

**CITY OF GRIFFIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
WORKSHOP  
ONE GRIFFIN CENTER, W. ELMER GEORGE MUNICIPAL HALL  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2016**

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Chairperson Dick Morrow presided, calling the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Commissioners attending included Doug Hollberg, Ryan McLemore, Cora Flowers, Cynthia Reid-Ward and Rodney McCord. Absent was Commissioner David Brock.

Also present were City Manager Kenny Smith, City Attorney Drew Whalen, City Staff Attorney Jessica Whatley O'Connor and Teresa Watson to record minutes.

Chairman Morrow asked if Mr. Moss, present in the audience, would like to address the Board regarding the topic of their phone conversation yesterday. After Mr. Moss' comments, we will resume the agenda.

Wayne J. Moss, 2700 S. Walkers Mill Road, Griffin, Georgia

Mr. Moss relayed that an angel he had placed on his mother's grave has been removed by cemetery personnel. Several others have voiced displeasure at having items removed from their loved ones' graves, as well. Even if there is an Ordinance from the 60's that prohibits some of these items, time has shown that selective enforcement of the ordinance has taken place without any sense of consistency. Thousands of violations are allowed to go unchecked, and he felt the Christmas season is the wrong time to go and start removal of items from loved ones' graves. He held up the angel for Commissioners and asked what is objectionable with such a little angel on a cemetery grave. He asked who has authority to remove items.

He would like to receive a special exception to leave this angel on his mother's grave, which has been there since Mother's Day. Chairman Morrow said he talked with Mr. Moss yesterday and this is not the first issue of this nature.

Much discussion followed. The main rationale for not allowing such items on the grass of gravesites is that it hampers maintenance, i.e. weedeating and grass cutting. Maintenance workers have to remove the items to perform maintenance tasks and then put them back, the handling of which can result in damage to the items which is problematic for the families. Some of the more elaborate and lighted displays are also a problem for workers. Seasonal items are allowed but must be removed after a 30-day window, and items that are placed on the base of the monuments (headstones) are not removed since they do not interfere with maintenance. The problem mainly exists for those displays put on the grass.

He ask that staff take a look and possibly address an update at a future workshop. Mr. Moss was thankful for the consideration but asked if he can put the angel back in the meantime. Chairman Morrow noted the Board would discuss with Staff after this meeting, and he would call Mr. Moss with their findings.

***Discuss proposal regarding City of Griffin purchase from Atlantic Fiber Networks (AFN) their fiber optic network that provides internet service through Education Networks of America (ENA) to the Griffin-Spalding County School System. Chief Information Officer Jack Poland will address.***

Mr. Poland introduced Mark Metcalf from AFN who would elaborate on the proposal. Afterward, Mr. Poland will detail where we are today and after their expansion. Mr. Metcalf noted he was a Managing Partner with AFN. As background, he noted that in 1996 Atlantic Engineering engaged in the business of designing and implementing fiber networks. Over the last 19 years, AEG has successfully completed in excess of 140 optical fiber networks representing about 25,000 miles of designed and/or constructed outside plant. AFN designs, builds, manages and maintains end-to-end fiber optic solutions tailored to meet the needs of end users. Three years ago their business plan evolved to focus on a need for public school systems that generally don't have the bandwidth needed to facilitate resources used by those schools. Education Networks of America, with whom they have a long-standing partnership to provide services to K-12 schools and libraries, has a 96% retention rate and serve thousands of school systems. About a year ago, they identified the need in Griffin and worked out a system with ENA. There were tight time constraints and, because of timing and conditions, they turned over about 40% of the network to the City of Griffin. This is a much different model than any other done by AFN before. They owned others free and clear whereas they only own half of these local assets. However, because the situation is very unique there is an opportunity for the City of Griffin to take over the network, both the outer layers and inside facilities. This proposal represents a good opportunity; renewal rates are very high. AFN has built the system and now are proposing to share the system with the City.

