

**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 10, 2008 CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**  
**AT THE JEFFERSON CIVIC CENTER**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Joiner, Council Members Plott, Kinney, Kidd, Griffith, Varnedoe, City Mgr. J. Ward, City Attorney R. Hopkins, City Clerk E. McDonald

- 1. CALL TO ORDER - MAYOR JOINER**
- 2. PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT – JERRY WEITZ**

- A. Review of Public Hearing Procedures – Jerry Weitz

Jerry Weitz, Planning Consultant, read the public hearing procedures into the record.

Mayor Joiner stated that there was a motion made at the last City Council meeting to table a rezoning request which also included a variance and conditional use request regarding the First Baptist Church. We have been notified that the First Baptist Church is withdrawing their request involving V-07-J17, R-07-J33, and CU-07-J02. Since this item was withdrawn it was pulled from the agenda. Please see Mr. Nick Bledsoe's letter, which is part of your agenda packet.

**Rezoning Request**

R-08-J01 Moon Kim KTA, LLC to rezone property (48.019 acres) located on Concord Road north of U.S. Highway 129, also property fronting 600 feet on north side of U.S. Highway 129, from LI (Light Industrial District) to C-2 (Highway Commercial District) for the purpose of retail, hotel and restaurants (Tax Map/Parcel 092/005C).

Chris McCrary, McFarland, Dyer and Associates, presented the concept plan to develop the site with a mixture of uses to include a hotel, restaurant, and retail space. Mr. McCrary said there are a lot of flood areas with the majority of their property being in the flood plain. We are looking at a little over 20 acres that can actually be developed. The concept plan proposed prior to discussion with Mr. Weitz, was above the DRI threshold. We have revised this to be below the threshold. We took out some of the retail area. At the QCPC meeting we went over some conditions of zoning and we do not have a problem with meeting those conditions.

Mayor Joiner noted in the QCPC notes that they are proposing a five-story structure. Mr. McCrary said it depends on marketing. This would be the ideal and we would have to ask for a variance for height increase. The market may not ask for that. Mayor Joiner inquired about fire protection for a five-story structure. City Manager Ward noted that we have a 60' ladder truck and have access to a 100' ladder truck at North Jackson. We will receive written confirmation of that

from the Fire Department. Mayor Joiner noted that they will have to come back for a variance. Council Member Varnedoe inquired as to whether the retail portion will be single story. Mr. McCrary concurred that it will be single story. City Manager Ward asked how many entrances will there be onto Concord Road? Mr. McCrary pointed out three entrances onto Concord Road. Council Member Varnedoe questioned how wide is the buffer between the developable land and the Oconee River? Mr. McCrary replied that they have the 50' state water buffer and 75' impervious setback.

There was no one else to speak in favor or in opposition.

### **3. CITY MANAGER – JOHN A. WARD III**

#### **A. Police Department – Chief Joe Wirthman**

- Chief Joseph Wirthman awarded Officers Johnny Wood, Keith Robinson, and Stephen Bannister for their heroic efforts during the course of the Jackson County Comprehensive High School bomb threat last April.

Chief Wirthman noted that the monthly report is in the Council packet. We have been doing a lot of proactive enforcement throughout the community on the Brockton Road and Damon Gause Parkway. I presented an alarm ordinance to City Manager Ward for his review. We received 67 alarm calls last month, all of which were false alarms. Council Member Plott asked about the cost to send someone out on an alarm call. Chief Wirthman said it's about \$50.00 per call. City Manager Ward stated that the biggest situation they run into is new commercial or retail – sometimes we go out to the location four times per day for days on end. Sometimes it takes two to three weeks to get the retail and commercial alarms fixed.

Chief Wirthman introduced two new canines – Rex and Auke. Auke is drug trained. Rex is tracking and drug trained. These animals are officers. They are keeping the streets safe and keeping drugs out of our City. Most drug stops are on I-85. Officer Johnny Wood noted that Rex has made three felony trackings and he's been on the road since August 2007. Officer Jay Parker stated that they are alpha dogs and they do not get along with other dogs or with each other. Chief Wirthman stated that they will not be bred.

#### **B. Finance – Amie Vaughan**

- February Budget Report

Ms. Vaughan stated that she's added the revenues to the budget report as requested during last month's meeting and hopes these reports will give Council the information to make sound financial decisions throughout the year. Please feel free to ask questions about the new report.

