

UNION CITY
CALLED MEETING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2008
CITY OF UNION CITY
6:00 P.M.

Present: Mayor Ralph Moore, Council Members Angelette Mealing, Shirley Jackson, Brian Jones, and Vince Williams, City Attorney Dennis Davenport, Interim City Administrator Ken Collins, and City Clerk Jacqueline Cossey

II. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Council to review Union City's Ethics Ordinance.

Mayor Moore stated that Council has come to a consensus that the ordinance in its present state has an opportunity to be reviewed by people who are discontent with Council and/or elected officials. He added that the intent of this ordinance was to join the community of cities that belong to the Georgia Municipal Association and state that Union City would uphold the ethics standards set by Georgia Municipal Association with regards to Council's behavior and activities. Mayor Moore stated that Council never envisioned that it would be used toward the Councilmembers. He added that Council also never envisioned that they would have to sit in judgment of a colleague. Mayor Moore then recommended that the Ethics Ordinance be repealed or amended to ensure that a level of integrity is upheld by the board. He then opened the floor for comments.

Councilmember Williams asked if the Georgia State Ethics Commission could hear the complaints and keep the ordinance in place, but amend it to let the Georgia State Ethics Commission hear the complaints and review any type of violation. He added that this would remove Council from policing these matters. Councilmember Williams stated that he would not feel comfortable scrutinizing either of his colleagues or any members of the past. He concluded that the ordinance should be amended and the City should be consistent with what the State does and other cities by allowing the State Ethics Commission to listen to ethics violations, when there is a violation.

City Attorney Davenport stated that there are two basic models to use when putting together ordinances. He added that one option would be to have the elected officials to be the panel to hear the complaint. He further added that the other option is to have a group other than the elected officials to hear complaints. He stated that some communities have a group of ten people, and when an ethics complaint is filed; they will randomly select three to five of those people to hear the complaint. He added if there is merit to the complaint; it would be sent to the

elected officials. Attorney Davenport stated that typically, the State Ethics Commission handles campaign disclosure issues. He then stated that Gwinnett County took their Ethics Ordinance off of the books about fifteen years ago.

Councilmember Jackson stated that selecting a group of people from the public, who have no training and allowing them to hear ethics complaints would be dangerous. She added that criminal complaints should be handled by the District Attorney and ethics complaints should be handled by the Georgia State Ethics Commission.

Councilmember Mealing concurred.

Councilmember Jones asked if the Ethics Ordinance was repealed, would that reduce the amount of complaints, particularly frivolous complaints that are trying to disrupt the operations of the City.

City Attorney Davenport responded that it may have some discouraging effect, but if it was not a meritorious complaint; maybe it should be discouraged.

Mayor Moore stated that Council's position seems to be to direct the public to the District Attorney and the State Ethics Commission if they feel that a crime has been committed by this board.

Councilmember Mealing stated that she would support repealing the ethics ordinance. She added that often time these complaints are filed because some of the public may not understand city government or the process for filing complaints.

After a brief discussion Mayor Moore stated that he would entertain a motion regarding the matter.

On motion of Councilmember Jackson, seconded by Councilmember Williams and carried, the aforementioned ordinance was repealed. Vote was unanimous.

Mayor Moore stated that he had a few other issues that he wanted to discuss. He added at the last Council meeting, a question was raised regarding televising public meetings. He then stated that he would like to put this item on the table for discussion.

Following a brief discussion, Council agreed that the ongoing costs to televise Council meetings are not a priority for the City.

He then directed the City Administrator to forward a letter to Ms. Madden to inform her of Council's decision.

Mayor Moore stated that he would also like to discuss holding town hall meetings. He then informed Council that any member of the Council could offer a town hall meeting.

Councilmember Jones stated that he was not in favor of town hall meetings at this time, but things could change.

Councilmember Mealing stated that she did not find town hall meetings productive and she would not be in attendance.

After a brief discussion Council agreed not to hold town hall meetings with the public.

Mayor Moore stated that he was informed that there was a desire to move the Public Comments section of the agenda to the front of the agenda.

Councilmember Williams stated that it is his desire to move the public comments to the front of the agenda and he feels that two minutes is enough time.

Councilmember Jones stated that the public should not expect a response from Council during public comments. He added that Council should have time to discuss the citizens concerns during Worksession under "Discussion" and a letter should be sent to the citizens regarding the action that was taken.

Council concurred.

Mayor Moore suggested that Public Comments appear on the agenda prior to Review of the Minutes.

