
COMMISSIONERS:

Terry Knowles, Mayor
Eleanor Randall, Vice Mayor
John Martin
DeLoris Roberts
William Carlton

CITY MANAGER:

Chad M. Shryock, City Manager
Donna R. Mayes, City Clerk

CITY ATTORNEY:

Steve Lee

**MINUTES
JOINT MEETING
HAWTHORNE CITY COMMISSION
ALACHUA COUNTY COMMISSION
APRIL 23, 2007 @ 7:00 PM**

A. Call To Order

Mayor Knowles called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. City Board and Staff present was: Mayor Knowles, Vice Mayor Randall, Commissioners Roberts, Carlton and Martin, City Manager Shryock, City Clerk Mayes and Attorney Lee. County Board and Staff present was: Commissioners Delaney, Byerly and Pinkoson, County Manager Randall Reid and Assistant Attorney David Schwartz. Also present was staff from Fire/Rescue Services.

B. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Roberts gave the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Martin.

C. Approval of Agenda

Moved to approve the agenda for the April 23, 2007 Meeting

Motion – Commissioner Roberts

Second – Commissioner Martin

Vote – 5-0

D. Agenda**1. Alachua County Fire Assessment**

County Manager Reid informed that the fire assessment was for the unincorporated areas and it was not mandatory for the municipalities to join but it would not be fair to charge someone just outside the city limits one price and inside the city another. The County has never charged the full cost to run the department for the city, it has always been subsidized. It is not fair to provide services to cities for less than that of the county residents; therefore the municipalities can opt into the fire assessment, do a contract for the same amount as the assessment or start their own department. City Manager Shryock related that the timing issue was not acceptable and the cost to the residents was not available at the time of the presentation although he has since received that information. The City has four options, to join the countywide

assessment, renegotiate a "fair share agreement", contract with another agency or reestablish the City Department. The County was concerned with the expected cuts on the ad valorem taxes from Tallahassee and wanted to have the assessment in place to fund the fire/rescue. Ms. Anderson, with Fire/Rescue Services related that half of the funding came from the MSTU and half came from sales and utility taxes. Of particular concern to the City Commission was the overwhelming leap in the figures and also learning that the cost to service the district was \$400,000, why so much more for the City alone. Commissioner Martin stated the city is being asked to opt into something they do not have a clear explanation of. Would it not be possible to wait for another year and pay the fair share, at least until the County has figured out the details and know what is being voted on. County Manager Reid stated that the Commission could make arrangements for the fire assessment or do a contract for the same amount for a means to provide fire services, noting the figures will not change and staff will not recommend to the County Board to subsidize the city for these services. Mr. Slade Dukes made it clear that if some cities opt out the rates will change. City Manager Shryock inquired how the county would service the people just outside the city limits should the city not opt in. Chief May commented they would possibly locate a station on the east side of the county. He explained that this was a fifteen year process, that funds would be set up for maintenance and for purchases so if there was a need for a truck the money would be there. As a general objective the assessments was developed with the stipulation of having a single service and they have been waiting to see who would participate. There have been discussions on interlocal agreements and keeping full time employees of cities with fire departments already established. Ms. Vivian Wagner raised the question of what happens to those who cannot afford to pay this assessment on their tax bill. Mr. Duke advised the County has requested a hardship be drafted if one is under a certain poverty threshold. Vice Mayor Randall related that one can make payments on their property tax if an initial payment is made by June 1, which gives a tax break to the senior citizen. Commissioner Martin expressed that there would be more cost associated with this that will be passed on, than that the tax bill will show and that the County will not see because how their tax is structured. Discussion arose on how the ordinance would be structured and on fair market value on the Fire Station. County Manager Reid informed that the City can structure their own but has no right to structure the County ordinance that might bind other cities to issues. Attorney Lee advised the City can do an ordinance and then opt out after one year. Chairperson Delaney communicated they were continuing to gather more information and would try to shift the burden off the tax payer making it as fair as possible.

E. Adjourn

Mayor Knowles adjourned the meeting at 9:40 PM.

These Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Hawthorne City Commission and the Alachua County Commission are submitted for approval.

Chad M. Shryock, City Manager

Terry Knowles, Mayor

Donna R. Mayes, CMC
City Clerk