The coming months are going to be very busy with preparation of the 2009 budget. Jackson County has requested that we have the digest set by the end of

July so that bills may be mailed by August 20. This is two months earlier than last year's deadline. Most department directors have already received their budget workbooks for 2009 to begin the budget process.

Mayor Joiner asked when 2007 would be finalized. Ms. Vaughan said she is working on it and is very close to having it finalized. We have one more month of accruals. City Manager Ward said typically it will be January through March and then we will be ready to hand it over to the auditor.

### **General Fund**

There is currently 83.33% of the Fiscal Year remaining. General Fund has collected 39.41% of the budgeted revenue for Fiscal Year 2008. The majority of revenue is from the collection of property taxes. There is currently 85.81% of the budget remaining. All departments are currently operating within their budget.

We did not budget for a Tax Anticipation Note during 2008. General Fund Contingency balance is \$521,697, however, this number will decrease due to the 22% increase in employee health insurance. It will also be decreased to pay the Standards Foundation \$6,940 for the Safety Check Program allocation for 2008 which was approved by council after FY08 budget was approved

### **Water and Sewer**

Water and Sewer Fund has collected 2.51% of their budgeted revenue. However, 50.84% of the revenue budget is GEFA loans to fund Capital Projects. Also during the month of February, bills were not prepared until the month of March, so February's revenue is not reflected in this report. The Water and Sewer Fund has 94.35% of the budget remaining. Of this budget 59.08% is related to Capital Projects. Looking at operating expenses there is 86.2% of the budget remaining.

### **Quad Cities Planning and Development**

Through the month of February 7.48% of the revenue has been collected. There is still 93.60% of the operating budget remaining.

City Manager Ward said it has been slow in January and February. We have had projects come through that will be reflected in the March postings.

### **Solid Waste**

During the month of February no Solid Waste was billed out so currently only 7.8% of revenue has been collected. There is currently 91.28% of the operating budget remaining.

**Cash**

Our cash balances are currently as follows:

Cash in Bank – General Fund	\$	2,476,124.30
Cash in Bank – Water & Sewer Fund	\$	791,154.24
Cash in Bank – Quad Cities	\$	101,746.12
Cash in Bank – Solid Waste	\$	41,099.32
Cash in Bank – Impact Fees	\$	231,547.94
Cash in Bank – SPLOST (Rec)	\$	79,188.36
Cash in Bank – SPLOST (Pub Safety)	\$	1,277.75
Cash in Bank – SPLOST (Roads)	\$	353,396.49
Cash in Bank – SPLOST (W&S)	\$	202,785.79

Council Member Griffith questioned the status of the Special Accounts in the Police Department that had been returned from the GBI investigation. City Manager Ward said he’s working with the Accountant to determine the placement of those funds. We are dividing out what would have been applied to the general fund if it would have been appropriately submitted (i.e., the vehicles that were surplus through the County auction and other charitable funds). Those will be divided up between equipment and refunding to the general fund.

Council Member Griffith also inquired about where the money collected by the dogs will go. Chief Wirthman interjected that the DEA takes 20% and the City receives 80% to use for non-budgeted items. It cannot be used on salaries or overtime pay.

- Discussion of New Purchasing Policy

Ms. Vaughan presented general guidelines for the purchasing policy.

<b>Amount</b>	<b>Approval Routing</b>	<b>Minimum Type Price Quotation</b>
\$1.00 - \$99.99	Department Director/Designee	May be purchased with petty cash.
\$100.00 - \$499.99	Department Director/Designee	Competitive pricing at discretion of department director
\$500.00 - \$4,999.99	Department Director/Designee Finance Director	Written, faxed or e-mail Purchase order required
\$5,000.00 - \$19,999.99	Department Director/Designee Finance Director	Written, faxed or e-mail Purchase order required
\$20,000.00 and over	Department Director/Designee Finance Director City Manager	Sealed bid/proposal, advertising in legal organ Purchase order required

- Any product or service available of state contract can be purchased without competitive pricing, however, a purchase order must still be issued based on price.
- Sole source providers will be accepted, however, supporting documentation from the requesting department is required.
- Reverse auctions are permissible.
- Bid bonds shall be required for all projects costing \$50,000 or greater.
- Performance and payment bonds shall be required for all contracts where the cost is \$50,000 or greater.

Council Member Griffith asked that City Manager signature be required for \$5,000 - \$19,000 category. Mayor Joiner asked why this was necessary. Stating that the City Manager needs to designate his Department Directors/Finance Director for that. It doesn't mean he will not be aware of what's being done. He just doesn't need to sign off on it. City Manager Ward said items would have already been approved in the budget. Council Member Plott suggested that we give the Department Director a little more latitude up to \$1,000 or higher. Ms. Vaughan stated that \$2,500 is a little large for her, she would prefer it to not go higher than \$1,500.

