

**CITY OF COLUMBIA
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
APRIL 19, 2006
9:00 AM – CITY HALL– 3RD FLOOR
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**



The Columbia City Council met for a Work Session on Wednesday, April 19, 2006 in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29217. Mayor Robert D. Coble called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The following members of Council were present: The Honorable E.W. Cromartie, II, The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine and The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann. The Honorable Anne M. Sinclair arrived at 9:09 a.m. Also present were Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk.

**There was a consensus of Council to discuss a letter from Richland County regarding the Vista Tax Increment Financing District in open session instead of Executive Session.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

- A. Columbia Metropolitan Conventions and Visitors Bureau Fiscal Year 2006/2007 Hospitality Tax Funding Application – Mr. Steve Camp, Executive Director

Mr. Steve Camp, Executive Director of the Columbia Metropolitan Conventions and Visitors Bureau (CVB) requested \$1.1 Million in Hospitality Tax Funding for fiscal year 2006/2007. He noted that Hospitality Tax funding provided over the past three (3) years has produced results indicating successful progress in the marketing of Columbia as a destination for meetings, conventions and leisure travel. The accommodations tax collections increased by 13.9% and hospitality tax collections increased by 10% during the first 8 months of fiscal year 2005/2006 according to the Department of Revenue. The incremental amounts in those collections are positive indications that the CVB marketing process is having the desired effect. Visits to the new website (www.columbiacvb.com) have shown amazing increases by 143% over March 2005. The website will soon have online booking capabilities through a partnership with Travelocity. The site will also include information on Columbia, South Carolina in eight different languages. He anticipates that the opening of the Convention Center Hotel in 2007 will increase the interest of regional groups to hold their meetings and conventions in Columbia. He noted that only 32% of the business booked by the CVB utilizes the Convention Center, reinforcing the mission of the CVB to book business where it may be best accommodated in the region. With the support of Hospitality Tax funding, they are focusing more on the leisure market, which should provide a substantial economic impact for the local hospitality community. The collaborative marketing initiative with the Columbia Riverbanks Zoo and Gardens, State Museum, EdVenture Children's Museum, Columbia Museum of Art and Historic Columbia Foundation raises the bar to a new level. The effort begins next week and will run for 7 weeks in Augusta, Georgia featuring 30 second television commercials and radio spots and strategically placed billboards all driving traffic to the new campaign website www.visitcolumbia.com. Mr. Camp noted that the campaign will also offer opportunities to many other area attractions, events and businesses. He explained that their request for the next fiscal year has increased by \$100,000 to allow for the successful completion of this innovative campaign. The CVB will again designate \$150,000 of the remaining \$1 million to properly fund this effort. He reiterated his request for hospitality tax funding support in the amount of \$1.1 million and by doing so they will continue the commitment of investing hospitality tax revenues for programs that produce incremental revenue streams.

Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine stated that there have been casual discussions among some members of Council and they suggested that the CVB be the recipient of all accommodations tax funding, thus eliminating the need to provide back up materials to receive hospitality tax funding. She asked Mr. Camp if this would be sufficient for the organization.

Mr. Steve Camp, Executive Director of the Columbia Metropolitan Conventions and Visitors Bureau said that they are only concerned about having enough funding to do the job. He noted that providing hospitality tax funding allows them to serve those that generate the revenue for this tax. He stated that they would consider the concept.

Councilor Sam Davis suggested that Council discuss this further and amongst themselves. He stated that there are other organizations that are worthy of accommodations tax funding.

Mr. Steve Camp, Executive Director of the Columbia Metropolitan Conventions and Visitors Bureau suggested that the CVB receive a definite percentage of hospitality tax funding.

Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine asked if the issues were resolved surrounding the Clyburn event.

Mr. Steve Camp, Executive Director of the Columbia Metropolitan Conventions Visitors Bureau stated that the Authority is comfortable with the solutions that were reached. He said that a report was sent to Congressman Clyburn and the City Manager.

Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine asked if there would be paper-marketing materials since not everyone has Internet access.

Mr. Steve Camp, Executive Director of the Columbia Metropolitan Conventions Visitors Bureau stated that collateral materials are available.

Councilor Elect Kirkman Finlay noted that the CVB's cash position and net assets grew substantially by \$120,000 last year. He asked why should the City fund an additional \$100,000 to the organization when their assets have increased.

Mr. Steve Camp, Executive Director of the Columbia Metropolitan Conventions and Visitors Bureau replied that they might not have paid all of the bills from the previous year. He said the some payments were delayed until they received the remainder of hospitality tax funding in August 2005.

Mr. James Bennett, Board of Director of the Columbia Metropolitan Conventions Visitors Bureau explained that Mr. Camp is asking for additional funds to continue to promote the City of Columbia, the Convention Center and area hotels. He said that Mr. Finlay was reviewing the operations side and that Mr. Camp was speaking from the hospitality tax point of view. He noted that an in-depth study was done on a myriad of events hosted at the Convention Center and there was no evidence of disparity. He said that Congressman Clyburn's fees were reduced to the cost of the event.

Councilor Elect Kirkman Finlay suggested that the CVB continue to fund itself and slowly begin the process of extending hospitality tax funding to other areas that are not as developed as the Vista.

Councilor E.W. Cromartie, II requested a plan on how the CVB intends to increase and provide for small and minority businesses doing business with the Authority. He asked if the CVB produces an entertainment / knowledge type video for hotels. This video should include the historical aspects of the African American community. He said that if this is being done, he would like to see it and if not, he wants to know why. He noted that during a recent trip to the Columbia Metropolitan Airport it was said that Leisure Times is the most sought after guide to Columbia. He further noted that Leisure Times is a small minority business.

Mr. James Bennett, Board of Director for the Columbia Metropolitan Conventions and Visitors Bureau provided the CVB's commitment to ensure that minorities are involved in everything that's done at the Convention Center. He said that they would be glad to provide the plan as requested.

Councilor Anne M. Sinclair stated that Columbia has a greater responsibility on the success of the facility, Leisure Times and other efforts. She said that most of the key attractions are in the City of Columbia. She noted that the City of Columbia provides 75% of the CVB's funding. She asked about their efforts to strengthen the regional partnership with other governments.

Mr. Steve Camp, Executive Director of the Columbia Metropolitan Conventions and Visitors Bureau responded that obtaining regional support has been an interesting challenge. He said that the City of Columbia has provided excellent support; Richland County has designated the CVB as a 30% recipient of their accommodations tax collections, they have not been successful in getting hospitality tax funding from Richland County or accommodations tax funding from Lexington County. He said that it is disappointing, because the community is stronger as a region. He added that the Towns of Cayce and Springdale are very complimentary of what the CVB is doing and recognize that they get more bang for their buck by passing what little funding they receive on to the CVB.

Councilor Sam Davis stated for the record that he concurs with Councilor E.W. Cromartie, II. He said that there is a problem with the perception of the way African Americans are treated at the Convention Center. He said that something is wrong and it needs to be fixed. He concurred with Councilor Sinclair that the City of Columbia is carrying the load. He said that these problems need to be fixed or he will withdraw his support.

Mr. Steve Camp, Executive Director of the Columbia Metropolitan Conventions and Visitors Bureau explained that he is here to request funding for the Convention and Visitors Bureau and not the Convention Center, which is funded by tourism development fees or self generated revenues not taxes.

Councilor Daniel J. Rickenmann stated that he would like to see an increase in funding for attractions. He said that he wants the money for attractions separated from the other funds. He requested that \$100,000 be set aside for the creation of a video and photo library to be used by everyone. He stated that \$750,000 would be adequate funding for fiscal year 2006/2007. He asked which organizations benefited from the CVB's transportation allocations. He is looking for the return on investment and is not supportive of the requested funding.

Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine suggested that the CVB reconsider Leisure Time's request for funding for fiscal year 2006/2007.

Councilor Kirkman Finlay, III stated that this is an issue of taking money from the City only and funding something that is supposed to be regional and some places are not seeing a return on their dollars. He said that Council should be careful of assuming the responsibilities and obligations of two counties and numerous municipalities under the auspices of a regional effort.

An in depth discussion took place, but no action was taken.

PRESENTATIONS

- B. Fast Forward Quarterly Update – Ms. Dee Albritton, Director of Fast Forward

Ms. Dee Albritton, Director of Fast Forward announced that the Fast Forward Summer Camp Program would begin on May 30, 2006 until June 30, 2006 at Shandon Presbyterian Church. There will be two new summer camps to include a music video camp. She announced an upcoming Internet Safety Seminar and a new partnership with KOBAN. She said that First Nazareth is bringing back their three and four year olds as well. She thanked the Ombudsman Office for coordinating the Strength and Unity workshops. Ms. Albritton announced that Fast Forward has entered into partnerships to apply for three grants.

Ms. Judy Hubbard, Fast Forward Board Member, stated that Fast Forward scanned photographs that documented 100 years of history for the Shandon Neighborhood. She invited the members of Council to a fundraiser on May 11, 2006 in her back yard. Funding from this event will provide scholarships for camps and purchase new equipment for the organization.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

- C. Downtown Business Improvement District Renewal Process – Mr. Matt Kennell, Executive Director of the City Center Partnership and Mr. Jim Apple, Chairman of the City Center Partnership Board of Directors

Mr. Jim Apple, Chairman of the City Center Partnership Board of Directors reported that they now have in excess of 60% of property owners indicating their support of the renewal of the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) for five years. The current boundaries of the BID are from Assembly Street east to Marion Street and from Elmwood Avenue south to Gervais Street. He did not request an expansion of the boundaries at this time. He asked City Council to direct City staff to work with the City Center Partnership to develop a definitive schedule for public hearings. The Plan to include a work plan, long term budget and assessment rates will be presented to the Board of Directors on May 10, 2006. Due to the large amount of new private investments in the area there will not be an increase in the assessment amount. They intend to maintain the current programs with the addition of a staff member to work on retail business recruitment and development within the BID. The Business Improvement District will cease all operations if not renewed by the end of 2006.

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Ms. Sinclair, Council voted unanimously to authorize the City Center Partnership to proceed with the reauthorization process for the Downtown Business Improvement District and to work with City staff to establish the appropriate schedule for Public Hearings and the approval of related matters.

- **Council adjourned at 10:16 a.m. to break before convening the regular meeting.**
- **Council reconvened the Work Session at 11:27 a.m.**

- D. Fiscal Year 2006 / 2007 General Fund Budget Overview – Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Administrator

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Administrator presented an overview of the proposed General Fund Budget for FY 06/07 in terms of what departments have requested.

Mayor Robert D. Coble suggested that they review code enforcement from a comprehensive standpoint.

Councilor Daniel Rickenmann suggested that overtime pay for Police Officers that cover events such as parades be paid from the Hospitality Tax Fund. He asked for clarification of the administration allocations of the departmental budgets and why they vary.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Administrator, explained that some departments include the director and support staff under the administration line item. Some departments place capital expenditures within this line item as well.

Councilor Sam Davis asked where the Community Safety Officers (CSO's) are funded. He asked how many CSO's were on the payroll. He asked if a CSO has been assigned to the Greenview, College Place and Belmont Communities.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Administrator, responded that twenty CSO's are included in the General Fund.

Councilor Elect Kirkman Finlay, III concurred with Councilor Rickenmann's comments. He stated that there is a \$15 +/- million shortfall of revenue versus expenses. He suggested that the public be told how the proposed budget would affect them. He said that the large increases needed to be communicated to the public. He said that Council should commit to not making any significant changes to the budget once it has been presented to the public.

Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine asked about the request for a Recruitment Officer position under Human Resources. She asked about the average cost of living adjustment amount being used by the State and other entities. She further inquired about the allocation for translation services for Municipal Court. Ms. Devine inquired about funding for pay increases for Police Officers and support staff.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Administrator, responded that an existing position was turned into the Recruitment Coordinator within Human Resources and that the request is for a support person for Human Resources and the Training Administration Office. She noted that they already have the Recruitment Coordinator. Ms. Caughman explained that the State offers a 3 % to 4% increase and we are in line with that. She noted that funding is included in this budget for translation services.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager stated that they needed to deal with the issue of pay raises for Police Officers and their support staff separately. He noted that they should look at the number of staff throughout the city that is in the same position and not just the Police Department.

Councilor Elect Kirkman Finlay, III, suggested that the scheduled open house be deferred by one week to allow time for the presentation of a balanced budget.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Administrator, stated that a balanced budget would be presented at the next meeting.

There was a consensus of Council to reschedule the Budgetary Open House for Wednesday, May 10, 2006 at 6:00 p.m.

- **Councilor E.W. Cromartie, II returned at 11:59 a.m.**

D1. **Finlay Park Operating Hours – Mayor Robert D. Coble

- **Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine left the meeting at 11:59 a.m.**

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Mr. Cromartie, Council voted unanimously to direct staff to draft an Ordinance that would mandate that all City parks close by dusk as dictated by the seasons of the year. The Ordinance should contain provisions for enforcement and should outline the penalties for violating the Ordinance. The appropriate signage will be posted throughout all City parks. Ms. Devine was not present for the vote.

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Mr. Cromartie, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 12:23 p.m. for the discussion of **Items E.** and **F.** as amended. Ms. Devine was not present for the vote.

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Mr. Cromartie, Council voted unanimously to discuss a letter from Richland County regarding the disbursement of funds derived from the Vista Tax Increment Financing in open session. Ms. Devine was present at this time.

D2. **Vista Tax Increment Funding

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager cited paragraph three of a letter from Interim County Administrator Milton Pope, which alleges that the City of Columbia did not expend Vista Tax Funding in accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreement, thus resulting in a \$6 million loss for Richland County since 1999. He noted that the Finance Department has begun researching the matter so that a response can be provided.

Mayor Robert D. Coble asked staff to outline which projects they may be referring to.

Councilor Elect Kirkman Finlay, III stated that this situation underscores the need for a strong Chief Financial Officer.

Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine suggested that a letter be sent to the County acknowledging receipt of their letter, noting that a response will be provided in a timely manner.

Councilor Anne M. Sinclair stated that this is not just a financial issue, because the comments also relate to Ordinances the City has passed. She said that our legal counsel should be a part of the review process to determine if we complied with the agreement.

Councilor Sam Davis stated that he would like to know the specifics.

Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine asked about the River Alliance and the approval process of their projects.

Councilor Anne M. Sinclair stated that their board approves the project and then it is sent out for bid. She noted that often the projects cost more than what they were budgeted for.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- **Council convened the Executive Session discussion at 1:13 p.m.**
- E. **Receipt of legal advice, which relates to pending, threatened or potential claim Matters were discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.
- F. **Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements Matters were discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.
- **Council adjourned the discussion to reconvene the Work Session at 1:33 p.m.**

G. ****CanalSide and the Beach Company**

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Ms. Sinclair, Council voted unanimously to authorize Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager to execute all documents necessary to affect the closing of the CanalSide property.

****Mr. Steve Gantt**, Senior Assistant City Manager for Operations reported that the Esplanade is moving forward and that a ribbon cutting ceremony should occur within the next 15 months.

- **Council adjourned the meeting at 1:34 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Salley
City Clerk