to reach a resolution one way or the other.

Commissioner Bailey said that Commissioner Weaver and Councilman Ward had extensive discussions on the topic. He said that he’d like to learn from them where the discussions and planning fell apart.

Commissioner Dupree said that he isn’t concerned as much with where the planning fell apart as he is with where the County is today and how they could move forward. He said to revisit the problems of the past will only be a step backwards.

Several agreed that this endeavor would likely involve bringing in professionals who are experts in the area of regional utilities to give directives and to help determine whether a regional utility would be feasible.

MOTION by Commissioner Frisina to appoint Commissioner Dupree, County Manager Williams and Attorney Feagle to meet with the City’s designees to begin discussions relating to a regional utility. Second by Commissioner Bailey. The motion carried unanimously.

MOTION by Councilwoman Moses to appoint Councilman Ward, City Manager Johnson and Attorney Darby to meet with County designees to begin discussions relating to a regional utility.

CITY of LAKE CITY UTILITY BOARD – VOTING MEMBERS

Commissioner Bailey and Commissioner Dupree serve on the City Utility Committee. Commissioner Dupree voiced that with the current structure of that committee that it makes it very difficult for the constituents in the county to have an effective voice. He asked if the City would entertain the idea of restructuring the committee so that only the three council members and two commissioners are actually the only voting members of that committee. The Mayor said that this would be taken up at the City Council or City Utility Meeting.

JUNKYARD on NORTH MARION AVENUE

Chairman Williams shared pictures of a junkyard that he has concern with located at Long Street, Wilson Street and Marion Street. Chairman Williams said that the junkyard is located in his district, but is also within the city limits. He said that he is receiving daily complaints regarding the appearance, smell, noise, etc. Chairman Williams said that he understands through city employee Larry Lee that the junkyard is zoned industrial, and that when the business opened, it was supposed to bring in “pre-cut” metal to be loaded and shipped. He said the business is now bringing in the metal and cutting it on sight. He said that when they bring in the acid metal from PCS and cut it that the smell in the community is almost unbearable. Chairman Williams said that the opaque fence intended to conceal the operation is not working since the metal is now stacked approximately 30” high. He noted there are also repairs that need to be made to the damaged fence. Commissioner Williams advised that the heavy trucks loaded with metal are traveling down Wilson and Long Street and are destroying the streets, which were not designed for that type of traffic. He said this junkyard is a very large eyesore for historic downtown district. He asked the City to look into the matter.

The City Council is aware of the problem and will send Code Enforcement to the junkyard this week to address concerns.

ENFORCEMENT OF 2 HOUR PARKING DOWNTOWN

Chairman Williams said there continues to be a problem with enforcement of the 2 hour parking rule in the downtown area. He asked that the City hire or appoint someone to enforce the parking. City Manager Johnson replied that he would talk with the Police Chief regarding the matter, but said he hasn’t seen an ordinance that prescribes the enforcement procedure. Attorney Darby will do research to determine if an ordinance exists.

Commissioner Williams said that part of the “deal” for the county to remain in the downtown area was that the City would provide for parking. He said that over the years, there has always been someone to enforce parking.

EMS CONSULTANT – Request for Proposal

City Manager Johnson said that the RFP will be put together in the next few days and will be forwarded to the county for their approval. He asked that appointments be made to the Selection Committee, which will be established to select a firm to conduct the EMS study. His suggestion was that the committee be made up of six members.

The Chair appointed Commissioner Dupree and County Manager Williams to serve on the committee. The Board will appoint a citizen at the next Board meeting.

The City will make their appointments at their next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Elizabeth Allen of North Marion Avenue agreed with Commissioner Williams that the junkyard issue needs to be corrected. She asked suggested the cleanup of a residence located across from Target in the 5-points area. She said that they have “tons” of junk cars in the yard. She said it is also a terrible eyesore. The Commissioner said that he would go take a look at the place.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

ATTEST:

P. DeWitt Cason
Clerk of Circuit Courts

Board of Commissioners
Chairman Ronald Williams