City Manager Ward informed Council that we have multiple vendors providing the same materials/supplies to different departments throughout the City. We are going to use state approved pricing or bidding for all the custodial chemicals, etc. for the City. This will allow us to write one check for a given item that is used by all departments, instead of writing six checks for each department that uses the same given item. This will streamline the process and make accounts payable much more efficient.

C. Parks & Recreation – Ben Dillard

- Recreation Advisory Board  
Recreation Director Ben Dillard presented the names of representatives from Ward 3, 4 and 5 of the Recreation Advisory Board that have agreed to serve another term – Ward 3 – Shanta Dalton, Ward 4 – Tommy Knight, Ward 5 – Tom Kimmel.

Mr. Dillard informed Council of three items: (1) The Jefferson Recreation Department recently hosted 16 teams in a state tournament. There is a need for a hotel in the Jefferson area to accommodate those attending such events. (2) Wayne Neal Chevrolet donated \$5,000 in sponsorship funds to the Jefferson Recreation Department. (3) We have over 1,000 signed up

for Spring Sports in a community of over 7,000 citizens with a full-time staff of seven.

- Update on Radio Station  
A city in Florida is considering buying and moving the radio station to Florida. I should have prices for you by the next Work Session, if not the March Voting Session.

D. Public Works Department - Jeff Killip

- Review/Discussion concerning Water Restriction changes  
Public Works Director Jeff Killip informed Council that we received a letter from EPD stating that we have achieved our 10% water reduction. It's lower than 10% - it's 14% winter average. We are easing up on our water restrictions. In the letter in your packet item 8 notes the requirement for an online certification process for professionally certified or licensed landscapers, golf course contractors, and sports-turf landscapers showing proof completion of the Outdoor Wateruse Registration Program.

City Manager Ward informed Council of a state law they are closely monitoring which prohibits a local municipality from managing their own water without the State's permission. While we were proactive in the past in implementing water restrictions based on our water levels, they are promising a three-day turn around with State approval. Mayor Joiner noted that it has not gone to the Senate yet. Mr. Killip said that the Northeast Georgia and Metro Atlanta municipalities are lobbying against it.

- Road Projects
  - MLK Drive was approved by DOT on January 18<sup>th</sup>. We are waiting on notification to schedule a kick off meeting.
  - Horace Jackson line relocation – the grading is complete.
  - John B. Brooks Road – We are waiting word from the County on construction coordination.
  - Hog Mountain Road – utility relocation is on schedule. There is talk of the County extending and widening to the Cousins property.
  - Traffic light cross walk widening was installed last week.
  - One-way system utilities – EMI is doing design engineering on the utility location. We will be meeting with them next week.
  - Civic Center Parking Lot – EMI is doing a design survey. We will be meeting with Michele on determining parking and usage.
  - Public Square – Changing drainage patterns.

Council Member Varnedoe wants to look at widening Park Avenue next to City Hall. City Manager Ward suggested making this a one-way street.

He also said this is something we might want to consider in our upcoming budget year.

- Water & Sewer Projects  
City Engineer Jerry Hood presented his monthly report:

**Parks Creek Reservoir** –The City’s permit application package to the Corps of Engineers is in the final stages, and a copy of the proposed permit conditions is attached. The Hardy Mill Branch mitigation plan and covenants has been forwarded to the Corps of Engineers. The case file is nearing completion, which will be sent to the Corps by Mr. Scott Cole. The UGA update to the Curry Creek Reservoir management plan was submitted to EPD, which in turn has questioned the methodology as it relates to water bodies being pervious. UGA has been contacted to assist in this discussion. A two foot contour map of the reservoir site has been prepared for final planning. EMI has recently met with the “spokesperson” for the property owners and they are providing current boundary survey information to be incorporated into the final concept plan.

**Highway 129 Sewer Extension** – The project has been complete and ready for closeout activities. There has been no change in status for the past four months. A final submittal and close out documentation, as required by the contract documents, remains due from the Contractor. EMI is aware of the concerns of the council regarding this project. Upon receipt of the final documents, EMI will provide an opinion within the limitations of the Engineer’s authority as outlined in the contract documents. Beyond that, further action will be up to the Mayor, City Council and City Attorney.

