



CITY OF COLUMBIA  
WORK SESSION MINUTES  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2014  
CITY HALL – 1737 MAIN STREET  
2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

The Columbia City Council conducted a Work Session on Tuesday, October 7, 2014 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mayor Steven K. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 2:12 p.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Brian DeQuincey Newman, The Honorable Cameron A. Runyan and The Honorable Moe Baddourah. The Honorable Leona K. Plough participated remotely. Also present were Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Moore, City Clerk. This meeting was advertised in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Mayor Benjamin announced that Councilwoman Plough is participating via Skype. He explained that under our policies and best practices she's allowed to participate in the discussions, but she's not allowed to vote.

\*Update on the Multi-Use Entertainment Venue

Mr. Jason Freier, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Hardball Capital, LLC reported that they launched the Name the Team Contest, which is available online at [www.columbiaprobball.com](http://www.columbiaprobball.com) through October 15, 2014. He said they are here visiting with elementary and middle schools, sports marketing classes at the University of South Carolina and the Conventions and Visitors Bureau. He said they are here learning what's local and unique about Columbia that could also tie into the ultimate choice of a team identity.

Mr. Casey White, Vice President of Brandiose said the best brands in baseball are built on stories about the cities the teams represent. He asked if there is any mythology about Columbia.

Mr. Jason Freier, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Hardball Capital, LLC told the members of Council to email him their ideas or enter the contest. He said they will not debut the actual name until the logo and identity are crafted in the spring. He said that over 1,250 entries have been submitted in the branding contest.

## **STAFF REPORT**

1. [June 2014 Financial Report](#) – Ms. Jan Alonso, Finance Director

Ms. Jan Alonso, Finance Director presented the preliminary financial reports for June and July 2014. She reported that the General Fund has \$3.7 million, but that is subject to change. She reported that the Parking Fund has \$375,000; and the Water & Sewer Fund has \$11 million. For July, she noted that not all journal entries have been made. She reiterated that all funds are subject to change.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager announced that the November Retreat has been deferred to January 29, 2015 through February 1, 2015. She asked the members of Council to check their calendars.

Mayor Benjamin concurred.

## **CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION**

2. [Update on The COMET](#) – Mr. Robert A. Schneider, PhD, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of The COMET

Mr. Robert A. Schneider, PhD, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of The COMET provided an update on the service levels for the COMET since the Fall of 2011. He reported that they now have higher hours of service and ridership on the core routes; routes have been restructured; the frequency of service has improved; weekend service has improved; and they now have mid-day service and service during later hours. He said there are eight (8) main thoroughfares and a vehicle goes through each route every forty minutes. He noted the key changes to include: the brand and image, pass programs, partners, the use of technology, and small propane vehicles running in neighborhoods. He announced that 1,000 bus stops will be installed during the fall along with shelters and service restoration, pending board approval. He said they are also working on The Orbit as an internal circulator that will be implemented in 2015. He announced that in the future they will have Wi-Fi onboard vehicles and Transloc, which is an application that allows you to purchase a pass with your smart phone, view routes and times, and receive alerts. He said they are also tied to the Google Maps transit feature.

Councilor Newman said they've conducted forums and hired new staff in order to support increased ridership. He acknowledged that a different style of planning has gone into laying out the routes and as a result some changes were made. He asked Council members to relay any concerns they hear or have, because they are working to grow the system without inconveniencing long-term riders.

Councilor Plough asked about the current ridership. She thanked Dr. Schneider for working aggressively to create partnerships.

Mr. Robert A. Schneider, PhD, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of The COMET said we are seeing 157,000 riders per month; we expect to exceed 160,000 riders this month; and we will continue to see growing ridership.

Councilor Davis said this is a totally different picture of the system in Columbia. He asked what significant adjustments have been made to DART.

Mr. Robert A. Schneider, PhD, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of The COMET said DART is part of the American with Disabilities Act and wherever the big bus goes, the DART van follows. Over the past year, we've built up our core services and

now we are restoring the services that were lost in the Sandhills and northwest areas. He said that most DART riders within the core of the city weren't affected.

Councilor Newman clarified that DART can run three-fourths of a mile off the existing route. He said concerns will be addressed as they continue to push routes out there.

Councilor Davis asked if they are still considering requests for the location of the shelters.

Mr. Robert A. Schneider, PhD, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of The COMET said they are more than willing to look at other areas, but they want to be careful with the selection of locations. He noted that they have a comprehensive agreement with a firm that will evaluate the locations.

