

**CITY OF COLUMBIA
ARTS AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
MEETING REPORT
FEBRUARY 24, 2014 – 4:00 P.M.
CITY HALL – 3rd FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
1737 MAIN STREET**



The Columbia City Council conducted an Arts and Historic Preservation Committee Meeting on Tuesday, February 24, 2014 in the City Hall 3rd Floor Conference Room located at 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Moe Baddourah (Chair) called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. The Honorable Brian DeQuincey Newman was present. The Honorable Leona K. Plough arrived at 4:15 p.m.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS

1. Mill Village Museum Presentation – Ms. Sherry Jaco

Ms. Sherry Jaco presented a plan to have a permanent Olympia Granby Mill Village Museum located at 1170 Olympia Avenue. This is the site of the original Olympia School. They are currently in discussions with the property owner to purchase the property for \$100,000. They have received pledges totaling almost \$25,000. The owner has asked to receive the funds within 90 days. They have contacted Richland County to see if they would be willing to contribute and support this effort. They have also researched if there are any grants that would be available for this type of project.

Councilor Baddourah asked if this type of project would be eligible for Hospitality Tax dollars.

Ms. Libby Gober, Assistant to Council advised that it would not since it is not located within the city limits.

Councilor Plough inquired how it will be operated and if they have made contact with Historic Columbia.

Ms. Sherry Jaco responded it would be operated by volunteers. She commented that they have not contacted Historic Columbia. She thought they were affiliated with the City.

Ms. Missy Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager asked staff to help facilitate a meeting between the Historic Columbia Foundation and Ms. Jaco.

Councilor Baddourah asked for public comments at this time.

Mr. John Whitehead, Executive Director of Columbia Music Festival Association and Chair of the Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee wanted to thank the Council for their continued financial support. Halfway through this fiscal year we have had 13,000 visitors. The total number of visitors last year was 22,500. People come from all over the country and internationally as well. He commended the Mayor for his comments made at a meeting last week regarding the City's continued support of the arts; it was very important to hear that. It should not only be carried on for one year but for 20-30 years should the stadium be built. He suggested that the art community should have direct input on how it will be used. We have a need for a venue that will hold 100-1500 people. He reminded the committee that one of the findings from the Arts Task Force was the need for an arts village. A location was proposed in North Columbia, but so many other parts of the city desired it and it never came to fruition. He added that he spoke with a woman in Ft. Wayne that is involved with the Arts and has a unique perspective on the use of that facility. He shared her contact information.

Bobby Williams, former Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee member added that he is concerned and a lot of people have expressed concerns, too. I'm concerned with the budget cuts. A lot of them are scared to say anything.

John Whitehead, Executive Director of Columbia Music Festival Association and Chair of the Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee added this is our sustainability; it's part of the quality of life. It gives you a base to build their budgets on. To even talk about weaning the arts off of Hospitality Tax is detrimental to the entire health of the arts community and its growth.

John Durst, President of the South Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association gave a brief history on why the Hospitality Tax was created and what its purpose was. Some groups that are not considered with this arts group are concerned that they might be losing funding. He said that the Mayor was going to get with the CFO to estimate how much hospitality tax would be used for debt service whether it's a 20 or 30 year term. It's either \$1.2 million or \$1.8 million.

Councilor Newman stated that he wasn't sure if this information was communicated to you or not, but we always want to hear from people whether it's a committee meeting or council meeting. To answer your question, I haven't seen anything, but the Mayor probably has that information. However, I wanted to point out one of the issues that I have with the whole Bull Street/Baseball is that a lot of misinformation has been put out there from both sides. We discussed this as a council about whether we would discuss the hospitality tax and baseball in this committee or as a Council. There was a decision made at that time for this not to be on this agenda so that the full Council could be present and make comments or ask questions. I wanted to put that out there. I have spoken with several people about this issue. The reason why it was decided to go to full Council was so that if a councilmember made a comment they could be there to answer questions put forth about comments they have made.

John Whitehead, Executive Director of Columbia Music Festival Association and Chair of the Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee stated that the Mayor did specify that all groups would not be cut.

John Durst, President of the South Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association added that lots of information has been circulated. What is accurate?

Councilor Plaugh stated that she doesn't think that all the information out here is incorrect. The Mayor said he would hold funding at current levels. Accommodations Taxes could be used. She mentioned that a letter last year alluded to a six (6) year agreement with the Convention Center and Lake Murray.

Ms. Libby Gober, Assistant to Council advised that it was not a written agreement; it was an agreement with them and two council members; last year's surplus was substantial.

Councilor Baddourah recalled a conversation he had with a restaurant patron regarding the funding of the arts.

Councilor Plaugh added that the Mayor discussed possibly moving some groups as line items; is that a good idea.

Bobby Williams, former Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee member added that there will always be competition.

John Whitehead, Executive Director of Columbia Music Festival Association and Chair of the Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee thought it was a good idea. This would give them a sense of stability, but not for things that come up.

Ms. Libby Gober, Assistant to Council added that some groups want to be line items, but they don't realize that line items do not get extra funds; line items haven't been increased in eight (8) years.

- **The meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Connie Lucius, Ombudsman
Office of the City Council