**Central City WWTF Operations**– A copy of the January operating report is attached. The plant was taken off line From January 7 to January 14, 2008 for maintenance. Both basins were drained to remove accumulated solids and deleterious material that had accumulated due to the automatic bar screen being taken out of service. The facility has functioned outside the permit parameters due to reinitiating the microbiological population after having the plant off line for 8.75 days. Both Jefferson staff and the Georgia EPD were notified before the plant was taken down. The wastewater was diverted to the land application system during maintenance. During the month, the plant operated at an average of 0.277 MGD which considers the time off line period. The maximum day was 0.471 MGD. A reuse water system has been installed for use at the headworks and chemical feed systems. Investigation into upgrading the plant to reuse quality and diverting flows to the upper Curry creek basin are being explored. This idea was discussed at a recent meeting at the Georgia EPD. Guidelines for this method of “indirect potable reuse” are under review at EPD.

**I-85 WWTF Expansion** – The City’s efforts to provide additional capacity at I-85 focuses on two stages of expansion. These include a minor expansion of the Land Application System (LAS) and a future mechanical plant with a discharge. The City has completed the public information aspects of these projects until the actual draft permits are issued. The DDR for the minor expansion has been completed and approved by the Georgia EPD. The DDR for the mechanical plant is also under review by EPD. An extension of the waste load allocation has been requested for the mechanical plant. Both projects were discussed at length at the Georgia EPD recently.

The permit for the existing I-85 LAS and future moderate expansion was duly advertised and this information has been submitted to the Georgia EPD for issuance of the permit.

**Waste water pumping and transfer Facilities for the I-85 Corridor** –This project has been awarded and the pre-construction conference held. A notice to proceed has been issued.

**Plan for High rating water plant facilities-** The plan to “high rate” the filters at the water plant and increase the capacity by 40% is complete and has been submitted to EPD. EPD has visited the plant and given concept approval. Detailed specifications are being prepared for submittal and approval.

**Capital Improvements Element (CIE) and rate study analysis**

The City has approved the future infrastructure study to address future capacity needs and proper funding mechanisms. This study is well underway and will provide a new five, ten and twenty year plan. Water supply and waste water projections will also be provided to the year 2050. Obviously population and water use projections are very subjective at this time due to the economic climate and many other factors. This plan is at the 85% completion stage, with population, customer base, and an implementation schedule being the final components to complete. I recommend this be on the next Work Session agenda.

**Curry Creek Reservoir Enhancement program**

Plans, specifications and bid documents have been completed for this project and submitted to EPD for review. Permitting is in process. The project will include dredging of the upper portion of the reservoir, with final disposition of the dredge material being hauled to the I- 85 spray field properties. The City’s DCA- ITD Grant was approved and the GEFA loan application was approved on January 29<sup>th</sup>. Upon approval of the plans, an appropriate strategy and schedule will be developed in the best interest of the City.

**Hog Mountain Road Utilities Relocation-**

The widening of this road will necessitate the relocation of certain water and sewer facilities owned by the City that are in conflict with future construction. The

contract for construction has been awarded and a pre construction conference held. A notice to proceed has been issued and work is underway.

**Hoschton Street Water Tank Renovation-** Utility Service of Perry Georgia has completed the major portions of this project. The logo, lettering and final clean up remains to be completed.

**Groundwater Resource Investigation**

A&S Environmental has completed a service area wide groundwater resource investigation, using the latest methodology and technology. The preliminary report and recommendations have been submitted. The City staff is investigating properties for potential test well sites.

E. Better Hometown – Beth Laughinghouse

- Jefferson Streetscapes Update  
City Manager John Ward directed Council to the report from Bron Cleveland & Associates on the Transportation Enhancement Activity Project for the downtown area. The preliminary plans and the water management plan have been submitted to Morton Altobeli and the DOT for review. We are awaiting those reviews.

F. Administration – John Ward

- Monthly Department Reports  
In your packet is the monthly department reports that outline the activities of each department.
- Employee Insurance Discussion  
City Manager Ward reminded Council members that during the budget preparation process we planned on a 5-7% increase in employee insurance. We were notified by GMA that we would have a 23% increase effective January 1, 2008. We have two options: (1) Council to authorize \$120,000+ out of the contingency fund to be moved to the employee benefits portion to offset that cost; or (2) Council to authorize a savings of \$6,929 up to \$13,335 per month through a dual option plan presented by Matt Bidwell of MSI Benefits Group.