### **HOMELESS SERVICES DISCUSSION**

3. [Discussion of the Response to the Request for Proposals for the Regional Coordination of Homeless Services](#) – Ms. Sandra A. Wright, Purchasing Agent for the City of Columbia and Mr. Gregory Sprouse, Director of Research & Planning & Development for the Central Midlands Council of Governments – [Click here to view the presentation](#)

Mr. Gregory Sprouse, Director of Research & Planning & Development for the Central Midlands Council of Governments explained that the framework was set in 2005 with the Blueprint to Address Homelessness in the Midlands and some of the recommendations from that plan were implemented, but we continue to see gaps in the coordination provision for homeless services. He recalled that City Council adopted six (6) Homeless Response Goals in September 2013; a Request for Information was released in January 2014 to solicit input from homeless service providers on potential strategies for meeting those goals; a RFI Panel convened in April 2014 to review the responses and recommended that Council issue a full Request for Proposals to seek qualified agencies to coordinate homeless services across the region with a focus on five core areas: coordinating the service provider roles, horizontality integrated case management, housing, transportation, and food sharing and meal services. He explained that because of the regional nature of this issue, the COG agreed to assist the City of Columbia with the procurement process related to this RFP. He further explained that on July 17, 2014, the RFP for the regional coordination of homeless services was released; the response period closed on August 22, 2014; and the evaluation committee met on September 2, 2014. He noted that the RFP was deliberately written in broad terms so that we could allow the respondents to provide a comprehensive proposal. He said respondents were asked to comment on how to coordinate amongst the existing service providers; we focused on getting the respondents to facilitate collaboration and develop strong organizational partnerships in their proposals; we were looking for a team that could also bring additional financial resources to the table to help leverage what the city was putting forward as a part of this procurement process. He said they established a scope of services that focused on the RFI Panel recommendations and the responsibilities related

to the five core areas. He explained that the evaluation committee was asked to evaluate the proposal based on the seven (7) established criteria. He said that one (1) proposal was received from the United Way of the Midlands in partnership with the Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless (MACH), which is a consortium of other organizations. He explained that their proposal focused on meeting the scope of services by adding two (2) staff positions: a Homeless Coordinator, which is an existing position that will be realigned to support the scope of work and they are asking the City to partially fund that position, which would provide the bulk of the coordination services and a Housing Coordinator position that would be fully funded by the City to focus on the coordination of housing programs and services. The response included partnerships that were established through Memorandums of Understanding with the City Center Partnership, the National Alliance of Mental Illness of South Carolina and the Midlands Housing Trust Fund. They are using existing resources and staff to meet federal reporting requirements and they are currently working on a statewide effort to implement a coordinated assessment system. A seven (7) member evaluation committee was established to represent multiple jurisdictions, non-governmental entities and the private sector. He reported that the evaluation committee voted unanimously to recommend that the City of Columbia engage in negotiations with the United Way of the Midlands and MACH. He outlined the following additional recommendations made by the evaluation committee: ensure that staff is properly credentialed with the relevant education, communication, facilitation skills and experience with case management; ensure that outreach related to food sharing and meal services is coordinated through a grassroots-type effort; that they are inclusive of community members, neighborhood leaders and the business community; and the committee wanted specific recommendations for the transition plan for the emergency winter shelter. He said the United Way of the Midlands submitted a response to these recommendations and that response addressed all of these concerns. He announced that the immediate short term response to the transition plan recommendation is for the City to operate one or more park facilities for overnight sheltering on an as needed basis and that this team would support the City in that effort. He stated that we have concluded the procurement piece of this process; we have determined that the sole proposal received was responsive to the requirements of the RFP; and our evaluation committee recommended that City Council authorize staff to move forward with contract negotiations.

Councilor Plough asked if the Community Development Department was involved with this analysis.

Mr. Gregory Sprouse, Director of Research & Planning & Development for the Central Midlands Council of Governments said they served in a technical advisory capacity to the evaluation committee.

Councilor Plough said she is concerned about the housing position, because there is a significant need to address housing needs across this city. She asked how the existing positions will collaborate with the new ones. She asked what the coordinator will be doing.

Ms. Sandra Wright, Purchasing Agent for the City of Columbia said pages 9-15 of the response clarifies the positions that are currently in place versus the new positions and the resources that will be utilized. She explained that the Homeless Services Manager will serve as an executive staff member for the coalition, manage federal grant application, reporting activities; monitor MACH and emergency shelter grantees; provide staffing for coalition meetings; and provide oversight of additional homeless services staff. She clarified that this is a new position. She explained that the Homeless Service Coordinator is an existing position that will be realigned to support the services and objectives that we have outlined, support local and overall MACH federally requested tasks, and develop other partnerships and stakeholders. She said the Affordable Housing Coordinator is a new position funded by the City and the individual will develop opportunities and network to increase affordable housing and they will set up mini taskforces to work towards rapidly rehousing our homeless.

Councilor Plaugh asked what the director's job is.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way said they will integrate these positions into the existing team that's currently led by Jennifer Moore. She explained that they are realigning staff while using city resources to work on this regional issue, because MACH covers fourteen (14) counties. She added that the coordinator will be responsible for coordinating food services, transportation, and other local issues called for in the RFP.

Councilor Devine clarified that the positions are outlined in the organizational chart provided by United Way.

Councilor Davis sought to understand where the emergency shelter fits into this. He asked who's bearing that responsibility.

