

The Council of the City of Villa Rica met in a regular scheduled meeting on Tuesday, August 4, 2009 in the Council Chambers at 101 Main Street, Holt-Bishop Justice Center, Municipal Courtroom. Those present were Councilmembers Perry Amidon, Verland Best (Mayor Pro Tem), Woody Holland, and Joey Kelley; City Manager Larry Wood, City Clerk Reedell Saxon and City Attorney David Mecklin. Mayor J Collins and Councilmember Shirley Marchman were absent with notification. Approximately 37 people were in attendance.

Best called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The invocation was given by Amidon. All recited the pledge of allegiance.

The minutes from the July 7 and July 28, 2009 meetings were presented. Amidon moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Kelley. Motion carried 4/0.

Chief of Police Michael Mansour presented a plaque to area citizens Carolyn Reno and Brent Reno for their assistance in thwarting a burglary. The citizens, while driving by a business at night, noticed legs dangling from the ceiling inside the business. They notified Villa Rica police who were able to arrest the burglars. The Renos received a hardy ovation from those in attendance.

Under Old Business: Chief Mansour presented the second reading of ORD-09-10-CCO, an ordinance to amend the current Pawnbroker Ordinance by requiring electronic recording of pawned or second-hand items. Descriptions of the items, a picture of the individual who pawned or sold them, and a picture of each item would be instantly available to Law Enforcement Agencies anywhere and would replace going through thousands of paper tickets, which are periodically collected, in order to locate stolen property. Mansour said he was aware there has been some opposition to the ordinance. He showed a large bundle of pawn tickets which represented a month's worth of pawned items and pointed out some drawbacks from this time consuming method currently in use. He also listed advantages of the proposed system such as real time searches of pawned items with more available information. Mansour displayed an Office of the Secretary of State of Oregon certificate showing that the monitoring company has a location in Oregon and information would be stored there, not in Canada as some suspected. They are also looking for closer locations. Best asked Mecklin if there were any legal problems with adoption of this ordinance. Mecklin said no. Best opened the floor for public comment:

Ben Brown, 516 Cedar Street, Carrollton, said his family has owned Villa Rica Pawn Shop for thirty years. Brown said the ordinance raises some issues although he agrees with the intent of it. One issue is that the information travels on the internet where it could be hacked. It requires owners and employees of Pawn Shops to be fingerprinted which he considers redundant and can make one feel like a criminal. Brown said the National Pawnbrokers Association has researched this issue and reports that less than one half of one percent of the items pawned are later found to be stolen.

Diane Henry of Golden City Pawn Shop said they are already on the Internet and asked why they couldn't just e-mail the information to the Police Department rather than incur the expense of \$0.40 per transaction.

John Bloomfield, owner of Golden City Pawn Shop, provided numbers from this and his other four pawn shops in the Atlanta area. In the past one and a half years, only one item each at the Villa Rica and Madison stores was found to be stolen. In Winder there were three, and in Douglasville there were none. In Loganville, which has a similar system

to what is being proposed, there were three in the same year and a half; seven since 2007. He said he agrees with what the City is trying to accomplish but doesn't believe it will improve the reclamation of stolen items and will add a cost to the shops. However, he will do what is required of everyone.

Jonathan Brown, also of Villa Rica Pawn Shop, was concerned with the issue of privacy. He said guns are in a different category, but for other pawned items, he believes this will make the pawners feel like criminals. It will also cost the stores in merchandise turnaround time, manpower, and associated fees for the system. Holland and Best asked about the procedure for the pawning of firearms.

Elaine Brown, mother of Jonathan and Ben, asked if the ten day holding period would be applied to jewelry stores which buy gold and jewelry. Mansour said yes because that would be considered second hand and is covered in the ordinance.

There being no other comments, the floor was closed. Holland said he is opposed to more government in citizens' life. Kelley spoke in favor of the proposed system. When he was in Law Enforcement he occasionally had to pick up and sort pawn tickets which he likened to looking for a needle in a hay stack when looking for a specific stolen item. He pointed out that the information transmitted over the Internet is no different than the banking information similarly transmitted everyday. Kelley also noted that the photo information collected through the proposed system would help prosecute the perpetrator and recover both the stolen item and the pawn shop's monetary loss. After further discussion, Best moved to postpone a decision until the next meeting in order for the affected business owners to meet with the Police Chief and reach a consensus, seconded by Holland. Motion carried 4/0. Best asked that the Chief report back on this request next month.

