Minutes
Fayette County / City of Fayetteville Called Meeting
Fayette County Commission Chambers
140 Stonewall Avenue West, Suite 100
Fayetteville, Georgia 30214
April 9, 2014
6:00 p.m.

Fayette County Commissioners	Steve Brown, Chairman Charles Oddo, Vice Chairman David Barlow
Fayette County Commissioners Absent:	Allen McCarty Randy Ognio
Fayetteville City Council	Greg Clifton, Mayor Mickey Edwards Ed Johnson Paul Oddo, Jr. Jim Williams Scott Stacey
County and City Staff	Steve Rapson, Fayette County Administrator Joe Morton, Fayetteville City Manager Floyd Jones, Fayette County Clerk Tameca P. White, Fayette County Deputy Clerk

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1. Call to Order – Fayette County Commission Chairman Steve Brown

Fayette County Commissioner Chairman called the April 9, 2014 Joint Meeting of the Fayette Commission Board of Commissioners and the City of Fayetteville City Council to order at 6:03 p.m.

2. Discussion concerning Fayette County's Fire Consolidation Proposal

Fayette County Commission Chairman Steve Brown gave opening comments on Fayette County's Fire Consolidation Proposal and how both the City of Fayetteville and Fayette County has worked in the past in order to bring Pinewood Studios to Fayette County.

Fayette County Administrator Steve Rapson provided the joint elected officials and the audience with a PowerPoint presentation on Fayette County's Fire Consolidation Proposal. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation, identified as "Attachment 1," follows these minutes and is made an official part hereof.

Fayette County Commission Chairman Steve Brown stated that reallocating the existing resources more efficiently is one of the benefits of the proposed consolidation since consolidation provides a service delivery model that is more efficient to fire operations. He said the consolidation format would eliminate issues concerning automatic aid and future annexations with no decrease in existing service deliveries. He explained that the boundaries for the City of Fayetteville are not stable, and as the city pushes out through annexation then the County has to pull back its services. He said the proposed consolidation, as presented is balanced, requiring using the existing fire tax rate with no fire tax rate increase either proposed or

warranted. Chairman Brown said Fayetteville residents would not pay more for the consolidation than they do currently for fire services. He explained that the County's fire tax is a separate, distinct tax that shows up individually on the tax bill in addition to other city and county taxes. He said the proposed consolidation would retain all the full-time City of Fayetteville fire staff at a better pay rate than their existing salaries, while leaving all the fire stations operational. He said all fire staff would become Advanced Life Support (ALS) rated under the proposed consolidation. Chairman Brown said Fayette County would expedite building the Veteran's Parkway Fire Station saying the building process would begin in 2015 and it becoming operational the following year. He stated that the unincorporated County's Insurance Service Organization (ISO) ratings would be enhanced, and that consolidation would help the County in aiding with its economic development capacity. He said consolidation would provide a Fayette County homestead exemption for qualified City of Fayetteville residents. He said the long-term approach showed that in 2018, the City of Fayetteville's fund balance is projected to be depleted; although the economy does fluctuate.

County Administrator Steve Rapson added that the proposed consolidation would allow for qualified City of Fayetteville residents to apply for homestead exemptions; meaning money would be returning indirectly back to the City of Fayetteville.

Fayette County Commission Chairman Steve Brown and Fayette County Administrator Steve Rapson provided additional comments. Chairman Brown then opened the floor for public comments.

