

**CITY OF ST. MARYS, GEORGIA
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday, July 20, 2006
3:00 P.M.**

AGENDA

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. INVOCATION

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. ROLL CALL

QUORUM: YES X NO ____

V. BUSINESS:

A. ST. MARYS CONVALESCENT CENTER

VI. ADJOURNMENT:

CITY OF ST. MARYS, GEORGIA
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
July 20, 2006
3:00 P.M.

MINUTES

The Mayor and City Council for the City of St. Marys, Georgia met for its Special City Council session on Thursday, July 20, 2006 in the Council Chamber at City Hall.

PRESENT WERE:

Mayor Rowland Eskridge
Councilman Gary Blount
Councilman William DeLoughy
Councilman Larry Johnson
Councilman Jerry Lockhart
Councilman L. J. Williams
Councilwoman Gull Weaver

CITY OFFICIALS:

William Shanahan, City Manager
Gary Bacon, City Attorney
Jennifer Brown, Finance Director
Max Tinsley, Planning Director
Chris Cox, Public Works Engineer
Timothy Hatch, Police Chief
Lt. Roger Wooten, Sergeant-At-Arms

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Eskridge called the Special City Council Meeting to order at 3:00 P.M. Councilman LJ Williams gave the invocation. The Mayor led the audience in the pledge of allegiance. Council roll call indicated a quorum of council members present for the meeting.

BUSINESS:

A. ST. MARYS CONVALESCENT CENTER

Mayor Eskridge stated that the special meeting had been called to discuss what Council would consider the on going problems with the St. Marys Convalescent Center. A number of St. Marys' citizens requested this meeting. Mayor Eskridge further stated that the City's Attorney was present to keep everything on track. During the meeting the public was asked that there be no name calling and to speak on the subject.

GRANTING AUDIENCE TO THE PUBLIC

Lois Sheffield, Sister and Guardian of William “Buddy” Scarborough, St Marys Convalescent Center 9-year resident, stated that a verbal complaint was filed with the Hospital Authority in July regarding the neglect of Mr. Scarborough while in the facility’s care. Ms. Sheffield read the statement that was presented to the Authority. A copy of the statement is attached as part of the minutes. The complaints include: patient neglect; no use of diapers at night; feces on hands; diapers not changed during the day; charts not read with instructions on care; medications given without authority and a large staff turnover. A verbal complaint was also filed with the director of nurses at the nursing home and the Hospital Authority.

Councilman Blount questioned Ms. Sheffield about who she spoke to in an authoritative position about these problems, when the lack of care began and were any of the issues rectified. Ms. Sheffield replied that she spoke to the Folkston Ombudsman, administrator and nurses, and the Hospital Authority in June and July. None of the issues have been resolved. The Hospital Authority Chairman directed Ms. Sheffield to file a complaint with a higher level. The lack of care began within the last six-months.

Councilwoman Weaver questioned whether it was normal procedure to file a complaint and with who were they filed. Ms. Sheffield stated that a complaint was filed with the Folkston Ombudsman and Atlanta Regulatory Board. Correspondence was received from Atlanta stating that they would check into it. Neither the local Hospital Board nor Administrator contacted her to resolve any of these issues.

The City Attorney questioned whether any letters or written correspondence was received from the Hospital Authority about the complaint. Mrs. Sheffield stated that she has not received any written correspondence from the nursing home or Authority about resolving the problems. Ms. Sheffield further stated that a correspondence was received from Atlanta stating that they would check into it. Neither the local Hospital Board nor Administrator contacted her to resolve any of these issues.

Dot Walker, Wife of a Convalescent Center 2-year resident, stated that she has not had a complaint at the nursing home until the new Administrator came. He wants to fire all the good workers and the ones remaining are not taking care of the patients. When she visited with her husband today, he was wet and so was the bed. He did not have on a diaper because patients do not wear them at night. The administration mailed letters to family members stating that they would furnish cloth diapers for \$33.92 a month. Ms. Walker stated that if she has to pay for the diapers, she will take them to his room and they cannot be used on anyone else. A complaint was filed with the Hospital Authority at the July meeting and the administrator was present.

Councilman Blount asked if any formal complaint was filed with the Hospital Authority and if anyone has responded to the complaint with a call or letter. Ms. Walker stated that a complaint was filed with the Hospital Authority at the July meeting and the administrator was present. No one has contacted her.

