

A special meeting of the City Commission of the City of Apalachicola was held on Tuesday, February 16, 2010 at 12:00 noon in the Apalachicola Community Center, #1 Bay Avenue, Apalachicola, Florida.

Present: Mayor Van Johnson, Commissioner Jimmy Elliott, Commissioner Brenda Ash, Commissioner Mitchell Bartley, Commissioner Frank Cook, City Administrator Betty Webb, City Clerk Lee Mathes, Water & Sewer Supervisor William Cox, Sewer Operator Carl Mayo

Visitors: George Watkins, David Adlerstein, Bobby Miller, Toni Taranto, Marjorie Solomon, Anita Grove, Geoffrey Hewell, Beverly Hewitt, Dieter Ambos

Special meeting opened by Mayor Johnson.

Mayor Johnson stated this meeting has been called to discuss the fire hydrant issue.

Ms. Webb stated that there have been 5 non working hydrants identified. The City has purchased 6 hydrants; proposals were sent to contractors to install hydrants; and the contractor will start work tomorrow replacing the hydrants. Ms. Webb stated not checking the hydrants was a miscommunication between the Fire and Water & Sewer department. Ms. Webb suggests hiring someone to check hydrants on a quarterly basis if departments don't have available time to do the work. Ms. Webb presented map that showed all the hydrants within the City limits. Ms. Webb stated that blue reflectors have also been purchased. The reflectors will be mounted on the street in front of each hydrant so the Fire Department can easily see where hydrants are located at night. Ms. Webb stated she is not sure why there haven't been more hydrants installed, but at this point, the process just needs to be improved. BDI will have to conduct a study to show where more hydrants can be installed, where hydrants can't be installed, and will have to conduct a water line study to make sure adequate service can be provided to all added hydrants.

Beverly Hewitt expressed concern that there is only one hydrant on Market Street and it is located down at Pendleton's old gas station.

Mayor Johnson asked how many people work in the water department.

William Cox stated there are 4 employees plus water plant operators. Mr. Cox explained what work is typically done each day in the water department.

Mayor Johnson stated the City hasn't been routinely checking the hydrants to make sure they operate properly.

Mr. Cox stated the Water Department flushes the hydrants and does routine maintenance only.

Mayor Johnson asked if the person who checks the hydrants would be a new position created.

Ms. Webb stated this would be a contractor to work about a week on a quarterly basis to check all the hydrants.

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Mayor Johnson asked if anybody available in the City that can do this task.

Mr. Cox stated he has no one available right now that can do this.

Commissioner Ash asked Mr. Cox how often hydrants are flushed.

Mr. Cox stated that about 10 to 12 hydrants are flushed monthly.

Commissioner Ash asked while the hydrants were being flushed, if the maintenance can be done at the same time.

Mr. Cox stated flushing is really for dead end lines. Hydrant maintenance is something totally different.

Mayor Johnson asked if there are more hydrants not working than the ones already identified.

Mr. Cox stated there could be more. It is hard to determine until you try to work the hydrant.

Mayor Johnson stated it was discussed to start working with the fire department to quickly identify the non working hydrants.

George Watkins stated the Fire Department has not started checking the hydrants at this time.

Ms. Webb stated that inspection tags has also been ordered for the hydrants. Ms. Webb estimates that it will cost about \$2,000/year for a contractor to check hydrants. The problems can be identified when they are being checked, and the problems can then be fixed.

Mr. Cox stated there are also things that can go onto the hydrants that light up, so the non working hydrants can be easily identified at night.

Mayor Johnson stated he has a problem spending additional money to accomplish this task.

Mr. Cox stated the Water Department works 8 hours per day, and those days are filled up. Mr. Cox stated he would hate to commit to something when there just isn't time to do the task.

Commissioner Bartley asked about the Street Department helping out.

Commissioner Elliott stated sending someone off to school to get certified in hydrant inspection and maintenance would be cheaper in the long term than hiring a contractor.

Bobby Miller asked about using inmate labor to do the task. Mr. Miller stated he will be coming back before the Board with more recommendations regarding this matter. There has to be a common approach to this problem.

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Mr. Cox stated we could try inmate labor.

Ms. Webb stated she is not sure about the inmates doing hydrant repair or maintenance.

Anita Grove expressed concern about non working hydrants.

Commissioner Ash stated maintenance needs to be done now, and a maintenance schedule needs to be set up. If money needs to be moved to get this done, then that is what needs to be done. The City must put something into action now.