Matt Bidwell of MSI Benefits Group presented a dual option Blue Cross/Blue Shield POS and PPO program to Council. We recommend that the City continues with Blue Cross/Blue Shield; but, that they do it on a direct basis, not through the Association plan. When you are dealing with an association plan, a lot of the cities have fewer than 50 employees. When you have 50 or more employees, you get better pricing by dealing directly with the insurance company. Small employers (50 employees or less) have a lot of problems buying insurance in the marketplace. The Association incurs the cost of covering lots of small cities and farm it out between all the members in the Association. Because we have more than 50 employees, we can go to Blue Cross/Blue Shield and buy insurance a

lot less expensive than through an Association. We are recommending your current PPO plan and a Point of Service Open Access Plan (POS Open Access). The difference between PPO and POS is under a POS plan your hospitals and doctors agree to accept approximately 20% less for the same service. For example, if two individuals go to St.Mary's for the same procedure and one is covered with PPO and the other with POS, and the hospital is charging \$2,000, under the PPO plan I will pay St. Mary's \$1,800, under the POS I would be paying \$1,500. Hospitals and doctors have over 100 different reimbursement rates for the same procedure.

Our job is to offer to the City and to the employee an insurance that accepts most of the hospitals and doctors you want to go to at the least cost. If you pay out a lot of money in claims, that translates to higher premiums next year.

City Manager Ward informed Council that currently we are paying out approximately \$65,000 per month. We are well over half a million dollars just in those payments alone. In addition to the dual option program, we have broken it out so that rather than just employee and family coverage, we offer employee and spouse, employee and children, as well as employee and family. There are fifty employees who only have employee health coverage. There are six that have employee plus spouse, two that have employee plus children, and sixteen employees who have employee plus family coverage. Out of 74 who are eligible for insurance, the vast majority have employee only. Under both options we are proposing that full insurance be paid for the employee. In 1999, the last time we addressed this issue, the employee was expected to pay 50% of dependent coverage. The numbers in your packet are based on 50-50 split with the City. These are not set in stone, that's why we brought them before you. Council sets how much they require the employee to pay.

Council Member Griffith asked if you would have to change physicians and hospitals if yours are not on the list. Mr. Bidwell states that he never recommends that someone change doctors. All local/regional hospitals are under both plans with the exception of Athens Regional, they are only under the PPO at this time. Athens Regional is approved for cardiac care and emergency care.

Council Member Steve Kinney stated that if you take the POS there is no deductible for hospitals. If I go to Athens Regional, I have a \$500 deductible. Mr. Bidwell said that maybe this would happen. If you are in an Open Access POS if you go to an in-network physician, they are required, by contract, to send you to a network hospital/facility. Any hospital nation-wide is paid as if in-network in case of emergency. If you choose to go out-of-network, you will pay the \$500 deductible and co-pays for out-of-network.

Steven Bannister interjected that he had to pay \$1,000 on his daughter's one-week stay in the hospital.

City Manager Ward said that probably one of the most obvious obstacles in administering a program such as the current one through GMA, is having our City Clerk as the responsible party for signing people up, being expected to answer insurance questions, even the complications of relaying one anticipated question, getting information back, and trying to answer that question, without having the known knowledge and technical terminology. While City Clerk Elizabeth McDonald (and Brenda Duncan before her) are doing an excellent job, the other portion that I like about this plan is that Matt Bidwell is the contact for employees and we eliminate that from the City Clerk's position. We have a new employee come in, we have a trained professional that meets with them one-on-one to determine their insurance needs and signs them up on the appropriate level of service and then serves as a single source contact for questions/customer service. That alone clears up 70% of the confusion we have had with GMA. In the past we have had one card for medical, dental, and prescription drugs. Now, we have Blue Cross/Blue Shield for medical, Delta Dental for dental and Aetna for prescription drugs effective January 1, 2008. I just received one of my cards last week. This new service would place all of those benefits under one card and one person to deal with rather than dealing with Delta, dealing with Aetna, dealing with Blue Cross/Blue Shield, you call this one customer service number for assistance.

Mr. Varnedoe questioned if the employee meets with the insurance company and they recommend the best plan for them. Mr. Bidwell stated that he has about five representatives that assist him with signing up employees. We have worked with Jackson County for two years and every open enrollment we have had five or six of our employees meet with over 360 employees. We meet about 15-20 minutes with each employee, we will come here late in the evening, early in the mornings, we accommodate employees who work different shifts. Jackson County had 350 employees covered under PPO and we offered them a similar package. During open enrollment 82% of their employees signed up for the POS program.