Sharon Hightower, spokesperson for Norris Lane, Husband of a 5-year resident Betty Lane stated that in all the years Ms. Betty has been a resident this is the first time there has been a complaint. Upon visiting the Center on Wednesday at 11:00 A.M., she noticed an odor in her friend's room. When she pulled back the sheet she had a bowel movement and no diaper. After questioning a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA), she was told that the policy had changed and no diapers were put on patients at night. The director of nurses verified this change and that letters were mailed to family members advising them about the change in policy. The reason given for the change was to air them out. Ms. Hightower stated that this letter was not received and family members should be given a choice about the diapers. She further stated that there is no problem with the CNA's but they are overworked. With this policy change it creates more work for housekeeping by stripping the bed, laundering bed clothes, and cleaning the bed and patient. Mr. Lane and Ms. Hightower spoke with the center's administrator and the director of nursing about patients not being diapered, they should at least check them every two hours. The director of nursing replied that she last checked on Ms Betty at 5:30 A.M. Ms. Hightower stated that it was now 11:00 A.M. and that they pay for diapers.

Councilman Blount reiterated the diaper policy as; if you pay for cloth diapers they will be provided but, if disposable diapers are requested then you need to pay extra. Additionally, the administration is saying that no diaper of any short is on patients at night whether you paid or not. Ms. Hightower response was that with the new policy change no patient is diapered at night, even though they pay for two cases a month

Millie McClellan, Daughter of Resident Mildred Smith stated that letters were mailed about a month ago that they would furnish cloth diapers and gave family members an option to buy the disposable pull-ups. There is no statement in the letter about the no diapers at night policy change. Many times her mother did not have on a diaper. When it was questioned, the administration response was that they ran out because they were given to someone else. When her mother first became a resident there were no complaints, the CNA's and social worker were very good. In the last few months, most of the good CNA's are gone. Ms. McClellan tried to speak with the administrator; however, he did not want to discuss it. During the meeting of the Hospital Authority, many of the complaints were addressed to the board over a lot of the issues, which were heard tonight. Ms. McClellan complained that the board's head honcho did not come across as being very nice or understanding. He told those at the meeting that they were there to address the social workers firing. Ms. McClellan stated that she had two pet peeves about the nursing home, keep her mother dry and glue in her dentures. Her mother's dentures have been lost because they do not glue the dentures. Now, new ones will cost her \$800 to replace them. The CNA's are stressed out because of understaffing so they are quitting. The administrator keeps firing good staff members like Loretia, Social Services, which was a total mistake. It is our families who are at the convalescent center and we are paying for their care. The administrator stated that the new CNA's are being trained but they are not being paid enough to care for the patients. There are bruises on her mother's arm where she got into a little tiff with someone. If that's what it was.

Millie McClellan (CON'T.)

Councilman Johnson asked for the names of the administrator and director of nursing. Ms McClellan responded that Eric Kinder is Administrator and Susan Van Dyke, Director of Nursing.

The City Attorney questioned who signed the letter that was mailed out concerning the diapers and was there a response from the board meeting when Ms. Lactetia's firing was addressed. Ms. McClellan's response about the letter was that she did not know who signed it. As for Lactetia, the board listened to citizen's comments and went into executive session to discuss the firing but they would not allow her to come back to work. Lactetia is the best social service worker there and we want her back. When Lactetia was there, we got good care for our family loved ones. Anyone of us could go to her, at anytime, to discuss our feelings and she would look into it.

Councilman Blount asked whether anyone from the Hospital Authority or the nursing home responded to you in any formal manner as to anything that they are doing to answer or working on your concerns. Ms. McClellan response was absolutely not. When we speak out they do not listen and they have a mind of their own to do everything their way.

Lactetia Thrift, Social Services stated that she was fired on June 23, 2006. The administrator told everyone that she had quit. Ms. Thrift was called to the administrator's office, was given five-minutes to get to her office, with an escort, to pack and get out of the nursing home.

Councilman Johnson asked how long Ms. Thrift worked at the Convalescent Center. Ms. Thrift has been employed at the Center for 10-years on February 26, 2006. Mayor Eskridge stated that Lactetia took care of his mother too.

Ms. Thrift stated that the Board said there were several reasons why she was fired. When she was called into the administrator's office on June 23rd, he called a liar, big mouth, and problem worker, not a team player. What prompted this was a man in Hillard's Nursing Home that we were trying to get admitted into our Nursing Home for three weeks. The proper paperwork was done and the family came in to watch the video. The administrator said that they did not want him in the nursing home because he was a coo coo. They did not want coo coos or anyone that had broken bones. When the administrator spoke with the family members, they were told that he weighed too much so we could not bring him in. The administrator said that she promised that man in Hilliard a bed in our nursing home. Ms Thrift stated that she did not promise such a thing. She does not hold beds for anybody.