Ms. Sandra Wright, Purchasing Agent for the City of Columbia said we requested that all respondents provide a transition plan, but we haven't officially awarded this RFP. She said we are approaching the winter months and the United Way didn't have enough time to address that issue.

Mayor Benjamin said no; the proposal does not take on responsibility for the Winter Shelter; it recommends that we use parks as inclement weather shelters. He said it is to be determined whether or not one of the funded positions may take a role in helping shape that future policy. He said a solution for this year is not contemplated in this proposal; it is recommended that the City find a way to resolve that.

Councilor Davis recommended that we look at that. He said if we are going to have that point of coordination for all services. The service providers have resources and the capacity to get more resources and they should assume the responsibility of the winter shelter.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said we have to come up with another plan for this year, but for the future, if United Way is chosen for the regional coordination, the expectation would be that the coordination contemplates all year long, including the winter months; not necessarily running the shelter we've had, because this Council has said we are moving in a different direction. That shelter is not being utilized for this purpose anymore. She said the intent was that the coordination of services would entail the winter months as well.

Councilor strongly recommended that Council receive a plan to address that.

Councilor Runyan said that he struggles with how this characterizes a fully responsive submission when we asked for plans for transportation, emergency sheltering and for all of the gaps. He said we have a proposal to add a couple more positions to do more of what we are already doing. He asked what the United Way's plan is for some of our problem folks that we have on the streets that there aren't currently United Way programs or other programs to help, like our sex offender population, those that are severely mentally ill and other populations for whom there is very little help right now.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way said they were looking to start the housing coordination so that they could move people more quickly through the system into permanent housing. We felt strongly that we needed to work on the backend; we can't solve all of these things short-term, but this will help us develop it over the long run.

Councilor Runyan asked if there is a plan now for sex offenders on the streets and in the parks or for the severely mentally ill.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way said we are working on help for the folks who have mental health issues. She said that's why we wanted to have crisis intervention training to serve individuals in the most appropriate ways. She acknowledged that they do have capacity issues.

Councilor Runyan asked if the proposal is for the city to assume responsibility for an emergency shelter indefinitely or for a season. He asked which parks they are considering.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way said the city would have to sort out which parks to use. She said the United Way was working under time constraints and the lack of an identified facility. She said they didn't think they could find a place to offer to the city and using the parks is a backup plan.

Councilor Runyan said he struggles with how this moves the ball forward at all; this creates another layer of bureaucracy; and that's what we're stuck with for the moment.

Councilor Baddourah said this coordinator will be responsible for bringing a lot of services together to help with the needs of the homeless population whether you are mentally challenged or just on the streets; this coordinator brings the fifty or sixty organizations that supported this RFP together and that's what we need; we've never had this before and it's worth a try. He said there is a responsibility for the coordinator to find shelter during the winter starting next year. He said that the coordinator is has to coordinate all of the services to help the needy. He said it comes back to city management and Council on what we are going to do this year in terms of the winter shelter. He acknowledged that in the long run, the coordinator has to come up with a plan or a vision for what we are going to do to eliminate that process completely.

Councilor Plough said we are hiring people to coordinate as opposed to hiring people for a deliverable. She asked what the coordination is going to result in.

Mayor Benjamin said we have to be clear on the deliverables we want to see based on this investment, which is relatively modest compared to what we need to invest as a community in dealing with the challenge of homelessness. He said we must find ways to stimulate more private sector, philanthropic, faith based and public dollars and work towards a long-term plan. He said we need to make sure deliverables are attached to this funding and we all need to continue to work together along with all of the partners who indicated support for this proposal to develop clear deliverables for this community. He said it's important for us to recognize that it's not the city's responsibility; it's not the United Way's responsibility; it's not Transition's responsibility, or the Salvation Army or churches; it's our collective responsibility to determine how we are going to do this. He insisted that the use of city parks as an inclement winter shelter is a non-starter. He said we have to rededicate ourselves to being very thoughtful in how we deal with this issue moving forward. He said this past week, we saw the temperatures drop in the mornings; it will be upon us; and it is imperative to have a plan in place posthaste.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way told Ms. Plough that the proposal called for coordination and people will be housed quicker if we can get these kinds of resources deployed; and the coordinated assessment will shorten the time that people spend homeless by getting them into services by using the no wrong door approach.

Councilor Runyan asked if any churches or faith based organizations are United Way member agencies. He asked how the United Way works with churches.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way said the Salvation Army. She said we work with as many agencies and organizations in the community as we can engage; we invite them to participate as volunteers in programs. She said we've connected with Family Promise; we work with the church groups to the extent that we can.

Councilor Runyan asked if the Salvation Army has a 501 (c) (3) church status.

Major Roger Coulson, Regional Coordinator / Corps Officer for the Salvation Army said we are both a 501 (c) (3) religion and a 501 (c) (3) charity.

Councilor Runyan asked which one of Salvation Army's legal entities is partnered with the United Way.