Steven Woodworth: Mr. Woodworth, an Assistant Chief of the Atlanta Fire Department, who resides in Brooks, spoke for approximately 26 minutes. He said he was concerned about misinformation that had been provided on this subject. He then spoke about the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) ratings saying the City of Fayetteville has an ISO rating of Class 4 and Fayette County has an ISO rating of Class 4/8B, while explain some of the criteria used to make the ratings calculations. He spoke about the differences in the ratings, reasons for the different ratings, and his concerns with the ratings and consolidation. He asked why the County Commissioners were taking on the City of Fayetteville's fire problem when the County has not fixed his fire problem. He said the Commissioners were elected to serve him, not the City of Fayetteville, and that he has been asking to have his fire protection problem fixed. He also asked why the County was buying golf courses when he has a fire protection problem since fire protection is a higher priority. He suggested the County should have invested $1.3 million in fixing fire protection in Fayette County before it bought a golf course. Commissioner Brown responded to some of the issues Mr. Woodward spoke about. He told the Fayetteville City Council that its Fire Department is operating at a higher level than the County's Fire Department. He stated that diluting a diluted system will only dilute it more. He said the papers were reporting that consolidation would enhance and improve ISO scores, but he told the elected members that there would not be an improvement of the scores. He stated that in over his 32 years of experience with nine separate fire departments, including both the City of Fayetteville's Fire Department and the Fayette County Fire Department, that that city's fire department is the most fiscally minded, well managed and well led department he has ever been a part of. He attributed its success to the City of Fayetteville's Fire Department's leadership.

County Commissioner Chairman Steve Brown stated that there was a problem with the water pressure in Brooks, and that the Water Committee was talking about that very issue seeking to bring appropriate water capacity to the area for the hydrants. Chairman Brown also stated that the golf course was purchased with Special Purpose Local Option Tax (SPLOST) funds that are set aside for road projects due to the 2004 SPLOST. He said the project was the number one transportation project in the county with unanimous jurisdictional support. He said the money could not be used for fire protection, so there was not choice in how the money was spent between either fire protection or constructing a road for future use.

Larry Dell: Mr. Dell spoke for approximately 21 minutes. He reminded Commissioner Brown that one Commission Board cannot bind another Commission Board. He then spoke to the individual city council members, beginning with Mayor Greg Clifton, asking if they were in a private meeting with members or a member of the County Commission that was not published. Each council member replied that they had met

in private meetings with members of the County Commission. It was pointed out that there was no quorum so that the meetings did not have to be advertised or published to the local media, and that the meetings took place in a public restaurant. Mr. Dell asked if fire consolidation was such a great deal, while did the elected members have to meet in private. Mr. Dell also asked if the city council members were able to carry a copy of the proposal home for further study if it was such a great proposal. He then asked each city council member if they saw an advantage to consolidation. The city council members responded to each of Mr. Dell's questions. Mayor Clifton said a couple of years ago Pinewood Studios was not in Fayette County or in Fayetteville, and the needed growth to stand up a new fire station at Pinewood would deplete the city's fund balance causing the city to raise taxes. Mayor Clifton added that it was telling to him that only two percent of the calls made to the City of Fayetteville's Fire Department involved fire, and this consolidation would grade the employees with Advanced Life Support. Mr. Dell asked, if someone looked at Fayetteville's financial figures, how $1 million for fire impact fees was missed, even after the fire fund was paid off. He also stated that $300,000.00 in grant money was also "missed" in the financial calculations.

Fayette County Administrator Steve Rapson replied that no one overlooked the $1 million and it was understood that there was $1 million from impact fees. He said that $1 million would be added to build the Veterans Parkway Fire Station, and the County did not count any of the fire grants that it has because the Impact Fee money is treated just like a capital fund and the Vehicle and Equipment Fund meaning not all funds are reflected in the PowerPoint presentation material. He explained that the provided material showed operational dollars, but that no other funds were missed.

Mr. Dell spoke about how the City of Fayetteville has historically spent its money very well and very prudently, and he asked how the city council could believe the information provided to them about the city going broke without doing their own individual research. Mr. Dell stated that it was true that Pinewood Studios was not in Fayette County two years ago, but it was unknown how much revenue it and the ancillary businesses would bring to the county. Mr. Dell also questioned a statement saying the county's fire departments had to work around the city's jurisdictional borders; creating the need for consolidation. He said he had not seen a toll booth or gate for people entering the City of Fayetteville. Mr. Dell reported that the city has reduced staffing due to the lagging economy, that the City of Fayetteville has outstanding staff and an outstanding Fire Department, and that they know what they are doing. He said when he was in the military most of the medics were not paramedics, but they would "save your butt" since they were trained in basic medical practices. He said the guys on the fire trucks do a great job, are able to do a quick assessment, and may even stop a medical transport. Mr. Dell was in opposition to the proposed fire consolidation.

