

**CITY OF COLUMBIA
ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING REPORT
JANUARY 31, 2012 – 11:00 A.M.
CITY HALL – 1737 MAIN STREET
COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM – 2ND FLOOR**



The Columbia City Council conducted an Environment and Infrastructure Committee Meeting on Tuesday, January 31, 2012 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine (Chair) called the meeting to order at 10:20 a.m. the following Committee members were present: The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann and The Honorable Leona K. Plough.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. **Greenway and Trail Connectivity

Councilor Devine explained that a connectivity plan is needed for our greenways and trails. She asked staff for a plan and a preliminary budget. Mr. Gantt and Mr. Delk have been talking with the Urban Land Institute to see how they can help.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager presented an aerial map of the City's greenways, trails and sidewalks. They are working with many groups to develop a connectivity plan that encompasses cyclists, pedestrians, historic tours, parks, greenways and the Bull Street development.

There was a consensus of the committee to endorse the concept. Staff will draft a plan for progression by identifying the connection points and other opportunities. The Urban Land Institute's proposal is to be submitted in writing and City Council will be asked to identify \$40,000 for the Urban Land Institute to conduct a plan.

2. Water / Sewer Line Warranty Program

Ms. Dana Higgins, P.E. LEED A.P., City Engineer recalled that the Environment and Infrastructure Committee asked staff to review several different warranty programs to assist homeowners with water and sewer line repairs on the customer's side of the meter. The following programs were reviewed: American Water Resources, HomeServe USA and the Utility Service Partners. She noted that these programs cover from the face of the property line to the main connection. She added that HomeServe USA would require the City to bill the customer.

There was a consensus of the committee to direct staff to draft a Request for Qualifications for a water and sewer line warranty program that covers the homeowner from the tap to the connection. The RFQ should be sent to American Water Resources and Utility Service Partners. Staff is to obtain references from existing customers. The City needs to know which customers are enrolled in the warranty program. Is there a preventative maintenance component? Staff is to find out how the service works from a homeowner and municipality perspective.

3. Privatization of Services

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager reported that from a water and sewer perspective, we privatized the installation of big taps and main lines. That has been cheaper for the customer.

Councilor Rickenmann suggested that the City Manager consider privatizing all repairs and allow workers to focus on maintenance.

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager said that can be done through a task order. He continued to report that we are moving towards privatizing the oversight of the Information Technology Department.

Councilor Plough suggested that the committee receive monthly updates on services that can be considered for privatization.

4. **Automated Meter Reading Request for Proposals

Ms. Dana Higgins, P.E. LEED A.P., City Engineer explained that a Request for Proposals was issued on November 19, 2011 for a qualified support team to provide product installation and training services for an automated meter reading system. We requested a mobile system, where a vehicle will drive by to obtain meter information or a fixed network system where information is sent directly from the meter to a central computer system. Responses were due on January 24, 2012 and an evaluation panel will review six (6) submittals on February 2, 2012. Council's approval will be sought on March 20, 2012. She introduced the Good Neighbor Program which is implemented to assist low-income families with their water bills. She proposed an opportunity for City water customers to voluntarily join an Operation Round Up Program and donate less than one dollar a month to a charitable organization. We had discussions with the Cooperative Ministry to explore the possibility of them administering the programs. Families needing assistance would be referred to the Cooperative Ministry. She also introduced the International Clean Water Initiative which provides clean water to poor communities around the world. We started discussions with Water Missions International, a Charleston-based non-profit, on the possibility of administering the program.

5. **Rocky Branch Study

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager reported that responses to the Request for Qualifications for a firm to evaluate Bright Meyers' proposed solutions as it relates to alleviating flooding and how it might affect water quality, have been received. All of the City's information on the Rocky Branch to include previous studies conducted by other entities, recommendations from the Rocky Branch Alliance and the letter from Dr. Venkat Lakshmi will be shared with the selected firm.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.