Major Roger Coulson, Regional Coordinator / Corps Officer for the Salvation Army said the United Way provides funding to the 501 (c) (3) charity.

Councilor Runyan asked if United Way would fund the Salvation Army if it was just a church.

Major Roger Coulson, Regional Coordinator / Corps Officer for the Salvation Army said not necessarily, there are a lot of churches that have social outreach that are able to do the work that is asked of them in the community, because there's no proselyting; a lot of organizations do what they do regardless of a person's faith or lack thereof.

Councilor Runyan said the church is one of our great assets in the community. He said he was under the impression that the United Way doesn't fund church programs.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way said we don't fund church efforts in terms of proselyting as it is being described; several years ago, we spent a lot of time working in an effort to help faith based efforts get the capacity to deliver services; if they are delivering services, we can engage with them, but we don't pay for church functions.

Major Roger Coulson, Regional Coordinator / Corps Officer for the Salvation Army clarified that groups like the Salvation Army go through a lot of review and processes in order to be sure that we are honestly accepting federal funds and using them appropriately.

Councilor Runyan said he is a member of First Presbyterian. He asked if United Way is equipped to partner with First Presbyterian.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way said they would need to be a 501 (c) (3) for us to grant funding.

Councilor Devine asked if an organization has to be a United Way agency in order to be a part of the coordination of services.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way said no and that's why we are partnering with MACH.

Councilor Devine clarified that it could be a faith based or community group.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way said we expect a lot of that as we coordinate the meal services.

Ms. Sandra Wright, Purchasing Agent for the City of Columbia acknowledged that the Oliver Gospel Mission submitted a letter in support of MACH's efforts and they don't think it is a one size fit all, but we need to tailor our services to the need of the individual.

#### 4. Inclement Weather Procedures – Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager distributed a copy of the proposed Inclement Weather Procedures and a proposed budget. She recognized that we are moving into the colder season and we certainly want to put something into place with Council's guidance. She clarified that as a City and staff, we are not equipped to run a winter shelter; that is not the role of a municipality nor is it the role of our staff to do anything more than facilitate. She said we are good at facilitating and working with certain providers and service agencies. She said we have put inclement weather procedures in place for cold nights and we can implement whatever Council feels is best. She noted that it would be on an as needed basis based on the protocol.

Councilor Davis agreed with doing it for this year, but for next year there needs to be a component addressing this. He said this needs to be a statement of expected outcomes or deliverables.

Councilor Runyan expressed concerns with the thirty six (36) degree threshold. He described how unpredictable the winters can be in Columbia, noting that it could be quite deadly for folks. He acknowledged that this is a very difficult situation that we didn't create, but we have to address it. He said we have to do everything we can to ensure that we are treating people with humanity and dignity. He said that 9 p.m. is too late; people will be sleeping under a porch with a blanket trying to stay warm by nine o'clock if it's cold. He asked that the City Manager and staff work to ensure that we are being as accommodating as we can for folks that don't have anywhere else to go.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said they considered 40 degrees if it is raining. She acknowledged that these recommendations are a starting point for Council's feedback and consideration.

Councilor Devine also expressed concerns about using our parks. She recalled past issues with making sure we get people in to transition it back for use during the day and we have a lot of fall sports.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager acknowledged that it's not an ideal location and she would not recommend this under normal circumstances. She said our overflow shelters have been at two of our primary larger parks and we would continue to do that for anybody, but we were trying to come up with a plan short of the shelter that we've had, because you all indicated for us not to utilize that.

Councilor Devine said the facility is available and it hasn't been transitioned to another use; since the winter is upon us, let's look at using that location again this winter. She acknowledged that we would have to work out the details of who would run it, but it's a large facility and it would be more prudent to use that.

Councilor Baddourah asked if the coordinator can manage that winter shelter.

Councilor Devine said the coordinator hasn't been hired yet and it sounds like the coordinator is not necessarily someone who can actually run it; it would be a coordinator of services.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager asked if that location would be used based upon inclement weather scenarios and not a full blown comprehensive winter shelter. She said this is based off of as-needed nights, which could be many nights. She noted that the budget doesn't entail the comprehensive approach that an operator would be involved with. She said we certainly would be as humane and accommodating as possible with snacks, mats, security and transportation, but it would not involve the triage and services that last year's shelter had.

Councilor Runyan asked how quickly a coordinator would be brought online.

Ms. Anita Floyd, Senior Vice President for Community Impact and Strategic Implementation for United Way said they would need to advertise the position.

Councilor Runyan asked if we could engage the United Way or the new coordinator to provide the services that were provided last year.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said we could, but for a winter shelter approach, the United Way would need to engage a provider just as we did.

Councilor Runyan said we ran the shelter efficiently for the last couple of years. He said we can't leave people to freeze to death on the streets. He asked if United Way has the capacity to help the City and the people in need on the streets of the City.

Councilor Davis asked if Mr. Runyan is talking about a full scale operation.