Mr. Bidwell said the deductible cannot decrease lower than \$500. Once you have over 100 employees, it opens up. City Manager Ward said this plan offers \$25,000 in life insurance for employees, where our current plan offers \$10,000. Also, under our current plan we have a one million dollar cap, under the new plan it is five million. In a poll of all of North Georgia, I could not find another municipality that had only a million dollars in coverage. Mr. Bidwell stated that the City is currently paying

\$9.50 for life insurance, with the new plan it's \$.50 less for \$25,000 for employee life insurance and \$5,000 for spouse.

Council Member Griffith questioned about how many employees, if they took the POS, would it effect in changing doctors. City Manager Ward said that he did not do a poll of every single employee. We used the Department Directors as a litmus and asked the Directors to take it back to their employees. That's why we invited employees to attend tonight's meeting to ask questions. Mr. Killip thought there was more information coming and that nothing was nailed down yet. City Manager Ward said we have to move forward and appropriate some money or make a change to the tune of \$30,000/month.

Johnny Childs, Sewer Department, said the rumor among employees is that when the budget was done, it was a mistake. You are trying to cover up a mistake that was made and you are letting the employees pay for it. Did anyone contact other cities to see if their insurance through GMA has increased? City Manager Ward said some municipalities are searching to farm it out, others are choosing to absorb it. Mr. Childs continued to say that most employees feel that the City should absorb this loss, go back and change the budget since the City made the mistake. Mayor Joiner stated that the budget was done in August and we received notification from GMA in October. It wasn't a mistake, Johnny. The Mayor continued to say that City Manager Ward talked to GMA and we were looking for a 5% increase at budget time. And when the official bill came out it was a 23% increase. Mayor Joiner said that it wasn't a mistake and we are not trying to cover anything up. City Manager Ward said under the current deductions, what we are looking at is that currently employees pay 13.65% of their dependent insurance. The City picks up 86.35%. Mr. Bidwell noted that people who are paying family coverage, if they go with POS what they pay will decrease. Mayor Joiner said that employees will have their choice in taking the PPO or the POS.

Mr. Killip said that currently employee dependent coverage is \$69 per week. Based on the PPO, the employee is 2.84% increase, employee plus spouse is 14% reduction, employee with children is 20% reduction, employee with family is 23.57% increase. It would be \$120.02 per week for family coverage, where it's \$69 now. City Manager Ward said rather than 86% paid by the City, 13% paid by employee, Council may want to go to something you are comfortable with instead of going to 50-50 split. We can pay 100% for any employee; under the POS your maximum deduction is \$69 for family coverage. If you choose to go with PPO, you factor in the difference.

Council Member Griffith asked what kind of increase are you looking at for next year? Mr. Bidwell said that your experience plays big into this.

If you come in with good claims you will have a 3-5% increase, if you have a worst case scenario, you could have a 20% increase. We can demand all of your claims experience when you go directly with Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Right now, GMA is resistant about releasing any information on your account. City Manager Ward stated that we had some major experiences last year that was submitted on our insurance and that had a significant effect. When you are in the larger pool with GMA, someone else in another municipality has an experience that effects all coverage in the GMA pool. You can have a 20% increase anywhere, it is up to Council to determine if they are going to continue to bare the cost and plan on a mileage rate that will pay for this cost or whether we divide up that cost with the people who are receiving the benefit. Mr. Bidwell said with the first renewal, you negotiate a renewal that's in line with your budget preparation and budget year.

Amie Vaughan noted that what impressed her was the million versus the five million cap. An employee with a previous employer had a car accident and their expenses well exceeded one million. If this happened to any of us, the insurance we are currently on would not continue to cover us. There are a group of people, myself included, that would be happy to have the POS plan. We are trying to offer better insurance at a better cost.

Council Member Kinney asked about a book of physicians. Ms. Vaughan said it's in Tonya's office. Council Member Kinney continued to say that an employee could check with Tonya to determine if their doctor participates in this plan. City Manager Ward stated that Department Directors have been provided a list of physicians within a certain radius of Athens and Jefferson. Mr. Bidwell said he has a detailed description of the POS and PPO if anyone would like a copy.

Dean Love said his understanding is that the POS is an upgraded HMO. His experience with HMO's has not been favorable. Mr. Bidwell stated that a POS plan is a better discounted program Under typical HMO you have to get a primary care doctor, you have to get a referral, you have to stay in network to receive coverage and with POS you have to do none of those. The real difference in PPO and POS is how the provider's are paid. There is no information on having to get a second opinion in the POS literature.

