

**JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL
EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE
MARY GORDON ELLIS EXECUTIVE BUILDING
FEBRUARY 15, 2008
CONFERENCE ROOM
2:00 P.M.**

COUNTY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

CHAIRMAN TYLER, COUNCILMAN TUTEN

HARDEEVILLE OFFICIALS PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN BEA JONES

COUNTY STAFF PRESENT:

ADMINISTRATOR - ANDREW FULGHUM, CLERK TO COUNCIL – JUDITH FRANK, WILBUR DALY –EMS

HARDEEVILLE STAFF PRESENT:

JEFF SLOCUM

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AT THE ELECTRONIC AND PRINT MEDIA WERE NOTIFIED.

DURING PERIODS OF DISCUSSION AND/OR PRESENTATIONS MINUTES ARE TYPICALLY CONDENSED AND PARAPHRASED.

CALL TO ORDER:

CHAIRMAN TYLER CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 2:00 P.M.

INVOCATION:

COUNCILMAN TUTEN GAVE THE INVOCATION.

DISCUSSION:

MR. FULGHUM SAID THE REASON HE CALLED THIS MEETING WAS TO DISCUSS THE CHERRY POINT FIRE STATION ISSUE. MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT THE REASON FOR THE SALE OF THE CHERRY POINT FIRE STATION TO THE CITY OF HARDEEVILLE FOR \$250, 000.00 WAS SO THAT HARDEEVILLE WOULD PROVIDE FIRE PROTECTION IN THAT AREA AND THE COUNTY COULD MOVE IT'S EQUIPMENT AND STAFF TO THE UNDERSERVED RURAL AREAS. MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT THE COUNTY PASSED THE ORDINANCE APPROVING THE SALE AND THAT A CLOSING WAS TO TAKE PLACE ON OR BEFORE MARCH 1, 2008, BUT THERE WAS NO PENALTY IF IT DID NOT CLOSE BY THAT DATE. MR. FULGHUM SAID HE FELT THAT THE TRANSACTION WAS THE BEST INTEREST OF BOTH PARTIES. MR. FULGHUM SAID THE COUNTY HAS A CONTRACT WITH HARDEEVILLE TO PROVIDE FIRE SERVICE FOR \$195,000.00 ANNUALLY AND THAT HARDEEVILLE WILL HAVE ADDITIONAL COSTS BECAUSE THERE WILL BE ADDITIONAL AREAS TO COVER. MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT CURRENTLY THE COUNTY HAS A SPECIAL FIRE TAX DISTRICT ESTABLISHED IN THAT AREA, BUT AS

HARDEEVILLE ANNEXED PROPERTY IN THAT AREA, IT WILL MEAN LESS TAXES TO THE COUNTY AS THE COUNTY'S FUNDING STREAM WILL DRY UP. MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT IF HARDEEVILLE WERE TO TAKE OVER THE CHERRY HILL FIRE DEPARTMENT'S COUNTY DISTRICT THEY WOULD NEED ADDITIONAL FUNDING. MR. FULGHUM SAID THE QUESTION WAS IF HARDEEVILLE IS PROVIDING THE SERVICE, SHOULD THEY GET THE MILAGE AND IF THE ANSWER IS YES, THE COUNTY WOULD COLLECT IT AND GIVE IT TO HARDEEVILLE AND AS HARDEEVILLE ANNEXED MORE OF THE AREA, THE FUNDING THAT COMES TO THE COUNTY DEMINISHES. MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT \$250,000.00 WAS BUDGETTED IN JULY AND ADDITIONAL STAFF HAS BEEN HIRED AND A NEW AMBULANCE IS TO BE PAID FOR FROM THE SPECIAL TAX. MR. FULGHUM SAID THE AMBULANCE AND THE STAFF TO OPERATE IT WILL STAY AT CHERRY POINT REGARDLESS OF WHO IS PROVIDING THE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE. MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT THE STAFF COULD NOT COME UP WITH A SOLUTION. MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT IF THE COUNTY KEEPS THE FIRE DEPARTMENT, THE FUNDING FOR IT WILL SHRINK. MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT THE FIRE DEPARTMENTS ARE CURRENTLY CO-HABITATING IN THE STATION AND HARDEEVILLE HAS AN ENGINE THERE AND THE COUNTY ALSO HAS EQUIPMENT AT THE STATION. MR. FULGHUM SAID AN ARRANGEMENT NEEDS TO BE AGREED UPON.

