

UNION CITY
CALLED COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2013
7:30 A.M.

Present: Mayor Ralph Moore, Councilmembers Shirley Jackson, Brian Jones, Angelette Mealing and Vince Williams, Interim City Manager Sonja Fillingame, City Clerk Jacqueline R. Cossey

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ralph Moore.

1. Council to discuss the 2013 projected budget changes.

Comptroller Tarsha Calloway addressed the Mayor and Council and stated that she wanted to begin with the Corrections Fund, which was the most difficult fund. She turned the Council's attention to a spreadsheet which consisted of a scenario that included a reduction of fifteen positions in corrections' staff. She added that if the Council follows her recommendation with this reduction; it would place the City back in the black for the remainder of this fiscal year, however it will still pose a problem for the next fiscal year if nothing changes.

Councilmember Mealing asked if we had more staff than inmates.

Mrs. Calloway stated that at this time we do. She then stated that these reductions were recommended by Chief Mansch as the minimum staff that we could operate with for the remainder of the year.

Mrs. Fillingame stated that this is based on our inmate population which is averaging around thirty and if that number continues to decrease, there may be additional positions that we will have to address as well.

Councilmember Mealing asked if the City had exhausted all of its avenues with regard to reaching out to different jurisdictions to try to get more inmates. She then added that we are bleeding and she would not be in support of trying to save the jail.

Jail Chief John Mansch stated that they have done everything conceivably possible to reach out to every jurisdiction within a 100 mile radius and we are finding situations where judges are just not locking inmates up. He added that the City of Fairburn is sending their inmates to Pelham, Georgia to save \$20.00 per day and it is probably costing more to get the inmates there with regards to savings. Chief Mansch stated that Fayette County reached out to him the other day and they currently have fifty beds before their capacity so they are doing long range planning in terms of what is available should they reach that crisis stage, but currently they do not have a need. He continued stating that he is hearing absolutely nothing from Fulton County or from Judge Shoob regarding the federal consent order.

Mrs. Calloway stated that the recommendation for this particular fund is to move forward with the reduction in force for the remainder of the fiscal year, but we will have to revisit this very soon to determine what we are going to do long term.

At this time Mayor Moore asked Councilmember Jackson if the Jail Authority was aware of this situation.

Councilmember Jackson stated that the Jail Authority is aware of the situation and they are very concerned about it. She added that they have done everything possible. She further added that she has concerns even if the facility closes because there will still be a cost associated with it. Councilmember Jackson stated that she and the Jail Authority are concerned about how we can sell something that we cannot show a profit on. She added that it is not as if the Jail Authority is not doing everything that they can, but you can only do so much.

Mayor Moore stated that even if the Jail was for sale, the City would have to carry the debt service during that period of time. He then asked Chief Mansch if there could be a favorable market, with the growing privatization of jails, to sell or lease the facility.

Chief Mansch stated that Fulton County needs space and they are interested in a southern hub in South Fulton. He added that this could be the entire basis of pulling inmates out so that they can buy the Jail for a lower price, but we all know that they do not have any money. He then stated that the only other possibility is to have a professional mediator to reach out to The GEO Group, Inc. (GEO) or Corrections Corporation of America. He further stated that there is still a potential for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) availability in the Metro Atlanta Area, but ICE will want the whole facility exactly the way that they want it set up. Chief Mansch stated that GEO is a very strong corporation and it would take someone with more real estate knowledge than himself to reach out to an entity that large.

Councilmember Jackson stated that she would like to see the Council move forward and make some steps in that direction because she does not see it getting any better and we should not wait until we are destitute by carrying that debt service. She added that she thinks that we should reach out now and make some steps in that direction.

Chief Mansch stated that we should also take into account that we must still have the capability to house Union City and Palmetto inmates. He added that Fulton County only takes felonies and no misdemeanor offenses. He further added that the bulk of the arrests in Union City and South Fulton are misdemeanor offenses so we must consider that, otherwise; we will be back to where we were twelve years ago.

Mayor Moore asked how many inmates we have on average per month.

Chief Mansch stated that we have approximately eighteen per month from Union City and our next biggest customer is College Park.

Mayor Moore stated that he suspects that College Park will build a facility. Councilmember Jackson stated that College Park has been talking about building their facility for years, but it has yet to happen.

Chief Mansch stated that College Park used to send their inmates to East Point until they increased their fees approximately five years ago.

Mayor Moore stated that Chief Mansch has expressed the fact that he was uneasy with the sale of the Jail, so maybe we should reach out to a professional in this business and begin to look at a contract to market our facility. He then stated that the financing of the facility was predicated upon the revenue that would pay the debt service for public safety officers which means that we will need to look at that portion of the debt service.

At this time Councilmember Jones joined the meeting.

Councilmember Jackson interjected and stated that the Jail Authority is already paying the police department portion. She added that debt service is not being paid by the City. She then asked for confirmation from Mrs. Fillingame.

Mrs. Fillingame stated that Councilmember Jackson was correct.

Mayor Moore stated that if he does not hear any objections from the Council, it would be his recommendation to begin looking at the long term solution of dissolving our interest in the jail facility whether it is public or private.

No objections were made.

Councilmember Jackson was in agreement.