Councilman Blount reiterated the reason for the firing was that this guy could not come because he was coo coo and he weighed too much. And his argument against you was that you promised a bed at this facility. Councilman Williams asked if this is what fueled the dismissal. Ms. Thrift stated that is exactly it. She was called into the administrator's office after he received a call from this man's son, Jay Riley wanting to know why he could not bring his father in. The administrator fired her on the spot, and told her that she was a problem worker, had a big mouth and called her a liar.

Lacretia Thrift (CON'T.)

Councilwoman Weaver asked if this was the only reason. Were there any other altercations or any other instances before this? Was there any formal write up on her?

Ms. Thrift stated that Eric Kinder has harassed her ever since he came to the nursing home and she had to look over her shoulder. In addition, he told her that she did not do her job properly since August. In February, Ms. Thrift's annual evaluation was more than satisfactory. Two months later, she was written up and suspended without pay for three days because she was behaving in a non-productive manner with the new Director of Nursing Susan Van Dyke. The only reason Ms. Thrift was not behaving in a productive manner was because she questioned Ms. Van Dyke about moving the Residents Rights board from where it should have been. State Law requires advertisement of an Ombudsman Advocacy Program to be displayed in front of the nursing home where you came in so family members would know who to call in case of a complaint. The board was moved to another hallway where no one could see it. These were the only two situations Ms. Thrift was aware of.

Councilman Williams asked whether any other options were given before the firing. Ms. Thrift stated there were no options. The administrator was so angry that Mr. Riley called to ask why his father could not be in the nursing home when Ms. Thrift told him he could. The administrator did not believe Ms. Thrift when she told him that she did not promise anything and said she was lying because Mr. Riley had no reason to lie.

Councilman Blount asked Ms. Thrift if she went to the Hospital Authority, was she given a separation notice and whether anyone from the Hospital Authority or anyone else has contacted her concerning the dismissal. Ms. Thrift stated that she attended the last meeting but did not speak. She further stated that she was never given a separation notice and has not been contacted by the Hospital Authority or anyone else regarding the dismissal. She was invited to come to the meeting in July, which was the same meeting everyone has mentioned tonight where they aired their complaints. When it came time to go into executive session, Frank Frasca said she would not be going into the executive part of the meeting.

The City Attorney reiterated Ms. Thrift statement that she was invited to the executive meeting but when they got to that point, she was told that she would not be going into this session. Who invited you to the meeting? Ms. Thrift replied that Frank Frasca did and asked Board Member Kyle Lewis to call and invite her to the executive meeting.

Councilman Williams asked Ms. Thrift if she tried to get her job back in any way. Ms. Thrift stated that no she did not because the administrator told her he did not want her back in that building. Councilwoman Weaver commented that if Ms. Thrift was escorted to her office, that was a bit of intimidation not to be coming back. A lot of people that were fired by the administrator were told that he would call the law and have them arrested. He did not tell me that but former employees did. Councilman Williams asked Ms. Thrift if she would want her job back. Ms. Thrift replied that she does want her job back. They are her family at the nursing home. Those are my people.

Lacretia Thrift (CON'T.)

Mayor Eskridge asked Lacretia to tell Council what the tension is like at the nursing home. Ms. Thrift stated that the stress level is terrible there. Ms. McClellan stated that a long time employee at the nursing home told her that the administrator is going around firing all the people that have been here a long time that are making a good hourly wage and she is next on the list. This employee is administering medication to patients under these stressful conditions. There is only one (1) CNA on two halls at night and two (2) CNA's assigned to each of the four halls. Ms. Thrift stated that her job was to talk to family members. On several occasions, the administrator would call her into his office to ask why she was in B hall talking to a family member and what was being said. When certain family members would come to see Ms. Thrift, the administrator would send someone down the hall or come himself to find out what they were talking about. It is very unfair the way the employees are being treated. They have been there a long time. They know the people and their family members. Ms. Thrift also, dealt with transporting patients to other facilities for appointments. If transportation was not available, she would transport them in her personal vehicle.

Councilman Blount commented that his concern is not only for the employees but also for the care of the patients that cannot leave the facility who are completely dependant upon the staff taking care of them and their state of mind. How long did you see conditions deteriorating? Ms. Thrift stated that conditions were deteriorating before Christmas. Nothing is well organized. Residents come in and interrupt all the time; it used to be that staff would redirect residents to their rooms. Staff does not know how to redirect. There has to be some kind of compassion.