Councilor Runyan asked if the United Way has the desire to help us do what we've done in bringing dignity to people in the past couple of years.

Mayor Benjamin asked Mac Bennett if there is any interest by the United Way in running a winter shelter.

Mr. Mac Bennett, President and CEO of United Way said we communicated yesterday that we would work with the city. He said this is a community response; one organization cannot resolve some of the issues that surround our homeless challenges. We've told City staff that we are willing to work with the City and our partner agencies in the community to find a solution to address the emergency homeless issue this year and going forward. He said our challenge was responding in the timeframe that the RFP allowed when we understood that the shelter was not available. He said the challenge was finding a place that would be appropriate to offer to the community. We responded to nine out of ten requests in the RFP and we were very specific that we were not planning to respond to that particular element of the RFP.

Councilor Runyan stated that the plan United Way is proposing is to put our most needy citizens in our parks. He asked if that is where United Way stands or would they be able to carry the ball if we were able to make the facility from last year available. He noted that the beds are still there along with heating and air; it is a well-equipped facility right now. He asked if the United Way is able to run it and give dignity to those that are in need.

Mr. Mac Bennett, President and CEO of United Way said he is willing to commit to working with the City and partner agencies to find a solution to open the emergency shelter this fall.

Councilor Plaugh suggested that we make the previous shelter available during inclement weather just as we would a park, judge the need and work with United Way to address that need.

Mayor Benjamin said we would look to the existing and new staff at United Way to work with us to address that specific issue. He noted that when the responses to the RFP were due, the former winter shelter location was not on the table; now it's back on the table as a venue. He said that is prudent in addition to looking at other resources or potential opportunities in the community. He said that is one clear deliverable; let's immediately see what we can do this winter, but also looking at long-term solutions for the upcoming winters. He clarified that the facility is available; we would like for this engagement to contemplate coordinating inclement weather options, while realizing that if we are going to do something there, it will take significantly more resources than it has in years past. He insisted that they go ahead and take the parks off the table.

Councilor Runyan asked the City Manager to meet with Mr. Bennett and bring something back for Council to consider by the end of the week. He said every day is becoming more and more critical.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said absolutely. She asked if Council wanted her to work with United Way on this issue regardless of Council's approval of the RFP or does the directive contemplate United Way serving in this role officially.

Mayor Benjamin said we need to move forward, but let's aggressively move forward with the inclement weather piece while working with United Way as the coordinators for the regional response along with other partners. He said the goal is not to automatically look at the former winter shelter as the option, but certainly as an option that was not available when the proposals were due; let's look at any and every other option available to us as well. Mayor Benjamin made a motion to approve moving forward with the award of the contract; to make it clear that the use of city parks as overflow or inclement weather shelters is not on the table; to also make it clear that we'd expect the City Manager working with the United Way as the winning proposer, to immediately come back with a plan to deal with inclement weather; that ought not be restricted to the site we've used in the past; encourage you to continue looking at partnerships with any and every other organization in the community that's willing to work with you to achieve that goal.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager asked Council to make it clear as part of the motion, that the recommendation from the COG has been transitioned back to this body to take action upon and for the City to move forward with implementing the recommendations. She noted that the COG is still technically the body that has helped us get to this point.

Councilor Runyan asked that they take up the RFP then the shelter component by a separate motion.

Councilor Davis suggested that they include winter sheltering as part of this.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager sought to clarify that as part of the coordination of services in this response, the United Way would take a leadership role in recommending long-term solutions all year long.

Mayor Benjamin said that goes without saying; if you are going to be a coordinator for regional homelessness, you have to coordinate even that, but it's also important to note that we can't take this vote and automatically expect United Way to solve the issue of inclement weather sheltering. He said we will have to continue to seek regional solutions.

Councilor Davis insisted that this Council has to go on record that these kinds of services are being transitioned from the City.

Mayor Benjamin agreed with Mr. Davis, while noting that the challenge is with resources and our goal should be for this to be resourced in a participatory manner with the City playing a role along with the other governments, non-profits and the private sector.

Councilor Davis said we should not be the provider; we should be a participator.

Mayor Benjamin said as we look at our role as primary provider, he agreed that this should not be the case prospectively. He clarified that we are not expecting United Way to step into that role after this vote today either.

Councilor Davis said we conceptually agree that it would be the result of coordination.

Upon a motion made by Mayor Benjamin and seconded by Mr. Baddourah, Council voted five (5) to one (1) to approve the following motion. Voting aye were Mr. Baddourah, Mr. Newman, Ms. Devine, Mr. Davis and Mayor Benjamin. Mr. Runyan voted nay.

- Accept the Central Midlands Council of Governments' recommendation;
- Acknowledge that the City of Columbia will be responsible for the implementation of the recommendations;
- Accept the proposal from the United Way for the Regional Coordination of Homeless Services with the caveat that the use of city parks for emergency or overflow sheltering is not on the table;
- Authorize the City Manager to work with the United Way as the winning proposer of the Request for Proposals to immediately come back with a plan for inclement weather sheltering, which should not be restricted to the site used in the past;
- Continue looking at partnerships with other organizations to achieve that goal;
- Clarify that we are working within a defined budget; and
- Develop succinct deliverables within the contract timeframe.