Mr. Poland noted there was a real potential to expand the City's revenue base with small business and homeowners. This arrangement could be really advantageous for the City of Griffin to acquire the additional network. From the City side, MEAG substations currently use copper and are putting fiber close to the substations, a situation we can take over now and do business with MEAG. This would be a part of the potential growth. This mutually beneficial arrangement would double our network fiber. Other cities

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such as Huntsville, AL have successfully taken advantage of this type system. Commissioner Hollberg asked about providers, such as AT&T, Comcast, etc., that are available, wondering if our model will successfully compete and perform even better. Mr. Poland said we could actually stand up a communications department as an enterprise fund at some future juncture. City Manager Smith confirmed we are looking at making this operation an enterprise fund in next year's budget.

Currently, the City of Griffin will benefit from routes established by AFN that will double our network. Mr. Poland detailed his PowerPoint presentation. This buyout will allow for new customer potential with additional fiber plant mileage added to existing asset. The City could reach more homes and businesses as they move toward greater fiber deployment. This also provides the capability for multi-year renewals. Dark fiber WAN in place has the ability to service school districts for 20-30+ years. This will be a tremendous advantage if renewals continue. Acquisition of this network would fill in gaps in the City's existing network for superior service, improve economic development with this capability, attract businesses with this provision of services to residents and commercial customers, enhance a partnering opportunity with the Griffin-Spalding County School System, and provide benefits to students for many years to come with the new, scalable dark fiber network.

No other cable-based data transmission medium offers the bandwidth capability of fiber optic, and optical fiber allows data to be sent far greater distances than copper cabling without the necessity for as many repeater devices. Finally, it is easy to accommodate increasing bandwidth, as well.

Per our current agreement, for the provision of both aerial fiber and underground fiber, ENA to AFN gets \$28,050 monthly or \$336,600 annually and The City of Griffin gets \$5,527 monthly or \$66,324 annually. After the proposed buyout, with the agreement with ENA, the City of Griffin will receive \$28,050 monthly or \$336,600 annually. Current billings (revenue stream) without the AFN buyout proposal approximate \$108,695.04; with confirmed billings that will continue into or start in 2017 bring that figure to \$122,015.04; and the potential for billings for 2017 (unconfirmed MEAG and Spalding projects) are estimated at \$157,895.04. Payback would be in 47 months or 3.11 years.

The City of Griffin initially wanted to bid on the Spalding County School System RFP but Ronnie Harper came and spoke to us and we could not meet the timeline. We did a quick analysis of the cost involved at that time, and it was actually very near the amount of this contract without including any equipment or peripherals. So, this scenario is a win-win situation with a guaranteed payback. Mr. Smith and Mr. Schwab will address funding for the buyout. Mr. Smith said one source of cash for the \$1.29 million would be to utilize the MEAG short-term trust with a strong recommendation that payback be swift, within 36-48 months, because we have Vogtle payments starting in 2019/2020. It would cost \$20,000 to \$40,000 per mile to install this underground construction – which is much higher than aerial facilities. Over the 10-year period he has been here, Mr. Poland said he has only had one lightning on electrical pole and replacement was significant. We will assess what is needed, and fiber enjoys a good shelf life. We can utilize conduit already there and expect a 30-year life. ENA projects are funded through federal grants. Should they decide the funding goes away, ENA is the bandwidth provider (with equipment) and we are the carrier. Federal funding picks up between 70% and 90% in a grant and local matches make up the difference. This program has been around for 20+ years and experienced increased funding last year. There could always be the possibility of defunding but it's incredibly unlikely given the education aspect. The beauty of fiber is if we could go to 40 gigabits and just have to change equipment on the end. ENA would pay this additional cost to increase the speed and the fiber will always be needed with only equipment on the end user being adjusted. We are 10 times faster already than most school systems.