Margie Samuel, Wife of new resident Thomas Samuel, stated that she pressed the assistance button several times from 10:00 A.M. to help get her husband to the bathroom. Each time it was announced over the loud speaker that D4 needs assistance. No one ever called the room to ask what was needed nor did any one come. After two hours, she went to the main desk and told the attendant that their system was not working in D4. The attendant came to the room, pressed the button and the same thing happened. The next time, she got on the line and asked, can you hear me? Someone at the desk responded that they could hear her. So how many people do they have working? She did not think many. Ms. Samuel's did not see anyone in the hall from 9:30 A.M. until the 3:00 PM shift came on. The only one seen all day was the nurse who distributes medicine and she told me that a CNA would be in shortly. No one ever came. Ms. Samuel's husband was upset about being left without a diaper at night and that he wanted them on, so she bought diapers. Another time, Ms. Samuel's could not wake her husband, she called the nurse and CNA who came and helped to get him into a chair. These types of things are happening and it was the physical therapist that put us on to the idea that it was his blood pressure. The next day, Ms. Samuel's brought a blood pressure cuff from home; it read 51 over 35 so she called the nurse who called the EMT's. At the hospital, they thought it was from dehydration.

Barbara King, former Board Member and Daughter-in-law of a 6-year resident Dorothy King, stated her concerns about the turnover in staff. She and her husband attended the July Hospital Authority meeting to request a pay increase on behalf of the staff members. It takes a special person to go to work every day in a depressed atmosphere, where so many patients are not of good mind. As long as she could remember, staff has always been compassionate at the facility. It is family orientated; everyone talks and socializes among the staff, residents and family

Barbara King (CON'T.)

members. Ms. King recalls receiving two letters regarding the diapers. One did state that there would be no diapers on patients at nighttime. For the past 6-years, she purchased diapers, which stayed in Ms. Dorothy's closet. The letter stated that if we purchased diapers ourselves, they needed to be taken to the office to be dispensed. Ms. King wrote on the bottom of the letter that she will continue to take the diapers to her closet in D3 and did not want her left without a diaper during the night at any time. Staff told Ms. King that patients did not get bedsores when aired out. In her opinion, no one would want to lay in feces and urine for 8 to 10 hours. It is state law to change diapers every two hours. Ms. Dorothy has a good mind. Last night, Ms. Dorothy's elbow was bandaged. When asked what happened, she replied, she got into it with a CNA today. The CNA was mad at the world when she came to the room. Ms. Dorothy was treated so badly, she cussed her out. Ms. Dorothy told the CNA to get somebody so a complaint could be filed. We have never had a complaint in the nursing home since Ms. Dorothy has been there. She has been taken care of very well. We were pleased with everyone at the home.

Councilman Blount asked how Ms. Dorothy's arm got hurt. Ms. King stated the girl flipped Ms. Dorothy to change her diaper and her arm hit the railing on the bed. The skin was torn off and bleeding. Ms. Rochelle and Ms. Angel came to the room to take the complaint. After the complaint was filed, Ms. Dorothy told them that she did not want the girl fired because so many people were already fired and under so much stress. But, she did not want the girl back in the room to tend to her. The girl usually works on another hall but was sent over to Ms. Dorothy's hall for some reason. Ms. King had a message on her home answering machine from Ms. Megan telling her about the bandage on Ms. Dorothy's arm. When Ms. King spoke to Ms. Megan she requested a telephone call from Ms. Rochelle. Ms. Rochelle verified that there was a problem and the girl was mad. The girl did apologize to Ms. Dorothy. Ms. King stated after thinking about the incident, she stated to Ms. Rochelle, how mad was she at the other residents at the nursing home. How many others did she mistreat that could not speak for themselves? Ms. King has reconsidered Ms. Dorothy's decision about not firing the girl. Mr. Kinder has fired the bread man and was getting day old bread from Publix. The residents are eating bagels that are even tough for her to eat, after they are toasted. This was brought up at the Hospital Authority meeting last week and the Chairman wanted to know where this information was coming from. She did not know that this was top secret and we were not to know anything. This is a public facility and she is entitled to know everything that goes on there, with exception of personnel issues that are handled behind closed doors. When this was discussed, Mr. Scott Shaw, Management Team took Ms. King to Mr. Kinder's office to get one of his business cards. Mr. Shaw stated that Mr. Kinder had run the change in the bread order by him and he approved it but would not approve it any longer. Ms. King said that she called the State and they did not approve it. She spoke for herself and those present that none of them want the facility closed. It is a lifesaver for them because they all have had to call EMT's to help get a senior person up. The Convalescent Center is a Blessing, a God send for this facility to be here. All they are asking is for those residents to be treated with respect. When Ms. King thinks of respect, she automatically respects a person in an administrator's position. It takes a lot of education to get to this position. Mr. Kinder had my respect when he first walked in the door of the facility. Ms. King also mentioned to Mr. Shaw that when Mr. Kinder came to the facility he had a filthy mouth. Mr. Shaw responded that they were working on the problem and that he could not find anyone else. There were only two applicants for the administrator position and Mr. Kinder was