Councilmember Williams stated that we have to also consider the posture of jailing inmates, especially misdemeanor inmates. He added that the judicial system is taking a different turn and are now offering diversion opportunities where they do not house inmates and some are sent to eight to ten week training classes. He further added that some may come back a second time inmates, but first offenders are offered, by law, the pretrial opportunity so I am sure that this has certainly put us in a position where there are not as many misdemeanor opportunities.

Chief Mansch stated that fundamentally that is what is occurring now and that is the problem; however, when a person commits a crime and he is arrested he must be placed somewhere until he can see the judge and when they see the judge it is like a revolving door. Chief Mansch stated that he could get thirty five inmates over the weekend and on Monday morning there could be only one left because as soon as they see the judge, they are out.

Councilmember Williams stated that Clayton, Henry and Fayette are giving them the opportunity to go home and schedule a meeting with the prosecutor rather than locking them up, if it is a misdemeanor. He concluded that he was in agreement with Mayor Moore's recommendation.

At this time Ms. Fillingame stated that in the recommendation there was a reduction in force for fifteen positions; however, she wanted to make the Mayor and Council aware that there may be an additional strategy that the Chief could use.

Chief Mansch interjected and stated that he recommended sixteen positions which included his position.

Mrs. Fillingame stated that if the numbers continue to drop we may be able to use the intake area to house inmates. She then reiterated that this is only if the numbers continue to drop and under certain conditions. She concluded that they will continue to play it by ear and keep the Mayor and Council posted on this matter, but for now it is the fifteen positions posed by Mrs. Calloway.

Mayor Moore asked if there were any questions or recommendation regarding the Jail.

No questions or recommendation were made.

Mrs. Calloway asked for clarity that the Council was in agreement with moving forward with the reduction of the fifteen positions recommended and to look into selling the facility.

Council was in agreement.

Mrs. Calloway stated that the next fund was the General Fund and she and Ms. Fillingame have been working very closely with the department heads to cut back as much as they could, operationally, for the remainder of the fiscal year. She added that they came up with a total of \$798,329.00 in cuts for the remainder of the year which still leaves us with a negative \$898, 281.00. She further added that the recommendation is to use our fund balance to take care of this loss for the remainder of the fiscal year and move forward and look at how we can cut back and use savings for the next fiscal year, so there will be no reductions in force for the General Fund for now. She then stated that this will reduce the Fund Balance drastically. Mrs. Calloway stated that as of the audit, we had a 1.8 million Fund Balance and this recommendation will leave us with approximately \$900,000.00, so we will definitely need to build that back up.

Mrs. Fillingame interjected and stated that this will underscore the criticality of the planning process for next year's fiscal budget. She added that we will have to look at things very closely.

Councilmember Williams stated that we must be mindful of where we are headed.

Mayor Moore asked if there were any questions for the recommendation for budget cuts.

Councilmember Williams stated that he is aware that we are addressing the remainder of this budget cycle. He then asked Mrs. Calloway if she could foresee any drastic staffing cuts as we move towards the next budget cycle.

Mrs. Calloway stated that we may have to look at furlough days in the future because most of our costs are personnel. She concluded that it was very difficult to cut this much at this stage of the year, but we are going to have to do something with staff. She added that she was not sure how drastic it will be, but she will keep the Council updated as she moves forward with planning.

Councilmember Mealing stated that she was sure that all of the money for the vacant positions has been frozen.

Mrs. Calloway confirmed that the money was frozen, but there were not many positions vacant.

On behalf of the Mayor and Council, Mayor Moore recommended that all out of state travel be suspended and only travel in state.

Mrs. Calloway stated that all travel for staff has been suspended unless it was already arranged. She added that some travel was already secured and they will continue but any other travel has suspended.

Mayor Moore stated that he would like to put the suspended travel for the Mayor and Council in the form of a motion so that there is no misunderstanding.

On motion of Councilmember Williams seconded by Councilmember Mealing and carried, all out of state travel for the Mayor and Council has been suspended. Vote was unanimous.

Councilmember Jones asked Mrs. Calloway if she knew how much we would save with regards to the furlough days if it was only one furlough day.

Mrs. Calloway stated that the numbers that she ran included the remainder of this fiscal year, from May through August. She added that she has not looked at next year. She further added that this also depends if public safety is included in the furlough days, because that is the majority of the personnel.

Councilmember Jones stated that he would like to see that scenario when we get into the budget season. He added that he would like to see the numbers if we had one furlough day per month as opposed to two per month, so we can see the impact.

Councilmember Mealing stated that if we decide to go with furlough days, it may be helpful to extend the holidays. She added that the State had a lot of furlough days, but they combined the furlough day with a holiday, but without pay.

Councilmember Jackson stated that she would like to stay away from the public safety if possible because they are vital on the street.

Councilmember Williams stated that public safety is critical.

Mrs. Calloway stated that we should do this early on so that we can realize a cost saving.

Mayor Moore stated that this is how the budget process works during our critical times. He then called for a motion to adjourn.

On motion of Councilmember Williams seconded by Councilmember Mealing and carried, the meeting adjourned.

The meeting was called back to order by Mayor Ralph Moore. Councilmembers Mealing and Jones were absent.

Mayor Moore stated that he recommended an all inclusive motion for staff's recommendations regarding the jail and the budget.

On motion of Councilmember Jackson seconded by Councilmember Williams and carried, the aforementioned recommendation was unanimously approved.

On motion of Councilmember Jackson seconded by Councilmember Williams and carried, the meeting adjourned.

Jacqueline R. Cossey, City Clerk

Ralph Moore, Mayor