

**CITY OF COLUMBIA
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING REPORT
July 24, 2012 – 1:00 P.M.
Washington Street Garage
Conference Room – 820 Washington Street**



The Columbia City Council held an Economic and Community Development Committee Meeting on Monday, July 24, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Sam Davis (Chair) called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The Honorable Moe Baddourah and The Honorable Leona Plough were present. Committee recommendations to the Columbia City Council, if any, will be made only by the committee members. There will be no official City Council action or votes taken at the committee meeting.

Chairman Davis thanked everyone for their attendance and introduced The Honorable Moe Baddourah as a new City Councilperson and new member to the Economic and Community Development Committee.

Committee Discussion

1. Plex Partnership

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager began by saying this is not the proper title for this item and may be addressed as a side issue at some other time. He said he met with Mr. Patrick Palmer and the owners of Plex Indoor Sports at the request of Mayor Steve Benjamin to establish a partnership with the City of Columbia. He introduced Dr. Michael Harris, Mr. Steve Scoma, and Mr. Patrick Palmer to the committee.

A presentation was made about Plex (a copy was provided). By partnering together the City would receive revenue from the various tournaments and it would be a community benefit. The revenue has seen some good years and some bad. This year is looking better. The county's complex will include mostly outside sports and the Plex offers indoor sports.

Mrs. Plough asked if they have requested hospitality money from the County. She said she would hate to see the facility close; however, this will be a challenge for the City of Columbia because the facility is located in the County.

The consensus of the Committee to recommend Plex go back to the County to see if they would reconsider their proposal and offer them some assistance. This location is not within the city limits and near a proposed outdoor athletic park being planned by Richland County.

2. Haystack Needle Project Update

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said he and other representatives from the City of Columbia (Jim Gambrell and Sam Johnson) met with Mr. David Kunz from the Haystack Needle Project and toured the Parks and Recreation facility. He said

they were very impressed with the building mainly because of the location. They wanted to know when the building will be available. Mr. Baker said he told them 2-3 years. He said they will meet with Mayor Benjamin and express their interest in the building. The project would create 300 new jobs by opening a call center in Columbia. Seventy-five (75) people will be hired in the first phase. They will target the working poor and low income individuals.

It was the consensus of the committee to have Mr. Kunz will come back to the Economic and Community Development Committee with a complete proposal. Staff will also prepare a policy for the committee's review regarding managing surplus property.

3. Economic Development Planning Update

Mr. Jim Gambrell, Economic Development Director said we are trying to refocus on where we have been and where we are going in the future. A consultant was hired by the City of Columbia to develop a strategic economic development plan for this purpose. He said a meeting needs to be arranged for Mr. Williams to meet with Chairman Davis. A list of 35 individuals was identified and Mr. Williams have met with some of these individuals. As a result of these meetings, a comprehensive program will be completed and will be presented to City Council in December 2012. He said he will continue to give the committee updates on the progress.

The committee asked that Raleigh be included in the comparison. Want to know what the vision is for the City of Columbia from an economic development standpoint in five, ten or fifteen years. Want to develop a strategy to see how we can get there. They want to know what other cities are doing to be successful. Mr. Gambrell said we are successful but want to be more successful. We need to have a goal and stay the course. Mrs. Plough said she is impressed with the relationship the City now has with the University of South Carolina.

The meeting adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Jones
Office of Economic Development