#### **CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION**

5. [Bond Court Consolidation / Operation of 24/7 Bond Court](#) – The Honorable Judge Dana D. Turner, Chief Administrative Judge for Municipal Court and The Honorable Judge D. Jeffrey Simons, Chief Magistrate for Richland County

Councilor Newman recalled that the Public Safety Committee has discussed a 24/7 Bond Court several times along with the ways it could result in cost savings and efficiencies. He said the Committee directed the City Manager to meet with the County Administrator, Chief Municipal Judge and the Chief Magistrate for Richland County to vet the process. He said there have been a number of exchanges; we received a proposal from the Richland County Magistrate and a response from our Chief Municipal Judge.

The Honorable Judge D. Jeffrey Simons, Chief Magistrate for Richland County said he was asked to prepare a proposal for a Bond Court would operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and the magistrate would set all bonds. He said that by consolidating the bond courts, there would be savings to both the county and city. He explained that the city conducts two bond courts a day: one in the morning and one in the afternoon and Richland County conducts four bond courts a day: at 9:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. He further explained that a 24 hour Bond Court would allow a detainee to immediately go before a judge before being booked into the jail population; they will be fingerprinted and a picture will be taken; victims will be notified; and detainees will be allowed to sober up before a bond hearing. He reported that over the past year, Richland County processed 10,000 inmates and 50% of the detainees received a personal recognizance bond. He noted that detainees that need to remain in jail will remain there.

He acknowledged that city judges are against this proposal. He said the proposal outlines additional costs for judges.

Councilor Newman said that Richland County Council is in favor of this measure. He noted that this doesn't apply to violent offenders. He said it would save the City \$25 per day and Richland County would save \$40. He noted that the committee didn't make a recommendation, but thought it would be prudent to get formal information, have Council vet the proposal and then we could collectively decide on next steps. He noted that the proposal is for a one-year trial period.

The Honorable Judge Dana D. Turner, Chief Administrative Judge for Municipal Court stated that she is concerned that 24 hour bond setting would allow detainees to immediately return to the streets even if they have a bond set. She referenced the two hypothetical situations that were outlined in her memo to City Council. She noted that repeat offenders could be released frequently. She said this would not be welcomed by neighborhood leaders. She urged City Council to review the cost savings; the detention center costs are fixed and the savings would come from feeding and clothing detainees at a cost of \$3. She said the city wouldn't save much except for the minimal expense of overtime; it wouldn't eliminate any staff or judges. She said if the real goal is to release folks quicker, a 2014 amendment to Section 22-5-530 also known as the Cash and Dash allows individuals to post bond at the jail and be released immediately for summons level offenses prior to bond hearings.

Councilor Devine asked if Cash and Dash is being used.

The Honorable Judge Dana D. Turner, Chief Administrative Judge for Municipal Court said it is available to anybody who wants to use it.

Councilor Baddourah said it is our responsibility to save the tax payers money and make our departments as efficient as possible. He expressed concerns about someone being arrested for fighting and then being released six hours later to return to the scene. He suggested that a cooling off period by keeping a person in jail overnight is a good thing.

The Honorable Judge D. Jeffrey Simons, Chief Magistrate for Richland County explained that bond settings can't be held until the victim is notified. He said that Cash and Dash has been on the books for quite some time, but it wasn't used in Richland County until recently.

Councilor Baddourah asked what happens when you can't reach a victim. He said he's not okay with someone being released in the same day.

Councilor Newman said this scenario could occur with the current Bond Court.

The Honorable Judge D. Jeffrey Simons, Chief Magistrate for Richland County said we would have to meet with all law enforcement agencies so they will know how we will be conducting bond court. He said the sooner we hold bond court, the more likely the victim will show up; the officers can better inform victims of when bond court will be held; and the victim can express his/her availability.

Councilor Davis asked about the opinion of the other City judges.

The Honorable Judge Dana D. Turner, Chief Administrative Judge for Municipal Court said they support my recommendation; they don't think it's in the best interest of the City to do this.

Councilor Davis sought to understand the cost savings to the City.

The Honorable Judge Dana D. Turner, Chief Administrative Judge for Municipal Court said you wouldn't know until you knew what kind of bonds were set. She said the \$25 per day is a part of a separate contract that isn't up for renegotiation. She said 80% of the bonds we set last year were personal recognizance. She reiterated her concerns with immediate releases.

Councilor Davis said it is a matter of being expeditious and creating cost savings. He expressed concerns with notifying neighborhoods that advocate for getting people off the streets and being notified about bond hearings.

The Honorable Judge Dana D. Turner, Chief Administrative Judge for Municipal Court said the law requires that the victim be notified of a bond hearing. She said that victims don't want to immediately come to bond court and it would be difficult for victims to come in the middle of the night.