Barbara King (CON'T)

the best qualified. Ms. King stated that the administrator needs to go and the replacement should be someone who cares about the residents. These problems started 11 months ago under the new administrator's direct attention. Ms. King identified 6 people who were long time employees that were either fired or left the facility because of stress. It is important for Alzheimer patients to have the same people around them. When there are new faces constantly, it confuses them. The Convalescent Center was built for indigent care for the people of St. Marys and Camden County when the mill was opened. In the past, there would be 2 or 3 beds empty. Now, there are 10 empty. The Center is primarily a Medicare facility and they cannot compete with private pays. The facility still gets enough money to care for its residents to meet their needs. There are more CNA's on the day shift because this is the busiest time of the day. CNA's and Nurses are only required to give a certain amount of time per resident in a 24-hour period. All state regulations are being met with the night shift being short staffed. It is no wonder the staff is depressed when there is one CNA to cover two halls. They have a tremendous amount of responsibility on them to get all the patients ready at for bed at night. Ms. King has brought this information to the Hospital Board at four meetings.

Councilman Blount asked if any of the issues that Ms. King presented tonight were brought to the Hospital Authority and did they respond to the issues in writing.

Ms. King stated that she attended four Board meetings and received a letter from the chairman thanking her for attending the meeting. Many vendors that provided services to the facility were fired. Because of this action residents went without milk because the milkman was fired. This issue was presented at the board meeting but most of the attendees where there to support Ms. Thrift. It was wrong that Ms. Thrift was not given the opportunity to state her case behind closed doors regarding her personnel matter. However, Mr. Kinder was invited into the closed session of the meeting to talk and to be asked questions for the entire time. Ms. King's basic concern for the facility is that the employees feel comfortable in their surroundings, not have management watching everything that is done.

Mayor Eskridge asked about the cleanliness of the home, how the food is and the doctor on staff. Ms. King replied that the home is kept clean. The residents and most of the staff will not eat the food. One of the reasons is because it is cold. The doctor presently on staff is very good. There was a quality assurance meeting held at the nursing home. The attendees included the staff doctor, pharmaceutical representatives, and department heads, Mr. Kinder was 15 minutes late because he went to Sin Far to buy lunch and ate it in the meeting. He represented us and that was disrespectful behavior.

Councilman Blount asked Kyle Lewis, Board Member if he was asked by the chairman to call Ms. Thrift and invite her to the meeting. Kyle Lewis response was that he called Ms. Thrift to ask why she was fired. Before that he called the chairman and asked if they were having an executive session at the meeting so Ms. Thrift could present her side to the Board. He even spoke with four of the board members about Ms. Thrift attending the meeting and they said it was all right and the chairman agreed. At the end of the meeting Mr. Lewis asked the chairman to bring Ms. Thrift back to the executive session, he said no, and I thought he said he heard

Barbara King (CON'T)

enough. Mr. Lewis thought maybe a mistake had been made and they would take care of it. The Board went into executive session where there was quite a bit of discussion, but, no unanimous vote. Councilman Blount asked whether the Board came out to vote. Technically, yes. But no one was there. They did vote out of executive session. Mr. Lewis stated that he had spent at least 10 hours talking to people who called him. He is convinced that management, right now, needs some serious looking at. Mr. Lewis stated that he would like to bring this up to the Board again because this is a very badly handled situation.

Councilman Blount asked who. Mr. Lewis replied the Board did not handle it well or have all the information that was needed. He believes there were four or more people fired that did not have standard reasonable justification for the firing. The biggest fault the board has had was in letting the professionals run it without interference. Mr. Lewis stated that he asked Ms. Thrift to the Board meeting and they did not hear her side of the issue only the administrator's side.

Councilman Blount asked if Mr. Lewis was at the Board meeting that heard all of these complaints. Mr. Lewis replied that he has not heard any complaints until April 2006. Many people attended and made complaints that he understood were taken care of. The next month, a couple more people came with complaints that their issues were not taken care of. At the fourth meeting, a crowd showed up to complain. There was not a single soul at the meeting that did not praise Loretta Thrift on her work and efforts on behalf of their family. Mr. Lewis stated that his argument with the Board is that a person with 11-years tenure in a job and does not have a complaint in the files and suddenly get fired by a new administrator. Mr. Lewis further stated that several have probably been fired that should not have been.