CHAIRMAN TYLER SAID HE FELT THE COUNTY AND THE CITY NEEDED TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL THE CITIZENS OF JASPER COUNTY.

COUNCILWOMAN JONES ASKED WHAT WILBUR DALEY HIS OPINION BASED ON THE FIRE STAND POINT.

MR. DALEY SAID THE CO-HABITATION WAS WORKING AND HE WAS NOT AWARE OF ANY PROBLEMS AND FORESEES NO PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE. MR. DALEY CONTINUED THAT AS FAR AS GIVING UP THE AREA HE FELT THAT THERE WERE AREAS THE COUNTY NEEDED TO COVER AND HE FELT THE CO-HABITATION WORKED WELL, BUT HE DID NOT KNOW OF A GOOD SOLUTION FOR THE FUTURE.

COUNCILWOMAN JONES DISCUSSED HER EXPERIENCE IN CHARLESTON WHERE EVERYTHING WAS ANNEXED AROUND A PORTION OF THE COUNTY AND IT PUT THE COUNTY IN A VERY UNCOMFORTABLE POSITION AND SHE DID NOT WANT THAT TO HAPPEN IN JASPER COUNTY.

COUNCILWOMAN JONES ASKED IF IT WAS THE COUNTY'S INTENT TO REASSIGN THE STAFF IF HARDEEVILLE TOOK OVER THE CHERRY POINT FIRE STATION. MR. DALEY SAID THAT THE STAFF AND EQUIPMENT WAS TO BE MOVED TO OTHER AREAS IF HARDEEVILLE ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE AREA.

MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT BY BOTH FIRE COMPANIES BEING THERE IT WAS ALMOST LIKE DUPLICATING SERVICES.

COUNCILMAN TUTEN ASKED WHY HARDEEVILLE WANTED THE FIRE STATION IF THEY HAD TO GO THROUGH A SECTION OF THE COUNTY TO GET TO THE AREA PROTECTED BY THE CITY. COUNCILMAN TUTEN SAID

