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**For Immediate Release:**  May 14, 2025

**Contacts:**  Stacey Smith, City Manager

Email: [ssmith@rockmart-ga.gov](mailto:ssmith@rockmart-ga.gov)

**Rockmart City Council votes to end Fire Services Automatic Aid Agreement with Polk County on July 1, 2025, barring last minute negotiations.**

During the May 2025 meeting of the Rockmart City Council, the Council voted to end participation in the Fire Services Automatic Aid Agreement with Polk County. Barring any last-minute negotiations, participation will end July 1, 2025. The City and County entered into the agreement in 2013 to provide professional fire protection and lower insurance rates in underserved areas of the county. This agreement was meant to be a short-term arrangement to allow Polk County to develop a twenty-year plan for implementing a countywide fire service, which was to be completed prior to July 1, 2015. This plan has not been completed, and the county has made little progress during the intervening twelve years to improve fire protection in the eastern portion of the county.

Since signing the Fire Services Automatic Aid Agreement, the cost of providing fire service to Polk County residents has increased significantly with over half of all structure fire calls received by Rockmart Fire and Emergency Services being in unincorporated Polk County. In response, the City of Rockmart requested Polk County Government pay a small portion of the costs associated with providing these services to Polk County residents. Since Polk County is unwilling to negotiate an acceptable agreement with the City of Rockmart and the City is no longer willing to tax city residents to provide fire service in the unincorporated county, the City Council was left with no alternative to ending the service agreement. After the vote, council members expressed their hope that Polk County Government would negotiate in good faith in order to avoid termination of fire services agreement on July 1, 2025.

Rockmart City Manager Stacey Smith stated, “we approached Polk County in October 2024 with a request to renegotiate the current agreement. Our intent being to request compensation to offset the rising cost of providing fire protection to citizens outside of the city. We also asked Polk County to address some other inequities in the agreement that had arisen over the almost twelve-year life of the agreement. In the following seven months Polk County only met with us twice and provided us with one counteroffer that did not include any monetary compensation, which we deemed unacceptable. We lowered our initial request but received no official counter to that offer.” She stated she was sorry the situation came to this but that she was open to any additional offer Polk County wished to make on the issue.

Rockmart Fire Chief Todd Queen stated he was sorry that a compromise couldn’t be worked out but that the citizens of Rockmart could not continue to subsidize firefighting efforts in the County. He stated that personnel costs have risen greatly and also there were some parts of the agreement that needed to be updated to better reflect current staffing and other issues. “Rockmart Fire,” he stated, “will continue to respond to the County on a mutual aid request from Polk County Fire Rescue. We will not, however, be automatically dispatched as we are now once this agreement ends.”