Councilman Williams asked if the Board only heard the administrator's side of the story and not Ms. Thrift side. Mr. Lewis stated that the Board bought the administrators reasons for firing her. Mr. Lewis further stated that he scheduled Ms. Thrift to speak at the board meeting to try to convince the Board that a mistake was made but it turned out the opposite way.

The City Attorney asked whether an attorney was present at the Board meeting and if an affidavit was signed after the executive session. Mr. Lewis stated that an attorney was not present because they do not have a standing attorney and he never signed an affidavit but he did not know if the chairman did or not.

Councilman DeLoughy asked the City Attorney what the Council could do, what is the limit and latitude about the situation. Councilwoman Weaver stated with all due respect the Council has only heard one side of the situation and before Council makes any jumps to do anything, Council has not heard the other side of the issue.

The City Attorney stated that it is at a point where you could receive a motion to move into executive session for legal reasons or continue with the hearing for more input.

Councilman Johnson stated that he is satisfied that as far as these people are concerned, some action should be taken.

Chuck Lanham, Hospital Authority Secretary/Treasurer stated that 90% of the people at the Board meeting were there in support of Ms. Thrift not being fired. Everyone got up to speak. Had Ms. Thrift wanted to speak, she could have, why she did not, he had no idea. After the meeting, the Board went into executive session and gathered all the evidence that was available to the Board and made a conscience decision based on the facts that were presented to them that the decision was the correct one.

Chuck Lanham (CON'T.)

Mayor Eskridge asked if Mr. Lanham knew that Ms. Thrift was invited to attend the executive session. Mr. Lanham replied that he did not know that. Mayor Eskridge was in the opinion that the reason Ms. Thrift did not make comments at the regular meeting was because she was to speak to the Board in executive session.

Councilman Williams asked how many board members were present at that meeting. Mr. Lanham stated that all nine board members were present.

Mayor Eskridge asked how many board members were present at this meeting. Mr. Lanham replied that seven were present today.

Tracy Mizelle, Hospital Authority Board Member stated that a lot of people do not understand that the Board is limited to what they can say and do when in executive session. The Board hears things that are not true or exaggerated, not that any of these people would do that. We listened and taped what everything the twenty-eight people spoke about at the last meeting. When going into executive session for a personnel issue, there could not be anyone in there but the Board and the administrator. He presented his package in writing. It was reviewed and voted because of the information that was given to us. A lot of these people are not privy to things that the board was given, and he is not sure that Council is privy too. That is something an attorney would need to tell us. If he says yey, then he has no problem with Council seeing the paperwork and you could come to your conclusions. There were nine Board members at the meeting, two-voted affirmative to keep Ms. Thrift, the rest voted to relieve her and to support the administration. That entire meeting was recorded. During the executive session, the Administrator Eric Kinder was instructed to address every issue and every problem from the meeting. It had been two weeks, granted somebody should have heard something at this point. Mr. Kinder was supposed to address every issue and notify the board of what issues were taken care of.

Councilman Blount asked if Mr. Kinder resolved each issue to your satisfaction. Mr. Mizelle stated that Mr. Kinder was told to take care of them and address them. The City Attorney asked what addressing means. What did you understand that to mean? Mr. Mizelle replied that he understood addressing to be what the real problem is, address it to the individual and to correct the problem. It has only been two weeks. There has not been another board meeting and Mr. Mizelle has not had a chance to speak with Mr. Kinder to see what is accomplished, if anything. But, apparently not much from what he is hearing today.

Councilwoman Weaver asked if Mr. Kinder was invited to this meeting. Someone from the audience said the meeting was broadcasted over the radio station. Mr. Mizelle stated that he was not and he called Mr. Kinder yesterday when he found out about the meeting. The City Clerk stated that a message was left for Mr. Mizelle that he call Mr. Kinder to invite him to the meeting pursuant to the chairman's instructions.

Councilman Blount asked if Mr. Kinder was aware of the meeting today. Mr. Mizelle replied yes. Councilman Blount stated that Mr. Kinder was very much aware of the meeting today and knew he could attend if he should desire. Mr. Mizelle replied yes.

The City Manager commented that the Board had 28 people that stated what they have been going through for a long time. Six months is a long time when dealing with family and Mr. Kinder gave the Board documentation saying what he did and why it was done. How did you verify what he said was the truth versus what everyone else was saying?

Tracy Mizelle (CON'T.)