Jessica Leonard: Ms. Jessica Leonard of the Fayette County Fire Department reminded everyone that the county runs all the calls with the city. She said one jurisdiction could not do without the other, and that they already work together.

Al Hovey-King: Mr. Hovey-King spoke for approximately 19 minutes. He said he was able to find the same information that Mr. Woodward found on the internet, and that he has an issue with the proposed staffing. He spoke about the County's Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating. He also spoke about the number of calls that the city made into the county as well as the average county to city calls, saying the city went into the county more often than the county came into the city. He spoke about how the millage rates are paid for the services provided to the City of Fayetteville. He suggested that the citizens of Fayetteville would have a higher tax burden without improvement to their services. Mr. Hovey-King stated that there has been virtually no public information presented on this matter, and virtually no one knew about this matter coming up. He stated if the city council were to approve the consolidation then it would be doing a disservice to the citizens of Fayetteville.

Betty McKibben: Ms. McKibben said the figures and recent conversation had blown her mind. She said that after hearing the concerns and figures, it should be evident that the people are concerned about the City of Fayetteville. She said the issue was about an individual department with individuals working in it, and that the individuals have heavy burdens. She asked what would happen to the years of service for the Fayetteville firefighters who would become a part of the Fayette County Fire Department.

County Administrator Steve Rapson replied that if an employee was currently enrolled in the Defined Benefits Plan with three years vested, that same vesting would roll over into the County's retirement plan. Additionally, he said whatever seniority a City of Fayetteville employee had would carry over to the County. He stated that the employee would be placed on the same vacation and sick leave time as well, with accruals matching county employees.

Ms. McKibben addressed the City of Fayetteville's Council, saying she wanted the council to assure the citizens that it supports the city, its citizens, and its employees. She asked the council to vote no to the consolidation, saying the members of the Fayetteville Fire Department represent many years of service, that they have families, that they lay their lives on the line. She asked the council to consider the members and all their work, and to keep the Fayetteville Fire Department. She suggested that the city council would be making a life changing decision. She asked the city council not to succumb to the political pressure being applied to it by the county government, and to vote against consolidation. She asked if the county would then go after the City of Fayetteville's Police Department and even other departments from other jurisdictions.

Ken Holland: Mr. Holland said he was concerned that the county was planning to take over the city, and he asked how the county was planning to pay for all of the extra employees. He also asked if the city's funding would come with the consolidation to the county. He pointed out that a Commissioner's house burned down recently, and he spoke about a fire that he experienced where the County responded with two firefighters.

County Administrator Steve Rapson replied that this proposed Fire Consolidation effort was being done at the request of the City of Fayetteville's mayor and council. He said the City of Fayetteville's Fire Department employees would be brought over to the County at the County's pay scale so that the employees would not be harmed. He said the money would come from the City of Fayetteville's $2.1 million digest; similar to how EMS and E-911 works throughout the county. He said the proposal assumes that the 3.07 Fire Millage Rate the County could bring the firefighters over with County salaries while negating shortfalls. He said that, in theory, a citizen of City of Fayetteville would see a line item on their bill for the County at 3.07 millage rates with a corresponding reduction in the millage rate of 3.07 for the City of Fayetteville. He stated that the consolidation would not cost the citizens of Fayetteville any extra money.

Ms. Wilbanks: Ms. Wilbanks, from the Lakemont subdivision, said everybody had just gone through the school board fiasco where schools were closed, children and parents were uprooted, and then, suddenly, money was found. She said the teachers were paid, but not one school was reopened. She stated that when the city gets rid of its fire department, it will never get the fire department back.

