

November Minutes  
Mayor and Council Work Session  
Commerce City Hall  
27 Sycamore Street  
November 7, 2005  
6:00 P.M.

The regularly scheduled work session of the Mayor and Council was held on Monday, November 7, 2005 at 6:00 P.M. in the City Hall Conference Room, 27 Sycamore Street. Mayor Charles Hardy called the work session to order and City Clerk Shirley Willis called the roll. Those in attendance were Mayor Charles Hardy, Mayor Pro Tem Archie Chaney, Council members Riley Harris, Mark Fitzpatrick, Bob Sosebee, Richard Massey and Donald Wilson, City Manager Clarence Bryant, Finance Director Steve McKown, one (1) member of the press and approximately seven (7) citizens.

Mayor Charles Hardy welcomed everyone to the meeting and especially the MEAG representatives Walter West and John Giles.

1. MEAG's Community Assessment Program presented by Walter West from MEAG.

City Manager Clarence Bryant said that Mr. Tom Berry, retired city manager of Thomasville was working with cities and MEAG and had put together a Community Assessment Program. The program created a citizen participation and involvement in the city. Mr. Bryant said it sounded like a super program and was a good plan to involve the public. He said the Mayor and Council worked together very well and did a five-year plan at the city's retreat every two years. However, the citizenry was not involved in those plans. He stated that Mr. West from MEAG would tell the group about the plan.

Mr. Walter West explained that Mr. Berry worked for several cities and was unable to participate in the meeting on November 7, 2005. He said each program was customized on each city's requirement. Mr. West stated there was a great need to get input from citizens. The program would work with the cities on different areas and interviews would be conducted on an individual basis.

City Manager Clarence Bryant asked Mr. West who would conduct the interviews. Mr. West said Mr. Berry would conduct the interviews and notes would be taken. The notes would be destroyed because of a confidential nature. A mathematical calculation of the output would be finalized.

According to Mr. West the City of Commerce should come up with a committee to participate in the program.

Mayor Pro Tem Archie Chaney said he was at the meeting and it was a good reason to get the community involved. Councilman Donald Wilson asked about the \$118.00 per hour and how many people would be there. Mr. West said there would also be an administrative person in attendance for a second set of eyes and ears.

Councilman Bob Sosebee said too was in the meeting. The City of Cordele was one of the first cities to do it. Councilman Sosebee said citizens would say things to someone else that they would not say to any councilman. The program results could be a retreat item.

Mayor Charles Hardy asked when the program could start. Mr. West said that was a City of Commerce decision. If the program was started now the results could be back by February for the retreat. Councilman Sosebee said the interviews would involve business owners, people on the street, plant managers, etc. Mayor Pro Tem Archie said while he has been on the campaign trail he heard that the citizens would like to be involved.

Councilman Donald Wilson asked if there was anyone in Commerce who could do the interviews. Councilman Bob Sosebee said no. The person needed to be someone that did not know anyone in Commerce. He said Mr. Berry was a very professional individual to do that job.

City Manager Clarence Bryant asked Mr. West if they were looking for a subcommittee from the council. Mr. West said yes. Mr. Bryant said the mayor could appoint a subcommittee.

## 2. Natural Gas Cost

City Manager Clarence Bryant said he wanted to talk about what the City of Commerce was facing on the cost of natural gas. He said that fifteen (15) years ago the margin was flexible. The margin is now fixed and is \$3.25. This month the cost billed out on the gas is \$20.38/mcf. The cost of the gas is \$17.13 that the City of Commerce is paying. The projection for four months of billing is over one million dollars per billing from MGAG.

According to Mr. Bryant, if the City of Commerce could stand it (would know when the financial statement for October is issued) in February the margin could possibly be lowered by \$.75.

The City of Commerce cannot cut off because the gas bill isn't paid. We will have to work with customers to pay over a period of time throughout the year. If arrangements are made the customer would not get cut off. The customers that do not make arrangements or do not follow through with the arrangement will be cut off.

Councilman Donald Wilson asked if the budget billing was working. Mr. Bryant said if budget billing was in place people would be broke and going to the bank to borrow funds to pay their bills. He explained that the City would look at what the customer paid one or two years ago during the same month and let the customer pay that amount and work with them on the remainder.

Mr. Bryant said that gas was coming down but it would still be in the \$17.00 range; not the \$12.00 and \$7.00 range that we previously enjoyed. The blame continues to be placed on the hurricanes. Mr. Bryant said the City of Commerce would see a lot longer interruptible period this winter. The interruptible customers could be held to contract allotment only and should that happen it would cost the City of Commerce a lot of money.

Mr. Bryant updated the council on the gas relocation. He said Phase I was completed; however Phase II was that the City kept repairing the lines. A contractor cut a hole in the new 8" main and gas blew for approximately six (6) hours. Gas Superintendent Jim Eubanks estimated the amount of gas and labor cost to repair the line could be \$20,000 to \$30,000. It was a contractor error and they would get the bill.