Council Member Griffith talked to two of his specialists today and they said they had to have a referral. Mr. Bidwell stated that Blue Cross started selling this program in 1994 and required referrals on this program until July 1, 2006. On July 1, 2006 they offered it as a non-referral product – Open Access. Tell your doctors it's an Open Access POS. Have your doctor call my office and I will explain to his office personnel that this is

non-referral and once they are aware of the type of program they will quickly agree with me that it's non-referral.

Kathy Wirthman inquired about the dental plan. Mr. Bidwell stated that it's not a POS dental plan, it's a typical dental plan. Your dental will work independently of your medical. You can go to any dentist you like. It has a good reimbursement. Ms. Wirthman asked if vision benefits are included. Mr. Bidwell stated that there are no vision benefits except the standard discounts you get at Lenscrafters. Vision plans are terrible values.

Ms. Wirthman continued by asking can we change after a year during open enrollment? Mr. Bidwell stated that you can change from PPO to POS or vice versa at the annual open enrollment.

Ben Dillard asked if this includes wellness visits. Mr. Bidwell replied that all the plans have wellness visit benefits.

Kevin Crowe inquired about whether the City will pay anything on family coverage under PPO. City Manager Ward stated that it's 100% employee on the POS, 50% of the dependent cost and 100% on the PPO and the figures you are seeing are also 50% of the dependent cost. That's the question now, whether we are going back to almost 90% of the dependent cost or whether we will look at more of a blended ratio of that.

Mayor Joiner confirmed that the \$69 employees pay now covers health, dental, and life. That's the maximum amount they pay whether they have a spouse, single person with children, or whether they cover spouse and five children. It's one fee under the old system. That's why we went to the tiered system. If we do 60-40, that will change all four tiers. We will have to change it accordingly based on those 16 families that are over the \$69 that we are currently taking out. This is not an easy topic; but, it's one that's not been addressed in the last eight years. The option to stay where we are and spend the almost \$130,000 per year is still there. Mayor Joiner asked if 1999 was the last time there was an increase. City Manager Ward concurred. Mayor Joiner said there had been increases all these years and it hasn't come back to City Council to absorb that cost. City Manager Ward said we will monitor this on a year by year basis to avoid this in the future.

Council Member Kinney stated that if I go with POS I might have to pay more per week for dependent coverage, but I would not have to pay anything if I had to go to the hospital a few times a year, it would more than pay for itself after the first hospitalization. It's a tremendous savings.

Dean Love said that if an employee does not make much money and they have to now pay over \$100 per week for dependent coverage, they will not make any money. We will not be able to keep the employees we have. I had cancer in 2000 and my children have congenital muscle diseases, so I go to where the doctor tells me to go. It will hurt employees that do not make much money.

City Manager John Ward said he's trying to provide the same benefit percentage wise whether you have children or not. Mayor Joiner said we need to do it on a percentage basis. You can't say we are not going to do anymore than \$69 per month. That might be fine now; but, if insurances increases again, then it's not. We will be right back where we are now. The City cannot continue to absorb it every year.

Steven Bannister stated that we are looking at 16 people that have dependent coverage. We have fifty that are not going to put their families on City insurance coverage. City Manager Ward said that the sixteen will not be paying the extra, we only have eight that will be paying extra. I will do an across the board blended 80-20 back down to 50-50 and we will bring it back before you for your approval. Coverage cost for an employee is \$365 on the POS. The employee plus spouse is \$730, employee plus children is \$693, and employee plus family is 1,095.12 per month. If you add that to your salary, you are looking at a \$12,000 increase, and out of that \$1,000 the City's paying almost 87% of it.

City Manager Ward stated that we are looking at a May 1<sup>st</sup> conversion. MSI Benefits will put together a complete packet to provide to all employees.

- Discussion of Alcohol/Liquor Ordinance to allow for outside consumption at special events.

City Manager Ward informed Council that it was determined by legal review that your current ordinance will not allow for outside liquor or beer sales at special events. I've included in your packet an ordinance I have worked on and had enforced in another location. I would like for you to look over this and give us input. With your support, we will move forward in implementing these additional options for special events with a few changes to make them appropriate for the City of Jefferson. We will bring that before you for the next City Council meeting. I will forward this to Ronnie for final approval.