Ken Steele: Mr. Steele stated that Fayette County and the City of Fayetteville both have outstanding fire departments. He was surprised to hear that the mayor and city council asked for the consolidation proposal, and he said the city council was shortchanging its citizens. He spoke about the quality and good work of the city fire department. Mr. Steele said innocence, like the fire department, once surrendered, is never recovered. He could not understand why the city council would get rid of the fire department; especially since maintaining a fire department is one of the ten criteria needed to be and remain a city. He said no one had expressed a problem or concern that can only be solved by consolidation. He said he opposed consolidation saying short-term solutions do not cure long-term challenges. He suggested that the two new members on the city council were not qualified to make a decision on the matter due to their lack of experience. He clarified that he was not trying to be divisive in his statement, and he wished them well.

Michael Green: Mr. Green, a City of Fayetteville firefighter, said he had a lot of questions that needed to be answered. He told the city council that he was the person they were affecting with their decision, and that he would be taking a $2,400.00 pay cut with Fayette County if consolidation was approved. Fayette County Commissioner Chairman Steve Brown encouraged the City of Fayetteville's firefighters to meet with the County Administrator and the County's Human Resources Director concerning their proposed positions and pay in the County.

Ken Steele: Mr. Steele returned to the podium saying city residents pay 3.07 mils for fire services and that he was told that if the consolidation was approved that the city would reduce the 3.07 mils for those fire services so there is not a tax increase for city residents. He said he had not heard a city council member tell about that statement, and he asked the city council if they were committing to a reduction of the millage rate in the amount of 3.07 mils. A council member replied that he had not thought that far ahead, and Mr. Steele asked if he thought that should be thought about.

Fayette County Commission Chairman Brown stated that the City of Fayetteville had to face economic reality, as reflected with its part-time staffing.

Chris Stanley: Mr. Stanley, a firefighter for Lamar and Pike Counties, and whose family lives and has worked for both the city's and county's fire departments, asked Fayette County Administrator Steve Rapson if, in his capacity in other cities, had this consolidation issue arisen. He also asked if other jurisdictions were similarly talking about consolidation. He said his father, a resident of Fayette County, was concerned about taxes since he has property in both the city and the county. He also asked about the numbers of time calls were issued from both the city and the county. Mr. Stanley said he and his father were concerned that the city would annex more land, but would be subject to the county's financial needs. Mr. Stanley also asked if the county had approached the City of Peachtree City in order to consolidate its fire department as well.

Josh Collins: Mr. Josh Collins, a City of Fayetteville firefighter, said he saw his proposed raise of $500.00 if the consolidation goes through, and he asked about his pension and retirement with the County. He also asked about the County's healthcare benefits. He also asked why the City of Fayetteville's command staff was being downgraded to a lesser level due to the consolidation. He asked what benefit the city firefighters would have should the proposed consolidation be approved. He said the city and county already works well together, and he asked what the problem was with the current situation. Mr. Collins said he did not know why this was a big issue and why the firefighters were not valued anymore by the city. He spoke about the financial sacrifices the firefighters have taken over the years, and he asked the city council to allow them to keep working for the city.

Carl Scottman: Mr. Scottman pointed out that the city council has not spoken much, that it has allowed the county to be out front and speak on this matter, and that the information was all one-sided. He asked the new council members to get with the system and figure out why this was going to a countywide operation with minimal information from the city council. He asked the city council to put this matter to a public referendum for the citizens of the city and county to vote on the matter. He suggested that City Hall would be full when the vote occurs, and that there was the potential for recall efforts to take place should the vote go through without public input. He said the County's fire service has grown and done a great growth model, but that it was not ready for "takeover mode" despite the political entities that were looking for consolidation. He said everyone who felt the City of Fayetteville could not afford a fire department should be ashamed.