Wood presented the Employee Medical Insurance Benefits package recommended by the City's Insurance Broker Northwestern Benefits Corporation (NBC) which would keep the biweekly cost to employees the same as last year and add two new benefits for Employee Assistance (EAP counseling) and Long Term Disability (LTD) at no extra cost to employees. Wood presented the five points of the plan:

1. Remain with Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Georgia for medical insurance. They are our current carrier and their proposal was the most economical with an 8.8 % increase to keep the same coverage. We recommend that the individual and family in network deductible be increased from \$500 individual and \$1,500 family to \$1,000 individual and \$3,000 family in order to have a zero rate increase. If Council would prefer to keep coverages the same but not incur any additional cost to the City, employees would have to pay about \$15/check or \$400/year in extra premiums to absorb the 8.8% increase. Family coverage would be an increase of about \$30/check or \$800/year.
2. Change to Guardian Dental Insurance. Delta Dental insurance has been negotiated to a proposed 1% increase but Guardian has proposed a 7% lower rate than Delta Dental which would save the City \$4,955 annually.
3. Change from Greater Georgia Life to UNUM Life/Accidental Death and Dismemberment and basic dependent life (formerly Providence). UNUM's rate proposal is about half the cost of current rates for an annual savings of \$16,323.
4. Currently the City offers "voluntary worksite benefits" through Fort Dearborn and American Fidelity. These voluntary benefits include short term disability, cancer insurance, additional life, etc. which are generally individual policies with transportability for employees where the City acts as the insurance company's collection agent. After much evaluation by Northwestern, it is recommended that the City authorize UNUM to offer these products because of both rates/pricing and coordination with the City funded Life and LTD insurance coverages.

5. There are two new employee benefits that we recommend be added which are long term disability (LTD) and an employee assistance program (EAP) which can be funded from the savings from dental and life/AD&D savings.
 - a. American Fidelity currently offers a STD plan that would pay for up to 50 weeks but it is voluntary. If we add LTD with STD through UNUM the payout to an employee out on disability would be increase to 60% of pay at a reduced cost which is what is recommended. Annual cost of LTD would be \$16,610.
 - b. The City currently does not have an EAP program which if approved would provide up to 6 family counseling sessions per year. Tanner Medical Center has approached us and Northwestern has compared their rates to other providers and we recommend that this benefit be added at an annual cost of \$2,646.

Kelley expressed concern at the higher deductibles being proposed. He said this might be an astronomical burden to employees and their families who must come up with the extra money all at once in an emergency rather than spread it out over twenty-six weeks. Kelley suggested the City use the savings from items 2 and 3 to offset some of the increase in premium and keep the deductible the same even if means not initiating the two new benefits proposed. Deputy City Manager – Services Jeff Reese and Chief Mansour said they had each talked to a number of their employees and found the majority said they could not afford an extra amount taken from each paycheck and would rather keep the bi-weekly payments the same and gamble on not needing the deductible. After further discussion, Holland moved to authorize the City Manager to do items 1 through 5 as presented, seconded by Amidon. Motion carried 3/1 with Kelley opposed.

Under New Business: Wood asked Police Chief Michael Mansour to present the August Employee of the Month Award. Chief Mansour praised Sgt Scott Cobb for taking on several additional responsibilities including the position of Safety Coordinator for the entire City and the Lead position on the Incident Review Board. Sgt Cobb was present to receive the plaque and check.

Community Development Manager Taurus Freeman presented the Villa Rica Beautiful awards for August. The residential award winner is Tommy McLeod at 1120 West Bankhead Highway. The commercial beautification award went to Wildwood Apartments on South Carroll Road.

Freeman presented ABL-04-09, an application by Faji Ababulgu of Douglasville, GA, for a Limited Pouring (beer and wine) License at 129 Main Street where he will be opening an Italian Restaurant. Mr. Ababulgu was present to answer Council questions. He said he is not sure of the final name of the Restaurant but hopes to have it open by August 15, 2009. Holland moved to approve, seconded by Kelley. Motion carried 4/0.