Geoffrey Hewell stated the City needs more fire hydrants. Three fire trucks can't run off one hydrant. Mr. Hewell stated he thought the City would have done something about this by now.

Mr. Miller stated our City has very old infrastructure. The City needs to set money aside each year to start repairing the basic infrastructure.

Marjorie Solomon stated there are not enough hydrants throughout the City to cover the City.

Mr. Miller stated there was not enough water coming from the hydrant to cover the fire on February 8th.

Mayor Johnson stated all the City can do at this point is make sure they hydrants we have now are in working order, and move forward to correct the problem.

David Adlerstein asked if there was sufficient water pressure to cover the recent fire.

Mayor Johnson stated the hose had to be carried a good distance, and that is what caused the water pressure to drop. Having a closer hydrant would have helped the water pressure problem.

Ms. Grove expressed concern about home owner insurance premiums being increased because of this incident. Ms. Grove stated insurance companies are now aware of the lack of hydrants.

Mr. Miller stated the insurance company saw on the fire report that the first hydrant did not work, and that there was not sufficient water pressure coming from the rest of the hydrants. Insurance companies are not going to insure our homes because of this.

Ms. Hewitt stated on your insurance application it asks how far you are from a hydrant. It does not ask if the hydrant works or not.

Mayor Johnson stated the City needs to install fire hydrants in the area around Mr. Miller's house immediately, identify all the non working hydrants, and make sure the remaining hydrants are working properly.

Mr. Miller stated it is now a matter of public safety.

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Ms. Webb stated the contractor will start work tomorrow replacing those hydrants that have already been identified. Ms. Webb stated the City will have to meet with engineers to identify areas that need hydrants, and see what infrastructure is needed to install the additional hydrants.

Mayor Johnson stated we need to drop everything that is not pressing right now so this problem can be taken care of immediately.

Ms. Webb stated the City has made good progress so far on solving this problem.

Mr. Hewell stated just because you have more hydrants doesn't mean you are going to have more pressure unless you install a bigger line.

Mr. Cox stated installing more hydrants would decrease the distance the hose has to carry the water from the hydrant. Mr. Cox explained hydrant water line route.

Carl Mayo stated each hydrant cost \$1,200 per hydrant. This does not include installation costs.

Discussion held concerning rebuilding hydrants, water pressure, and installing additional hydrants.

Mr. Cox stated some infrastructure will be needed to install additional hydrants in some areas.

Mr. Watkins stated 600 feet is the distance from a hydrant that would be needed.

Commissioner Elliott stated that Forestry Department has trucks that feed water out of a pond.

Mr. Watkins stated that after the bank fire, the Fire Department saw the need for bigger hoses. Bigger hoses was supposed to be on the new fire truck, but the new fire truck purchase was put on hold. Mr. Watkins stated he has ordered 1100 feet of 5 inch hose that should be here within 2 weeks. Bunker gear replacement parts have also been ordered. Mr. Watkins stated on the February 8th fire, there was excellent response from the Fire Department, Water Department, and Progress Energy.

Commissioner Elliott commended the Fire Department.

Mr. Miller stated this problem can be resolved and worked out. It wasn't created in a day, and it can't be fixed in a day.

Ms. Hewitt asked if the reuse water can be used to operate the hydrants.

Ms. Webb stated there is not enough flow to fight a fire. There would be enough water to fill up the tank on the truck, but that would be just about it.

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Mayor Johnson stated the hydrant was out for over a year. Mayor Johnson stated he does feel like this is the City's fault, and feels some type of disciplinary action should be taken.

Commissioner Ash stated the City is making this priority one; 5 hydrants are being replaced this week; ISO will be contacted about maintaining hydrants; after maintenance then we will set up some type of monthly maintenance for the hydrants; the City will contact engineers and along with water department locate water lines for additional hydrants and at that point we will know what will be needed.

Dieter Ambos asked if maintenance had to be on a monthly basis.

Ms. Webb stated ISO will be able to answer these questions.

Mayor Johnson stated we need somebody to identify how many hydrants are not working at this point.

Mr. Miller asked if this could be discussed in more detail at the March regular meeting.

Mayor Johnson stated 30 minutes will allotted at the beginning of the meeting to continue this discussion.

There being no further business, meeting adjourned.

Van W. Johnson, Sr., Mayor

Lee H. Mathes, City Clerk