

**Special Council Meeting
August 26, 2013**

I. Meeting Called to Order

Mayor Barley called to order the scheduled special council meeting of August 26, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

Members present: Council members Elizabeth Brannon, Ray Jackson, Jennifer Laird, Janice McLean and Harold Taunton.

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Freeport sewer loan/fire department option

Councilwoman McLean presented a draft proposal for the possible merger of the Freeport fire department with Walton County fire services, to include:

Balance of loan	\$2,300,000.00
Payment by Freeport	-\$1,000,000.00
Credit per loan agreement	- \$400,000.00
Credit interest paid	- \$340,000.00
Balance due for fire department	\$560,000.00

Councilwoman McLean mentioned that this proposal would give the County up to a year to build a station and provide the City with the \$600,000.00 for the proposed fire department budget.

Attorney Adkinson stated that the council would need to grant approval to make an offer to open negotiations to allow Walton County to make a counter offer at their meeting to be held the following day. He also reminded the Council that the County would expect them to adopt an MSBU ordinance for City residents prior to October 1. He recommended that if the council chose to authorize negotiations with the County, then the 1st reading of the proposed ordinance could be performed at the Special meeting of September 5, with the 2nd reading and adoption to be held at the last meeting in September.

Council discussion included the following items:

- County has the intention of pulling funding as of October 1
- The options available to the City are to either work with the County towards an agreement to merge services or to maintain independence and run on City funds
- Friday McCormick – suggested council request a one year stay, continuing County funding while the City negotiates towards a merger
- Bernice Morrison – would like to know how many actual fires, not total calls the fire department responds to
- Several council members expressed concerns about feeling “rushed” into a decision
- Thomas Palmer – would the City really consider merging, knowing of all the development to occur on Highway 331?
- Chad Harrell – can eliminate travel reimbursements from budget

- If a merger occurs, the \$1.00 collected per water account for fire hydrant maintenance could be used toward the amount that will be owed to the County
- Bernice Morrison – don't give the County anything!

Councilwoman Brannon motioned to authorize the presentation of this new option for negotiation with Walton County, Councilwoman McLean seconded. Councilwoman Laird asked the firefighters why they did not want to merge with the County, but received no response. There was no further public or council discussion, the motion carried 5:0.

IV. Adjournment

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Russ Barley, Mayor

Robin Haynes, City Clerk

Janice McLean, Council President