Mr. Mizelle stated that he could not answer that question. Mr. Lanham stated that what was talked about at the meeting was not about the caring of the patients. Councilwoman Weaver commented that it was about Ms. Thrift.

Councilman Blount asked about all of the concerns that everyone brought up about how their family members and friends were being treated, did the Board not feel any need to respond to any of these issues. We purge your concerns. We talked to the director and are taking these steps to rectify this. Apparently, no one has heard anything from the Hospital Authority. Mr. Mizelle stated that the Board has not sent any letters to anyone individually or as a whole either. Councilman Blount asked Mr. Mizelle if he has called anyone. Mr. Mizelle replied he had not called anyone. Mr. Kinder was going to address everything, take care of it and get back to the Board.

Councilman Blount stated that Mr. Kinder is the one that the people seem to have most of the problem with and if I were him, I would be a little bit leery to do this. Mr. Mizelle further stated that Mr. Kinder is the administrator that is paid to do the job and if he does not do it, then the Board needs to replace him. This all came out about two weeks ago but the King's have had some issues for about three months.

Councilman Blount asked whether the Board is taking any action or doing anything about it. Mr. Mizelle replied that they were and they could not discuss the care of patients because it is a personnel issue.

Councilman DeLoughy stated that there is a convoluted reporting authority and this is a difficult situation. This is why we are alluding to the City Attorney to look at all these things and to give fair consideration. There are two sides to every story and people are upset when it comes to loved ones. It is understandable and can be sympathized. But, the Council has a job to do. We do have to be objective. We do have to get the information. Council might be able to do something directly or indirectly, if the circumstances warrant.

Councilman Blount stated that based on everything that he has heard and what the Board has heard, what in your opinion should be done. What steps do you think the Hospital Authority should be doing to help rectify this? Mr. Mizelle stated that is something that he will address to the Board at the next meeting. Councilwoman Weaver stated that it is not a fair question. Councilman Johnson asked could a time frame be set as to when the Board will respond to the City. Councilman DeLoughy stated that it is not fair to set a time frame. Mr. Mizelle asked to give him two weeks. Following much discussion, Councilman Blount asked the City Attorney for a legal opinion on what demands could the Council make on the Authority or the Administration. The City Attorney stated that if Council wishes to discuss in great detail the option is to discuss it in executive session under legal qualification then come back and make a decision.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Legal

Councilman Blount made a motion to adjourn to executive session. Councilman DeLoughy seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

The Mayor and Council adjourned to executive session at 5:03 P.M., returning at 5:56 P.M. with Mayor Eskridge calling the Council meeting back to order.

LEGAL

Councilwoman Weaver made a motion to authorize the City Council and Mayor to meet with the Hospital Authority to resolve these issues, which have been addressed today; and report to this City Council at the August 14, 2006 Council meeting. If these issues have not been satisfactorily addressed at that time, the Council will take action to remedy the actions not made by the Hospital Authority including possible legal action to remove the Hospital Board Members. Councilman Blount seconded the motion but to clarify that it is to authorize the City "Attorney" not City Council. Voting was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Tommy King stated that he wishes to clarify for the paper and everybody else. Do the members of that board up there know who owns the Convalescent Center? Councilman Lockhart responded that it is the St Marys Hospital Authority that owns it. Mr. King disagreed with Councilman Lockhart and stated that the people of Camden County own it. Councilman Lockhart disagreed. Mr. King stated that the people of Camden County donated money, which Gilman matched to build it for the innocent people of Camden County. The City of St. Marys never put a dime in it. The only thing that the City of St. Marys does is appoint the Board that is over it. In which the people, being the people of Camden County, own that Hospital and a bunch of them are displeased with it. That is why we have come to you to undo some of the things that the appointed Board has done. We need to make some changes on the Board and administrator. The people of Camden County own the nursing home.

The City Attorney stated that research has been done on some of those issues. The nursing home is actually owned by the Hospital Authority that was established by the City Council in 1956. It was amended in 1960 and was codified in effect in the law that changed later. In effect, the actual, original start of it was the Hospital Authority by the City of St. Marys and they are empowered to set up Hospital Authorities within their municipal area. So, in effect that is controlled by that authority, which was created by the City of St. Marys years ago. Mr. King stated that when an attempt is made to buy the nursing home, you will see that it is not as simple as you think. The people in Camden County will have a say as to what goes on with the nursing home. It will not be left up to the city because the people of Camden County put money up to help build that home. There are probably records at Gilman that could be looked up that Gilman matched it. The City Attorney stated that it was established authority since 1956 and that is the law. Mr. King did not agree with what Council is trying to do. Council needs to do something with this Board at the nursing home that were appointed. His mother has been there 6 years and he and his wife go to the nursing home everyday. There is not a certain time of the day that they visit so they see what goes on. Nothing has changed about people not doing the work. Two meals a day are brought to his mother because she cannot eat the food in the nursing home. Even the people who work there will not eat it. Mr. King suggested that the Council members have dinner at the nursing home someday and see what the situation is like. They cannot speak for themselves. So many are there because their family put them there and do not care anything about them. When they see a kid they light up. It is the same with Ms. Thrift. They had all their trust in her and some of the other 5 or 6 that were fired. These people see them everyday. If he asks his mother if she would like to do something, she tells us to call Ms. Thrift and asks for her. Then this man from Atlanta came and hatcheted these people. Mr. King worked at Gilman Paper