HE SEES NO BENEFIT TO THE COUNTY AND HE ASKED HOW MUCH TERRITORY WAS BEING COVERED. COUNCILMAN TUTEN SAID THAT THE COUNTY AGREED TO SELL HARDEEVILLE A FIRE STATION FOR \$250,000.00, PROVIDED HARDEEVILLE WITH A LADDER TRUCK AND THE COUNTY IS ALSO PAYING HARDEEVILLE \$195,000.00 FOR A FIRE CONTRACT TO COVER THE RURAL AREAS AROUND HARDEEVILLE AND NOW HARDEEVILLE WANTS MORE MONEY TO COVER CHERRY POINT. COUNCILMAN TUTEN SAID THAT THE COUNTY HAS TO KEEP EMS IN THE STATION WHICH IS 6 PEOPLE. COUNCILMAN TUTEN ASKED MR. FULGHUM WHERE WILL THE COUNTY GET THE FUNDS TO COVER THESE EMPLOYEES IF HARDEEVILLE ANNEXED THE TAX DISTRICT. COUNCILMAN TUTEN ALSO ASKED IF THEY WERE COVERING A ONE MILE RADIUS AROUND THE FIRE STATION. MR. DALEY SAID THAT WAS PRETTY CLOSE TO THE AMOUNT OF AREA BEING COVERED. MR. FULGHUM RESPONDED THAT THE FIRE CONTRACT HAS HELPED AND AS PEOPLE ARE ANNEXED, THEY ARE COVERED. COUNCILMAN TUTEN SAID THAT THE COUNTY WOULD NOT SELL THE BUILDING AND 2 ACRES FOR \$250,000.00 TO ANYONE OTHER THAN HARDEEVILLE AND IT WAS WORTH A LOT MORE THAN THAT. MR. FULGHUM SAID THE LAND GIVEN TO THE COUNTY. COUNCILMAN TUTEN SAID THAT EVEN IF IT WAS GIVEN TO THE COUNTY, THERE WAS NO REASON FOR THE COUNTY TO GIVE IT AWAY. COUNCILMAN TUTEN SAID HE FELT THE BUILDING AND THE LAND WAS WORTH OVER A MILLION DOLLARS AND HARDEEVILLE SHOULD TAKE THAT INTO CONSIDERATION. COUNCILWOMAN JONES SAID THAT STAFFING WAS THE ISSUE AND IT IS EASIER TO BUILD A FIRE STATION THAN IT WAS TO STAFF ONE. MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT THE COUNTY GOT THE STATION FOR FREE AND HARDEEVILLE CAN GET ONE FOR FREE FROM ONE ANOTHER DEVELOPER. COUNCILWOMAN JONES DISCUSSED THE AREA COVERED BY THE CURRENT FIRE CONTRACT. COUNCILMAN TUTEN SAID A LOT OF THAT AREA HAS ALREADY BEEN ANNEXED INTO HARDEEVILLE AND THE COUNTY IS STILL PAYING THE SAME AMOUNT TO HARDEEVILLE. MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT IT IS STILL CHEAPER TO PAY HARDEEVILLE \$195,000.00 TO PROVIDE THE FIRE COVERAGE THAN WHAT IT WOULD COST THE COUNTY TO COVER THE SAME AREA. MR. FULGHUM SAID THE COUNTY HAS THE LAND, THE BUILDING AND THE STAFF AND THE COUNTY WOULD LIKE TO MOVE THE STAFF TO ANOTHER LOCATION, BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME AND IF HARDEEVILLE ANNEXED EVERYTHING AND THE TAX DISTRICT DISAPPEARS, MAYBE THEN IT WOULD BE THE TIME TO DISCUSS THIS, BUT IF THE COUNTY DOES IT BEFORE EVERYTHING IS ANNEXED, THE COUNTY CAN USE THE TAX INCOME TO PAY FOR HARDEEVILLE TO COVER THE AREA. COUNCILMAN TUTEN ASKED MR. FULGHUM WHAT HE WOULD DO AND MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT IT MAY BE BETTER TO WAIT, AND NOT TO MOVE THE STAFF AND EQUIPMENT AND DO A CO-HABITATION AGREEMENT FOR NOW.

CHAIRMAN TYLER ASKED IF A LONG WAIT WOULD CAUSE PROBLEMS AND MR. FULGHUM RESPONDED THAT DEPENDS ON WHERE THE GROWTH TAKES PLACE.

COUNCILWOMAN JONES SAID THAT HARDEEVILLE WANTS TO BE FAIR AND THEY WANT TO WORK TOGETHER. COUNCILWOMAN JONES SAID THAT A CO-HABITATION AGREEMENT UNTIL THINGS ARE RESOLVED COULD WORK. COUNCILWOMAN JONES SAID THAT THE GROWTH HAS SLOWED DOWN AND THINGS WERE HAPPENING SLOWER AND SHE FELT WORKING TOGETHER WAS A GOOD SOLUTION.

COUNCILMAN TUTEN SAID THAT EVERYONE WANTED TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ALL THE CITIZENS OF JASPER COUNTY AND THAT FULL PROTECTION HAS BEEN PROMISED, BUT IT HAS NOT BEEN DONE YET AND COVERAGE IS LACKING IN THE NORTHERN END OF THE COUNTY AND THOSE CITIZENS ARE ALSO ENTITLED TO GOOD FIRE PROTECTION.