The Honorable Judge D. Jeffrey Simons, Chief Magistrate for Richland County said a majority of the magistrates live in the City of Columbia and are just as concerned about our neighborhoods and releasing individuals that don't need to be released. He said they are proposing to try this for one (1) year without the city contributing to the costs. He said this will streamline the process and produce cost savings, but it's a matter of whether or not the city wants to do this; County Council members support this with or without the city's participation.

Councilor Davis sought clarification on the numbers.

The Honorable Judge Dana D. Turner, Chief Administrative Judge for Municipal Court said the cost savings would come from overtime; the only way for the city to realize more savings is by not incurring the \$25 per inmate per day, but we don't know what that number is now.

The Honorable Judge D. Jeffrey Simons, Chief Magistrate for Richland County said you would eliminate the need for judges, clerks and bailiffs to go to the detention center on a daily basis.

The Honorable Judge Dana D. Turner, Chief Administrative Judge for Municipal Court said our court officers will transport to the jail twice per day to pick up inmates for court. She said we still need a judge to handle Lexington County bond settings and we will still transport from Lexington County.

Councilor Devine said we had concerns with getting the necessary information to the judges to set bonds. She asked how that would affect preparations in order to set an adequate bond.

The Honorable Judge Dana D. Turner, Chief Administrative Judge for Municipal Court said they would run their own rap sheets and print incident reports at the jail before setting bonds. She expressed concerns about losing track of paperwork and having it on a timely basis.

Councilor Devine asked what the officers' opinions are on this proposal.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said they were not involved with these proposals.

Councilor Devine requested opinions from defense attorneys. She said there were concerns about the time it took to process detainees.

The Honorable Judge Dana D. Turner, Chief Administrative Judge for Municipal Court acknowledged that there are still concerns about the length of time it takes to process detainees once a bond is set.

Councilor Plough recalled the policy recommendations from the Mayor's Panel on Bond Reform. She asked if we are allowing enough time for the information to be assembled.

Mayor Benjamin said that is an issue. He noted that Chief Holbrook has thoughts about how to make sure our judges have comprehensive information.

6. [Elmwood/Roy Lynch Park Cost Analysis of Schematic Re-Design](#) – Mr. Jeff Caton, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department; Mr. Todd Martin, Park Planner; and Richland One School Board Commissioner Pamela Adams, Junior League of Columbia, Inc.

Mr. Jeff Caton, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department presented three (3) renderings and cost estimates for the reconfiguration of Elmwood/Roy Lynch Park to accommodate child safety zones. He noted that this information is being presented for discussion only and in no way represents a recommendation born out of community input. He announced that the Junior League of Columbia would like to be involved in the

fundraising aspect of this process. He explained that option c would provide the maximum amount of unaffected space.

Commissioner Pamela Adams, Richland One School Board and Junior League of Columbia, Inc. announced that this is the 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the Junior League of Columbia. She stated that the Junior League of Columbia is excited about the opportunity to work with the City on this park. The JLC has set aside \$60,000 and will submit a funding request to Kaboom for \$15,000 for a total of \$75,000. She noted that Roy Lynch Park is heavily used by the students at Logan Elementary and the Elmwood Community. She explained that the League has developed relationships with the Logan Elementary School's teachers and PTO and the neighborhood association. She stated that the League is here to give you all a gift of a new park.

Councilor Devine suggested the creation of focus groups with adults and children. She reiterated her concerns about whether or not the exclusive zones are providing what its supporters wanted. She agreed that new equipment is needed, but urged staff to make sure the redesign is necessary and that we fund this within a reasonable time frame, because there will be expectations.

Commissioner Pamela Adams, Richland One School Board and Junior League of Columbia, Inc. said the students wrote formal letters about what they want to see in the park, but she also likes the idea of sitting down with the children.

Councilor Davis asked if the safety zone would be done if the neighborhood doesn't request it.

Mr. Jeff Caton, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department said no, but it would be wise to pursue the reconfiguration and provide more green space in the park.

Councilor Devine said we could look at fencing, but we need to consider the cost and reason for redesigning the park if it doesn't accomplish the original purpose.

Councilor Runyan said given the possibility of designating child safety zones it would make sense as a practical matter to have this in mind when redesigning any park. He asked staff to determine if a redesign is warranted and why. He agreed with Ms. Devine in that it would change the calculus if we were to redesign the park for a child safety zone that isn't wanted, but it's another issue if the redesign is needed because the park is old, inefficient and under used. He thanked the Junior League of Columbia for their public private partnership and coming together for the benefit of the city and the children of this city.

Councilor Devine asked staff to consider incorporating outdoor classrooms. She noted that the University of South Carolina has standards for this new concept.