Mr. Smith reminded that we are only talking about infrastructure. There will be an initial five-year contract and anything can happen at renewal time, but we will have paid for infrastructure within the last six months of that time frame, so we will have already paid for infrastructure. Any provider could contract with us for fiber in a lease arrangement. Expansion alone gives the City its own infrastructure for improvement in the future. We are not taking on anything that will go away within the next 30 years.

The proposed buyout sale price is \$1,290,000 and they are offering the City of Griffin the first right of refusal relative to this decision. The current assignable contract value is \$1,514,700 and represents 54 months remaining on a five-year contract. The value of just the contract far exceeds the asking price of the entire asset.

Mr. Poland noted the City of Griffin has a unique opportunity to purchase a new, state-of-the-art network that would immediately provide a revenue stream for a minimum of five years and allow for expansion and growth, as well. City Manager Smith advised there are still a lot of details to work out and we will bring

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the contract back in January for approval. He just didn't want to get bogged down in details without a clear indication of Board consensus. The Board gave a general consensus to proceed.

Chairman Morrow asked about the cemetery comments made to the Board earlier in the meeting. Sherry Thaxton and Brant Keller came up to answer questions. The only things allowed in the cemetery are flower arrangements and seasonal items. Everyone is upset about other things being removed, such as lights on graves, metal shepherd hooks for hanging flowers and bird houses (also bringing complaints when these items are damaged or deteriorate during maintenance). Items that are removed are placed in boxes for retrieval and not thrown around or thrown away. Families may retrieve such items. Seasonal items are allowed for 30-day periods after which we remove them. We have to maintain the lawns, plant trees, etc. and these things hamper that process. Items, as an alternative, can be put on the base of the monuments. Cemetery personnel also remove some of the older flowers when they fade or weather badly or when new flowers appear without removal of the old.

City Manager Kenny Smith felt this leaves a lot to subjectivity. Additionally, the level of inconsistency is problematic. Some Ordinance sections do not address displays for gravesites, but the policy for Oak Hill Cemetery does go into much detail, i.e. flower arrangements that are objectionable, seasonal displays, etc. The overall new policy adopted July 1, 2016 had changes pertaining to the contracting of grave openings and closings. On page 4, a grave decoration policy addresses many issues. Mr. Whalen noted that some of the referenced guidelines were from the Veterans Memorial Cemetery policy and other language can be found in the Oak Hill section.

Brant Keller detailed our policy and said he had solicited several from surrounding jurisdictions. It seems to be an "all or nothing" direction where the jurisdiction either prohibits everything or nothing, and he needed some direction from the Board. Weedeaters and other equipment do damage some things left on the ground, and folks then complain to cemetery personnel. If there is room on the base of the monument, he suggests they utilize that area. Otherwise, maintenance folks have to move all the items to weedeat or cut the grass and move it back. Commissioner McCord felt some things could be clearly defined but we cannot legislate tackiness. Perhaps our perception is too subjective. Inconsistencies are always an issue. We don't allow lights at the cemetery at all, he thought.

Chairman Morrow said we need to better define regulations since this system does not appear to be working. The Commission has discretion, and Mr. Whalen said we can take a look at what most perpetual care cemeteries do. They generally have the monument/footstone markers and holiday decorations only with flowers allowed throughout year. Chairman Morrow said he would call Mr. Moss and ask that nothing be placed on the grass at the moment with the caveat that we will look more closely at policy.

***Pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 50-14-3(6), consider Executive Session for the purpose of deliberating or discussing the evaluation of personnel.***

***Motion/second by Commissioners Hollberg/McLemore to go into Executive Session at 9:53 a.m. carried 6-0.***

***Motion/second by Commissioners Reid-Ward/McCord to adjourn Executive Session and reconvene to Open Meeting at 10:13 a.m. carried 6-0.***

**ADJOURN**

***Motion/second by Commissioners Reid-Ward/Hollberg to adjourn at 10:13 a.m. carried 6-0.***

Respectfully Submitted:

Accepted:

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Kenny L. Smith, City Manager/Secretary

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Dick Morrow, Chairperson