Mayor Joiner questioned how this was going to impact our Streetscape plans if we have restaurants on the square that want to put tables out on the sidewalk and people eat and want to serve beer and wine. City Manager Ward said that currently this is prohibited. You have to be in an

enclosed area right now. Mayor Joiner stated that he knows this is done on the streets of Athens. City Manager Ward stated that with completion of the Streetscape, we are looking at \$1.5 million investment in downtown to try to encourage outdoor dining. If we tackle the entire liquor ordinance, we may want to have more than one review of that.

- Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA).

City Manager Ward informed Council that we are participating in the local updated of census addresses with the RDC. Staff has spent a lot of time updating our City limit lines. We are moving forward with completing that update. We have old tax parcel data from RDC; but, now with the addition of a GIS Department within the County, we have updated parcel data with the county. We are overlaying our zoning districts on that so that we will be both completing a new City limits boundary map, updating our zoning map, as well as moving forward with our annexation of islands. A lot of funding is tied to this – school funding, etc. We had a project we were working on with GA Power to update our franchise fees. The employee that identified the changes that needed to be made and the increase in fees from Georgia Power more than paid for her salary for the year. Projects like that and updates, like our insurance update, are what we are working on throughout the staff.

- 2008 GMA Annual Convention Registration Update

We have registered everyone for GMA's Annual Convention in Savannah, then we unregistered them because of GMA's problems with their computer system. We will register everyone again on Monday.

- Discussion concerning potential update to the City of Jefferson Impact Fee Program.

City Manager Ward informed Council that we have just completed our capital improvement element as well as our financial report to DCA concerning our impact fee. When we did the original (dated December 6, 2004), it was a methodology report completed by Ross & Associates for the library, fire protection, police department and parks and recreation. At the time, the main focus was on parks and recreation. If you choose to, now would be the appropriate time to update the methodology report. We have the possibility of looking for additional revenues for the library. We received a contribution of up to \$100,000.00 from Jackson County that will be placed in a new library fund (a deferred revenue fund safeguarded just for that). We have a growing population and part of state certification requires that you have a certain number of patrol officers per population. If we had to have any more officers, we would have to stack them on top of each other in their current facility. Ross & Associates is quoting

approximately \$8,000 for updating this. We need your input on whether we should move forward on updating this or add it as a potential budget item next year. Mayor Joiner and Council Member Kidd concurred that we need to proceed now with the update. City Manager Ward stated that the Governor signed off on three new libraries this year and we could have the option of getting our library on that list in the future.

- Schedule of Activities

March 22<sup>nd</sup> is the Easter Egg Hunt at Curry Creek Park.

March 29<sup>th</sup> at Crawford Long Museum is a grant funded program, Stories Through Folktales & Song

April 26<sup>th</sup> is Movie Night (The Bee Movie).

- April Agenda items currently being prepared by staff:

- Street Lights
- Adoption of Code of Ordinances
- Conversion to bi-weekly pay
- Downtown historical monument restoration presentation

City Manager Ward pointed out to Council items that staff are currently working on for the April agenda stating that he is providing this information so that Council can add any items they would like to the upcoming agenda.

He noted that we are working on our Street Light issue.

We are moving forward with the adoption of the Code of Ordinances Ms. McDonald is working on a game plan for converting to bi-weekly pay. Currently she spends one day per week preparing paper checks. We are moving to creating a system toward bi-weekly pay with as little disruption as possible, and that will merge with our direct deposit. We will not only save on time and material, but will also save a good deal on staff time.

We are working with a group, with your approval, who is moving forward on a downtown historical monument restoration presentation. The group wants to raise private funds for a historical monument in the downtown area and then make that as a donation to the City. Beth Laughinghouse is working with other civic groups as far as adoption of trees, etc.

Council Member Steve Kinney had a suggestion for the islands in the City. City Manager Ward stated that the census update project will address the islands.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Gordon Mann, member of the Board of Directors of the Jefferson Walk Homeowners Association, informed Council that they pay JEMC for their City street lights. There are a lot of homeowners who do not pay for their City lights. I am paying twice – once for myself and once for those who do not pay a dime for their City lights. This will be addressed in April? City Manager Ward concurred that it will be addressed in April.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

Council Member Bosie Griffith questioned why water bills went out a week late last month? I received several calls on this. Is there any way we can get this out on time? We have people cross trained, even if someone is out. It put some people up into a higher water bracket. City Manager Ward stated that we are working on that. We have a new employee who had a death in the family and she was out. We are working on cross training and actually, Candy Romines, will be able to take care of that with Tonya Crumley's assistance. We are working so that we have multiple people do that job.

6. **ADJOURN – MAYOR JOINER**

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Jim Joiner, Mayor

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Elizabeth McDonald, City Clerk