7. [Undergrounding Utilities](#) – Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Operations

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Operations explained that there is an initiative to gain support for undergrounding utilities on an annual basis. She outlined the areas that have been successfully completed: Gervais Street, Harden Street, Lady Street, and a portion of Main Street, Two Notch Road, and a portion of North Main Street. She reported that North Main Street will be completed with funding from the Penny Sales Tax and a TIGER Grant. She further reported that there is a pending application with the State Infrastructure Bank for Assembly Street between Elmwood Avenue and Rosewood Drive.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager noted that the City has been involved with the beginning template for the redesign of the entire length of Assembly Street. She stated for the record that while the University didn't underground the utilities within several blocks for the Darla Moore School of Business project, it wasn't for a lack of trying on the City's part.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Operations continued to explain that the non-standard service fund is a part of our franchise agreement with SCANA and we have spent \$28 million to date through this 50/50 partnership. She recalled that several years ago the City of Columbia advanced \$16 million to the partnership in order to pay for street scape projects and we will be fully reimbursed in approximately seven (7) years for those projects. She said the fund is being reimbursed at approximately \$1 million annually and we are committed to using every dollar that is available. She recommended that there be a dedicated funding source from the city and that we pursue public private partnerships. She presented images of Gervais Street before and after the utilities were placed underground.

Mr. Jack McKenzie, Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission member referenced the Kelsey Report from 1904 that said we needed to start undergrounding the power lines in a slow and systematic process over generations.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Operations presented superimposed images of areas to demonstrate the aesthetic attractiveness along streets with underground utilities. She noted that underground utilities eliminate the need to trim trees around utility lines, but it is expensive costing approximately \$1 million per block. She said other municipalities have passed resolutions encouraging underground utilities. She reported that the Tree and Appearance Commission recommends not allowing any new overhead lighting, but staff believes that we should be cautious, because we want development to happen; the Tree and Appearance Commission would like for the City to fund projects each year; and that we establish a committee to look at project areas. She noted that we are using SCANA's funding annually as a match to the City's funding; we should replace leased lights with city lights along project routes; and we currently partner with public and private developments.

Mr. Jack McKenzie, Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission member presented additional photos of Gervais Street from the 1970's.

Mr. Andy Whitfield, Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission member acknowledged that amazing work has been done in the Vista and on Main Street. He said there needs to be annual fund, because you would be missing out on \$1 million in matching funds each year. He outlined a number of projects that the City could partner in. He said the City didn't put any money into the Assembly Street project.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager told Mr. Whitfield that he is incorrect.

Mayor Benjamin noted that he asked the Tree and Appearance Commission to take the lead in coming back to City Council with recommendations and building support for it. He said we do need to underground more lines; continue to leverage the public private partnerships; devote more resources to sidewalks and other quality of life improvements; we need to step up our implementation of much grander recycling efforts; and as we go into our budget year, I want each of those as recurring funding items in the thoughtful and strategic way the Commission is recommending. He supports the Commission's recommendation on a dedicated source of funding. He suggested that we look for other private funds to leverage with federal funding.

Councilor Davis said we have a lot of commitments from people who want to see this being done in neighborhoods; we have to get off of the corridors sometimes.

Mr. Andy Whitfield, Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission member agreed that a portion of the funding can be set aside for undergrounding neighborhood utilities.

Mr. Jack McKenzie, Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission member suggested that areas be designated as underground utility districts once they are done so that developers could not install lines once the City has installed underground utilities.

Councilor Baddourah said this plan needs to be discussed at the retreat.

Councilor Newman asked if they considered requesting financial assistance from the Central Midlands Council of Governments. He suggested that we create a project similar to the assistance the City provided to USC.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Operations said they will certainly work with the COG.

8. [Finlay Park Public Meeting Process](#) – Mr. Jeff Caton, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department and Ms. Jenny Horne, Stantec Senior Landscape Architect – *This item was moved to the Council Meeting Agenda under Presentations.*

9. Classic 105 Employee Benefits Program – Mr. Joe Grant and Mr. Larry Harper, District Manager for The Total Financial Group – *This presentation was received as information. No action was taken.*

Mr. Joe Grant said the Classic 105 Program would fit well with the City's current insurance program; provide an increase in employees' take home pay; reimburse employees for 75% of their unreimbursed medial costs; and it will save the City money in its FICA contribution.

Mr. Larry Harper, Regional Director of The Total Financial Group explained that the Classic 105 Program is a proprietary tax overlay system that is ERISA and HIPPA compliant. He said once the program is implemented, it creates a self-funded welfare benefit account that reimburses an employee for 75% of any out-of-pocket unreimbursed medical expenses. He said that most employees will receive a 5% to 8% pay increase and the City will realize an \$850,000 savings from FICA. He noted that there are no costs to the employees or the city and it doesn't require changing any relationships. He provided an overview of how the Classic 105 Program works.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Upon a motion by Mr. Runyan and seconded by Mr. Davis Council voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 5:20 p.m. for the discussion of **Items 10 and 11**.

10. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
11. Receipt of legal advice as it relates to a matter covered by attorney-client privilege – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore  
City Clerk