Freeman asked that ZM-01-09, the request for adoption of the revised Official Zoning Map, be postponed until next month. Holland so moved, seconded by Kelley. Motion carried 4/0.

Freeman presented COMP PLAN-01-09 and a Resolution to Transmit this revised Comprehensive Plan to the Three Rivers Regional Development Center (formerly Chatt-Flint RDC) for their review as required by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. After their review and recommendations, the final draft would come back to Council for approval. The next scheduled update after this would be in 2016. The Planning & Zoning Commission has recommended approval. Best opened the floor for public comment. There being none, the floor was closed. Holland moved to transmit, seconded by Amidon. Motion carried 4/0.

Chief Mansour provided information on a grant from the 2009 Recovery Act, Edward Byrne Memorial, Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program. The \$40,000 grant would but used to fund an officer position which had been vacated due to budget concerns. Mansour said there were no matching requirements. It only requires Council approval. Holland moved to take any money the City can get, seconded by Amidon. Motion carried 4/0.

Reese presented a Consideration of Bids for 435 soccer uniforms for youths ages 3 through 16. Three bids were received. Soccer Wholesale was the low bidder at \$25.00 per uniform for a total of \$10,875.00. A portion of this would be coming back through sign-up fees. Kelley moved to approve the low bidder, seconded by Holland. Motion carried 4/0.

Wood presented a request to pay \$6,000 to Classic Curb, low bidder on an earlier project, to remove old concrete and re-pour 913 square feet of sidewalk in the middle of the 200 block of Main Street. Holland asked if the City had staff to do this in-house. Reese said no because this project requires both curbing and flat work and City resources could only do flatwork. Wood said funds were available and would come from the sidewalk budget in the SPLOST account. Best moved to approve, seconded by Amidon. Motion carried 4/0.

Deputy City Manager – Utilities Eric Lacefield presented a request for payment to Utility Service Company for \$11,305.35 for contractual maintenance of the Hickory Level Water Tank. Lacefield said this is a budgeted expense and funds are available. He also noted that the City plans to rebid the maintenance contract for the water tanks later this year. After a brief discussion Best moved to accept this request with the understanding the service will be put out for bid later this year, seconded by Holland. Motion carried 4/0.

Under City Update, Wood announced the City has received a COPS grant of approximately \$330,000 at about \$110,000 per year and will cover the training officer position and one other officer position cut from the 2009/10 budget. The main requirement of this grant is that the officers hired through it for the three years of the grant must be kept for at least twelve additional months at the City's expense. Wood asked for authorization to instruct the Chief to hire personnel for these two positions. Council gave him authorization.

State Representative Tim Bearden told Staff today that the City will be receiving a check from the Georgia Department of Transportation for approximately \$578,000 for the Transportation Enhancement Grant Trails Project. This will be used for funding the first half of the pedestrian trail which will eventually go from Mirror Lake to downtown.

An emergency warning weather siren will be installed at the Mirror Lake fire station. The City had budgeted for one half of the cost of the siren.

Best commented about something brought to his attention that Villa Rica Police Department patches were found for sale on E-Bay. Chief Mansour said police agencies often trade patches and they try to be careful with whom they trade. However it occasionally happens that the patches are sold.

Best initiated a discussion about youth collecting money at intersections. He said he has received complaints from citizens about young people being put in harms way and about solicitors from outside the city collecting here. Wood and Mansour said they will look at the existing ordinance for way to improve it. Holland asked if this could be brought back next month.

Best opened the floor for public comment:

Val Runyon, 2137 South VanWert Road, expressed concern about the area churches collecting or handing out literature on the right of way and putting young people in danger. There being no further comments, the floor was closed.

Holland moved to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing pending legal matters and acquisition of real estate, seconded by Kelley. Motion carried 4/0. Adjourned into Executive Session at 8:24 p.m.

Holland motioned to reconvene, seconded by Amidon. Motion carried 4/0. Reconvened at 8:40 p.m.

Holland moved to approve Consent Order to be signed with Georgia EPD related to spills from Wastewater Treatment Facility. City Manager was authorized to sign Order and to pay fine of \$60,000 associated therewith. Kelley seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

With no further business, Holland moved to adjourn; seconded by Kelley. Motion carried 4/0. Council adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Verland Best – Mayor Pro Tem

ATTEST:

Reedell Saxon – City Clerk