Tommy King (CON'T.)

Company for 37 years and he knows a little bit about the law. They are on shaky ground by what took place when these people were fired and he hopes that the City listens. He is very proud that Council had this meeting for them. But, if this meeting would have been called at 6:00 instead of 3:00, we could not put the people in this room because half of them that wanted to come were working. The people of this town are speaking and you need to listen. This is a good step what was suggested but do not let it go on the back burner because the people at the nursing home deserve it. We all might be there one day and you do not realize what it is like. The Board came out to check on things, only after we started to raise Cain. The City Attorney suggested to the Mayor that for people who may have a concern, they should submit them in writing for Council to review because they will be looking into these matters. For someone that could not be here today and had a particular complaint they should submit it in writing to Council. Councilman Lockhart stated that this is part of a due process plan. In Council's statement the plan is to have the City Attorney and Mayor meet sometime next week with the Hospital Board to see how many of these issues have been addressed since their meeting held two weeks ago. There is a deadline set and the main objective is the patient care issues.

Mr. King stated that it takes a special kind of person to do what these ladies and men do at the nursing home. Council needs to know that the citizens of St. Marys are behind you and only want to do what is right.

Councilwoman Weaver stated that there is one correction in the motion, which is the date of the meeting. Council is not scheduled to meet until August 14th.

Ms. King stated if Council decides to have dinner at the nursing home to go unannounced not announced.

Dinky Harvey, former Supervisor at Gilman Paper Company commented about the legalities of firing someone. What kind of grounds would he have? Mr. Harvey said that he would probably been the one gone, unless it was justified. Mr. Harvey stated that he has known Ms. Thrift since she was 6 years old and she took better care of her animals than most people do their children.

Councilman Blount stated that Council's primary concern is getting some sort of resolve for the patients and then the employee situation.

Mr. Harvey further stated that it upsets him to hear that someone can do something like this to Ms. Thrift and the Board voted against her. How did the administrator get the information that he presented? Did he do it? That is only one side. Councilman Blount stated that the City Attorney and the Mayor would have the opportunity to discuss it with the Board. In the event that it should happen, she should be repaid, reinstated and the administrator should be gone.

Lois Sheffield stated that her concern is that this is hurricane season. They have gotten rid of half of the employees already. Do they realize what it takes to move the patients from St. Marys to Nashville, Georgia? They have to have someone competent to do it. The CNA's have to go with them. If they are not taken care of in the nursing home how are they going to take care of them in a big gymnasium? They have to feed them and take all the records too. '

Councilman Blount stated that is a wonderful point and he is sure that the City Attorney and City Manager will be involved to get with the nursing home to review their plans.

Dave Smith, K- Bay stated that the Emergency Management Agency of Camden County reported to the commissioners at their last meeting that the State of Georgia has undertaken the evacuation of special needs patients away from the Convalcent Center. The Convalcent Center is responsible for getting them to a gathering point and they will be transported by the State to a safe shelter further inland. Another health district has been tasked with finding adequate shelter.

Councilman Blount stated that he wanted to find out specifically what their plans were. Mayor Eskridge directed the City Manager to review the Convalcent Center's plan.

Barbara King stated that she is concerned about how many more people will lose their jobs in the next couple weeks until this is tended too. Could Council put a freeze on the firing of any more staff? Mr. Mizelle stated that this was already done.

Councilman Blount asked when the freeze was put on. Mr. Mizelle replied Monday. Mayor Eskridge asked Mr. Mizelle if he could get him a date when he could meet with the whole Board.

The times for meals at the Convalcent Center are breakfast 7:30 A.M., lunch 12:30 P.M and dinner 5:30 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilman Williams made a motion for adjournment. Councilman DeLoughy seconded the motion. Mayor Eskridge declared the meeting adjourned at 6:13 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene M. Roellig, City Clerk