Councilmember Mealing asked how would Council get the message out to the public.

Mayor Moore recommended posting the "Rules of Engagement for Public Comments" on a large board to be displayed in the lobby. He added that this would not take effect immediately, but it could start in February. He further added that there should be handouts indicating what the rules are.

After a brief discussion with regards to rearranging Council's agenda concerning public comments, accepting speaker comment cards, as well as allowing the public time to arrive and speak. Council agreed that the public would be allowed to sign up to speak from 6:50 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and no one will be able to sign up to speak after 7:00p.m.

Mayor Moore stated that the city clerk's assistant would stand at the door and make the cutoff at 7:00 p.m.

Councilmember Williams stated that he would like to bring forth a resolution recognizing Union City Athletic Association (UCAA) as the official parent association of Union City.

Mayor Moore stated that Union City would eventually need to have some form of contract between UCAA and the City for the use of facilities and more. He added that this should happen by February/March timeframe.

Councilmember Mealing stated that during this past election, the citizens reiterated that Council should consider creating a recreation department. She added that Council should consider hiring a part-time parks and recreation person. She further added that the City should have someone to help organize the sports and oversee the recreational activities.

Councilmember Jackson suggested that this information be presented to Council during their annual retreat.

Councilmember Mealing stated that all video equipment should be set up in the back of Council Chambers except the media because the cords can be a hazard.

Mayor Moore stated that the department heads and contractors should be present and seated in the first two rows during Worksessions and Regular Council Meetings. He added that eventually he would like the department heads to have a table with nameplates stating who they are and their departments. He further added that he would also like to see new tables and chairs for the City Attorney, City Administrator, and the City Clerk.

Mayor Moore stated that he would also like to see the following:

- A projector, a screen and a laptop dedicated to Council Chambers for presentations.
- A zoning map framed and made available so that it could be brought to Council for their review.
- The third row dedicated to the press and it should indicate "Press" on the end of the row.

Councilmember Mealing stated that she would like the documents from Council's mailbox mailed to Council weekly.

Mayor Moore suggested that Council's mail be forwarded to them every Wednesday.

Councilmember Williams asked if it would be a liability for the City if staff and Council were allowed to bring one guest to the City's workout facility. He added

that he was aware that there has been a problem with some employees bringing guests and giving the code to the workout facility to other people.

Mayor Moore stated that the guest should be accompanied by the employee or Councilmember.

Councilmember Williams asked Mr. Davenport if that was a liability.

City Attorney Davenport stated that it increases some liability exposure, but it is manageable because the employee or councilmember has a connection with the guest and the City can agree to do that.

After a brief discussion Council agreed that the employees and Council can be accompanied by two guests.

Mayor Moore stated that the City has received hotel/motel tax dollars and by state law, it can only be dedicated toward economic development and tourism. He added that one of the major complaints that Union City has is that it does not have a sufficient inventory of restaurants. Mayor Moore stated that he is proposing that those monies be dedicated toward a business conference center that would attract business for seminars and other meetings as well as training. He then asked the board to consider using the money toward a revenue bond or a loan from GMA. He added that this would be an attractive cornerstone for the business community and if Council was agreeable, he would add this to his State of the City Address.

Councilmember Jones stated that he was in favor of this idea because presently, the City has no conference center or any other place to have black tie events.

Mayor Moore stated that because of prior disputes regarding voting, he asked for a voting machine. He then asked Council if they still needed a voting device.

Council was not agreeable to a voting machine.

City Clerk Jacqueline asked that Council announce their Yea's and Nay's for the record as opposed to raising their hands.

Mayor Moore stated that he could announce the vote.

City Attorney Davenport stated that he had three legal matters for executive session.

On motion of Councilmember Mealing, seconded by Councilmember Jackson and carried, Council entered into executive session.

On motion of Councilmember Mealing, seconded by Councilmember Jackson and carried, Council authorized Attorney Davenport to go forward on the issue.

On motion of Councilmember Jackson, seconded by Councilmember Mealing and carried, Council reconvened into regular session.

Chief Collins informed the Mayor and Council of a theft of equipment from one of his fire trucks while it was in the shop for repairs. He informed Council that he has money in the budget to replace the equipment and the appropriate disciplinary action has been taken for failing to remove the equipment prior to taking the truck to the shop.

VI ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Councilmember Jackson, seconded by Councilmember Mealing and carried, the meeting was adjourned.

Jacqueline R. Cossey, City Clerk

Ralph Moore, Mayor