### 3. Library Property Acquisition

City Manager Clarence Bryant said the paperwork on one of the property acquisitions had been turned over to Attorney John Stell to schedule a closing. The other property owner was negotiating with the city on her property. According to Mr. Bryant SPLOST funds # 5 included 4% for library funds. The City of Commerce had received its first check for those funds. Mr. Bryant said the City of Commerce would borrow the money and repay the funds with the SPLOST revenue. He advised Finance Director Steve McKown to go ahead and get the paperwork from the bank for execution at the November council meeting.

### 4. Alcoholic Beverage Ordinance

City Manager Clarence Bryant passed out a draft of the ordinance to Mayor Charles Hardy, Councilmen Bob Sosebee and Archie Chaney, committee members. According to Mr. Bryant a meeting would be held this week. Attorney John Stell had completed his review of the draft.

Mr. Bryant said that the City of Commerce had separate ordinances for consumption on the premises and package sales. This ordinance would combine the two.

### 5. Planning Commission Hearing Items

(a) Final Plat for Carrington Place Subdivision was approved by the Planning Commission. (Information Only – No action necessary)

(b) Donald Wilson's request for rezoning at 93 Georgia Avenue from C-2 to R-3.

The Planning Commission recommended rezoning the property from C-2 to R-1 and not R-3. Councilman Bob Sosebee asked about the lot size compliance for R-1. City Clerk Shirley Willis stated that the lot size was non-conforming in any residential zone. The

Planning Commission looked at the surrounding zoning and made the decision to rezone to R-1. All residential zones surrounded the property.

- (c) Scott and Sheila Mather's request for annexation at 8601 Jefferson Road from R-1 in the county to R-1 in the City.

The recommendation of the Planning Commission was to approve the zoning for annexation to R-1.

#### 6. Condemnation Hearing on five (5) properties held today, November 7, 2005

City Manager, Clarence Bryant said that Police Chief John Gaissert held the hearing on properties located at 380 Victoria Street, 314 Cedar Drive, 103 Cross Place, another location on Cedar Drive and a mobile home and lot on MLK, Jr., Drive. The second location on Cedar Drive was under construction for remodeling and they were given 180 days to finish.

According to Mr. Bryant the Police Chief would write a letter giving ten (10) days to comply. Councilman Donald Wilson asked about Hickory Street and Mr. Bryant did not have that on the list of hearings. Councilman Richard Massey asked about the building with the leaning wall. Mr. Bryant said that one was being processed.

Mr. Bryant said on 380 Victoria Street, 314 Cedar Drive and 103 Cross Place the owners had already been given the sixty (60) days notice. The matter would be brought back to council for a low bid to demolish those properties.

#### 7. Swimming Pool Renovations

City Manager Clarence Bryant said the City of Commerce had taken the proposal prepared by Mr. Mahaffey and sent it out for bids to repair the swimming pool. The walls would be redone and the deep end of the pool would be raised. There were twenty-two (22) contractors that picked up the plans and none of them returned a bid. The City of Commerce was in limbo as to the next action to get the pool renovated/repared.

- 8. Activity Reports would be included with the agenda package because they had not been received as of the work session.
- 9. Financial Updates – The October Financial Statement had not been prepared but would be included in the agenda package.

City Manager Clarence Bryant said that was all he had.

Mayor Charles Hardy reported that the County had sent a letter regarding the reopening of HB 489 and a meeting was scheduled for November 18, at 9:00 A.M. to renegotiate the contracts. The meeting would be held at the Gordon Street Center.

Mayor Charles Hardy said the cities did not want to renegotiate the contracts and would push for the typo corrections sent to DCA. The cities did want to renegotiate the map because the original map could not be found in the County. Mayor Hardy said the decision of the cities was to renegotiate the map and just fix the errors that DCA found in the contracts and leave them as they were.

Councilman Donald Wilson said he gave Mr. Bryant the credit for the flashing light at Highway 441 and the Bypass at the Ila Road. Mr. Bryant said the letter was written one and one-half years ago and he did not understand why it took so long.

Councilman Bob Sosebee talked about the traffic on Highways 441 and 59 being backed up past the State Farm Building on a daily basis. Councilman Sosebee said the timing at the light needed to be readjusted based upon the additional traffic. He said that some days the backup began at 3:30 P.M.

City Manager Clarence Bryant said the Highway 59 timer only allowed seven to ten vehicles to pass through before it changed. He said DOT needed to study the timer because out the Homer Road the traffic needed more time to make the light. Mr. Bryant said a request of DOT for a study would be made.

Councilman Donald Wilson mentioned that the cross ties finally fell in the road across from City Tire. Mr. Bryant said one fell down and the city would attempt to remove it, but if it was fastened to the others or anything in the bank it could not be removed.

Councilman Richard Massey made a motion, seconded by Councilman Mark Fitzpatrick to adjourn the work session.

The vote was unanimous.

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Charles L. Hardy, Jr. Mayor

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Shirley Willis, City Clerk

City Manager Clarence Bryant reported that Tricia Massey, Interim DDA Director, had notified the City that the Christmas Parade would be December 4<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 P.M. Councilman Bob Sosebee asked who needed to write the letter to DOT for the route approval and Mr. Bryant said the DDA should sent the letter.