Bobby Hayden: Mr. Hayden, a City of Fayetteville firefighter, said he had worked for both the city and the county. He said he worked with Fayette County for 23 years, but through a series of events he went to work for the City of Fayetteville Fire Department. He spoke about both the unity and distinctiveness of the city's and county's firefighters. He said the consolidation was a wash, and that it would save the city $350,000.00. He said if saving $350,000.00 was the issue that he would gladly give up whatever it took. He said that County Administrator Steve Rapson, Commission Chairman Steve Brown, and the other County

Commissioners have spoken to the city firefighters, but that he had not even had the opportunity to meet with a city councilmember. He suggested that the firefighters' input was important. He also asked, if the consolidation deal was so good, why not turn the consolidation around and give the control to the City of Fayetteville. He reiterated that these decisions were affecting a lot of people. He said the county's firefighters were good people, and so were the city's firefighters. He questioned the fairness of how the city and county employees would be affected. He thought it was not fair for Chief Jones to "come down." He thought this was a big hit for anyone to get rid of the fire department. He said when the city gives up its fire department and the county raises the taxes, the citizens of Fayetteville will not have any say in the matter. He repeated that he has talked to the County Administrator more than the city councilmembers, and that was disheartening.

Keith Harris: Mr. Harris, a Captain with the City of Fayetteville Fire Department, spoke about having two families, his home family and his Fayetteville Fire Department family. He said he would receive a $200.00 raise if the proposed consolidation is approved, but that he would actually lose over $400.00 per month. He said he was looking to retire, and this consolidation would hit his retirement hard. He said the consolidation would cause a loss of income, putting financial stress on him at a time when his child was preparing for college. He also asked where his time of service would go if the consolidation was approved. He asked the elected officials to take these considerations seriously since he has two families and loves them all. County Administrator Steve Rapson responded to Captain Harris' concerns.

Jimmy Jones: Mr. Jones said he could appreciate what the firefighters were going through. He also suggested that the County Commissioners should be let off the hook since it seemed the Fayetteville City Council was the entity throwing the citizens under the bus. He was strongly concerned that the city approached the county on this matter. He said the councilmembers could be voted out of office, and he asked them to vote no on this matter.

Sean Vansis: (***Note:*** *audio recording did not clearly capture the speaker's last name*). The speaker, a City of Fayetteville firefighter, said there were other questions that needed to be answered. He spoke about the numbers of hours he works, and the strain he and his family are going through. He said he would gladly work for anyone, but he asked the city council to provide the people with more time to get answers on this matter. County Administrator Steve Rapson and Fayette County Fire Chief David Scarbrough addressed the concerns that were expressed. The speaker thanked Mr. Rapson and Chief Scarbrough for answering his questions and stated that he wished he could get the same amount of time to speak with his city council.

Melina Collins: Mrs. Collins, the wife of a City of Fayetteville firefighter, said the answer to the budgetary questions that was asked earlier caused her to urge everyone to consider why this initiative was voted down in the past. She said she wanted to know how many other options have been put on the table to keep the city out of the red. Chairman Brown said that the options are what is currently had and the proposal, and he spoke about the financial difficulties that the city is facing. Mrs. Collins asked the elected officials to not be hasty in their decision in considering only one option.

Brenda Stevens: Ms. Stevens asked why this matter could not be brought before the citizens of the City of Fayetteville and the Fayette County citizens. Chairman Brown responded to Ms. Steven's questions.

Sandra Parker-Barnes: Mrs. Parker-Barnes said she knew the city firefighters and that they are great people. She wished that the City of Peachtree City's Fire Department had the City of Fayetteville's performance. She stated that the City of Peachtree City's Fire Department had not reached the same achievement that the City of Fayetteville's Fire Department has achieved.

Frank Gardner: Mr. Gardner suggested that fire services could drive down Lester Road, since it is almost like a four-lane highway, if they needed a way to get through Fayetteville. He said he came to the meeting leaning toward approving the consolidation, but that he was given reason to reconsider his position. He said he had not heard about the percentage of costs, and he asked where the costs would come from. He said

he did not know what the people of Fayetteville were worried about since in another twenty years the municipalities would push out the county. Mr. Gardner said he wanted to see the percentage of how much would be paid per household. He said there was a greater probability for people to get hurt in a condensed area, but that the county was paying more. He said he was probably in favor of combining the fire services since Fayetteville is growing and expanding, and since it meant he would be living in Fayetteville due to future annexations.