COUNCILWOMAN JONES SAID THAT THE PEOPLE IN CHERRY POINT ARE PAYING AN EXTRA TAX FOR COVERAGE AND THE PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW THAT.

MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT THE STAFF WILL WORK ON A CO-HABITATION AGREEMENT.

COUNCILMAN TUTEN SAID THAT HE FELT THE ENTIRE COUNCIL SHOULD DISCUSS THE SITUATION AND MAKE A DECISION.

MR. FULGHUM SAID THE COMMITTEE CAN MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL.

COUNCILMAN TUTEN SAID HE FELT THE COMMITTEE SHOULD MAKE THE RECOMMENDATION WHEN THE TIME WAS RIGHT AND MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT WHEN HARDEEVILLE ANNEXED EVERYTHING IN THAT AREA THE FUNDING FOR SERVICE WILL DRY OUT.

CHAIRMAN TYLER SAID THAT THE COUNTY AND THE MUNICIPALITY NEEDS TO WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE THINGS WORK AND HE DID NOT WANT TO MOVE FORWARD UNTIL THE ISSUES WERE WORKED OUT.

MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT BOTH THE COUNTY AND THE CITY HAVE A LIMITED BUDGET AND THEY NEED TO PROVIDE SERVICE TO THE CITIZENS.

COUNCILWOMAN JONES COMMENTED THAT THEY COULD WORK SOMETHING OUT THAT WOULD BE FAIR AND EQUITABLE TO EVERYONE.

CHAIRMAN TYLER SAID THIS SITUATION WILL NOT BE RESOLVED OVERNIGHT AND IT MUST BE RIGHT FOR EVERYONE IN JASPER COUNTY.

MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT IF THE COUNTY COULD GET WALMART AND OTHERS TO ANNEX INTO HARDEEVILLE, THEN HARDEEVILLE WOULD HAVE TO COVER IT. MR. FULGHUM SAID IT WAS A DIFFICULT PROBLEM AND HONEST OPEN CONVERSATION IS NEEDED AND THIS IS ONE PROBLEM HE COULD NOT RESOLVE, BUT HE DID NOT THINK NOW WAS THE TIME TO MOVE FORWARD.

COUNCILMAN TUTEN ASKED IF THE COUNTY WOULD LOSE MONEY IF EVERYTHING WAS ANNEXED AND MR. FULGHUM SAID THAT THE COUNTY WOULD NOT LOSE ANY TAX DOLLARS.

MR. FULGHUM SAID THE NEW RIVER AREA MUST BE RESOLVED AND THE COUNTY AND CITY NEED TO STIKE AN AGREEMENT AND MAKE IT WORK. MR. FULGHUM SAID THIS WAS SERIOUS AND DIFFICULT STUFF AND IT HAS TO BE DEALT WITH.

CHAIRMAN TYLER COMMENTED THAT THIS ISSUE NEEDED TO BE WORKED THROUGH AND KNOW WHERE IT IS GOING.

COUNCILWOMAN JONES SAID SHE DIDN'T WANT THE TAXPAYERS TO PAY FOR THE GROWTH AND THE NEWCOMERS SHOULD HAVE TO PAY FOR THE SERVICES THEY WANT.

CHAIRMAN TYLER TOLD THE ADMINISTRATOR TO GO BACK AND WORK TOGETHER AND WORK ON A CO-HABITATION AGREEMENT AND FOR MR. FULGHUM TO PRESENT THE INFORMATION TO THE COUNCIL AT THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING.

THE MEETING ENDED AT 2:45 P.M.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

APPROVED BY:

JUDITH M. FRANK, CCC
CLERK TO COUNCIL

HUBERT TYLER
CHAIRMAN