
A CALLED MEETING OF THE BRISTOL VIRGINIA CITY COUNCIL WAS HELD ON MARCH 15, 2016, AT 6:30 P.M. IN CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS WITH MAYOR ARCHIE HUBBARD, III PRESIDING. VICE MAYOR WILLIAM HARTLEY AND COUNCIL MEMBERS CATHERINE BRILLHART, GUY ODUM, AND JIM STEELE WERE PRESENT. ALSO PRESENT WERE CITY MANAGER, TABITHA CROWDER, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER, ANDREW TRIVETTE, CITY ATTORNEY, PETE CURCIO, AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, KIM ORFIELD.

Mayor Hubbard called the meeting to order stating that the purpose of the meeting was to consider the request from Bristol Virginia Utilities to approve the sale of the Optinet Division to Sunset Digital Communications, Inc.

1. Consider Request from BVU to Approve the Sale of the Optinet Division to Sunset Digital Communications, Inc.

Mayor Hubbard stated that the City of Bristol was not selling anything, adding that OptiNet was an asset of BVU. He advised that there was a signed contract to sell and no other bids would be accepted.

Mr. Michael Pollard spoke against approving the purchase agreement stating that at least one (1) company other than Sunset Digital, was interested in acquiring BVU's OptiNet division.

Mr. Anthony Amos spoke against approving the purchase agreement stating that Sunset Digital could finance the purchase by charging BVU customers higher rates.

Mr. James Green spoke against approving the purchase agreement stating that the agreement's ability to serve the best interest of the citizens of Bristol, Virginia was difficult to determine due to a lack of visibility by BVU board.

Mr. Malcolm Grason spoke against approving the purchase agreement stating that City Council was being naïve and should be more concerned with the details of the agreement and more concerned with the profit to be made by the sale.

Mayor Hubbard explained that OptiNet was restricted by State law to service an area within seventy-five (75) miles; this limits the number of customers that BVU (an authority of the State of Virginia) could reach. He continued by stating that private enterprise could spread costs over a larger area and customer base.

Council Member Odum stated that OptiNet was restricted by the BVU Act to provide internet service and not cable television. He added that Sunset Digital, a private company, would not be limited by governmental restrictions.

Council Member Odum, stated that an independent company reviewed OptiNet; the valuation was close to the offer received from Sunset Digital. Mr. Odum advised that while the footprint of OptiNet could not grow any further, Sunset digital would be able to provide fiber optic cable television and internet services to unserved or underserved areas.

BVU Chief Executive Officer and President, Mr. Don Bowman stated that proceeds from the sale of OptiNet would be used to pay off bonds.

Mayor Hubbard entertained a motion to approve the sale of the OptiNet Division to Sunset Digital Communications, Inc.

Council Member Odum made the motion to approve the sale of the OptiNet Division to Sunset Digital Communications, Inc. Motion was seconded by Council Member Brillhart.

Council Member Steele spoke against the sale at this time given the fact that BVU was currently under investigation.

Vice Mayor Hartley stated that purchase agreement was in the best interest of BVU and possibly the best interest of the City of Bristol.

The roll call vote was as follows:

AYES: Brillhart, Hartley, Odum, and Hubbard

NAYS: Steele

2. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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City Clerk

Mayor