Bill Grist: Mr. Grist said he did not know which branch of government brought this matter up, and he asked why this matter was brought up. He said he did not see any reason for the proposed consolidation. He said if the proposal came from the city, then there were two members on the city council who have not had time to figure out what is going on yet.

Fayette County Commission Chairman Steve Brown replied this was a proposal that came up a couple of years ago, and that when it first came up neither he nor Commissioner Allen McCarty had information on the initiative. He said some of the city council members had limited information. He stated that when this issue came up again, he wanted to make sure everyone had information on this matter. He added that this matter came up due to finances, and he acknowledged that since this matter last came up he has had continuing conversations with members of the city council on how to work together. He said the presenting issues were driven by efficiency and finances.

Fayetteville Mayor Greg Clifton agreed that finance was a big part of the discussion. He said the city thought it would get revenue from Pinewood Studios, but that the tax abatements reduced the expected tax revenue to the city. He stated that, in the meanwhile, the city has to stand up a fire department. Mayor Clifton stated that the county came to the city and asked for the proposed consolidation, that the city said it would be glad to consider the proposal should the County provide the proposal, and the county came up with the proposal. He stated that nothing has been hidden and everything is in the open for the people to review and make a decision on. Mayor Clifton then spoke briefly on the financial difficulties and its impacts that the city is facing.

Chairman Brown spoke briefly about the tax abatement revenue from Pinewood Studios.

Larry Dell: Mr. Dell returned asking Chairman Brown who paid for the other public safety services. He encouraged the city councilmembers to run for county office if they want to represent the county. Mr. Dell said people who own property have a choice of annexation, and that annexation could be turned down. He said the city council was elected to represent the people of the City of Fayetteville and told them that if they could not fulfill their duties then they should "turn their badge in." He asked the city council to think seriously about this matter. Councilman Edwards replied to Mr. Dell's comments.

Councilman Edwards said silence does not imply complicity or agreement, but that it means he was there to get understanding on the issues. He said he was there to hear from the citizens and he asked the people not to jump to conclusions. He said he thought the proposal was put to rest a couple of years ago, but he wanted to make sure all the information was provided and understood. He said Mr. Woodworth gave a good counter-analysis. He stated this is a democratic process, and he said this meeting was for fact gathering and hearing from the citizens. He repeated that he took his responsibility seriously.

Al Hovey-King: Mr. Hovey-King returned to the podium saying he went over the 2009 through 2013 mutual aid responses, and he asked Fayette County Fire Chief David Scarbrough what that was. Chief Scarbrough replied that Mr. Hovey-King was referencing material that only shows the City of Fayetteville's Fire Department's data set and not quoting both data sets. Mr. Hovey-King agreed that the citizens of Fayetteville pays for other public safety services through property taxes, and if the consolidation should be approved, then the citizens would not have a say in its tax structure. He also stated that he would be very surprised if the elected officials were not aware of the economic deals provided to Pinewood since those are typical agreements when recruiting economic development to cities and councils. Mr. Hovey-King asked

Councilman Williams, who was the City Manager for the City of Fairburn when it started its own fire department, if he saw the benefits of having a fire department. Councilman Williams replied to Mr. Hovey-King's question. Mr. Hovey-King asked the citizens in the room who wanted to keep the fire department to stand in support, and several people stood up.

3. Adjournment

Fayette County Commission Chairman Steve Brown and Fayette County Commissioner Vice-Chairman gave closing comments to those in attendance.

No vote was taken at any time during the Joint Meeting of the Fayette County Board of Commissioners and the City of Fayetteville Council.

Chairman Brown adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

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Floyd L. Jones, County Clerk Steve Brown, Fayette County Chairman

The foregoing minutes were duly approved at an official meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Fayette County, Georgia, held on the 22nd day of May 2014.

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Floyd L. Jones, County Clerk