

**CITY OF COLUMBIA WORK SESSION MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 6, 2006
4:00 PM – CITY HALL– 3RD FLOOR
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 1737 MAIN STREET**



The Columbia City Council conducted a Work Session on Wednesday, September 6, 2006 in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. Mayor Robert D. Coble called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. The following members of City Council were present: The Honorable E.W. Cromartie, II, The Honorable Anne M. Sinclair, The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann and The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III. Also present were Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager and Ms. Ramona Bouknight, City Clerk Assistant.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

A. The Village at River's Edge – Mr. Steve Benjamin

Mr. Steve Benjamin, Principle, LLC, presented a proposal to reconstruct 100 units located at the former Roosevelt Village site to provide quality affordable housing. There are 100 abandoned units on the site, with such problems as asbestos, lead paint, failing water and sewer infrastructure. He proposed an urban renewal development with 128 single family homes, 100 town homes, 66 condos / apartments. The goal is to create home ownership with the potential for housing for senior citizens. He admitted that rising property cost is a challenge and requested that the City of Columbia help to absorb the infrastructure development costs with an anticipated build out in three (3) years. Anticipated construction costs exceed \$35 million. Taxable income to Richland County and the School District is estimated at \$572,000. And taxable income to the City of Columbia is estimated at \$152,000 along with estimated water and sewer revenue at \$1 million over ten (10) years. Mr. Benjamin explained that he purchased the 24.6-acre site, 3.2-acres contiguous to the site, and is considering the purchase of another 4.3-acre for a total foot print of 32.1-acres up to Broad River Road. He is also considering the addition of light (neighborhood) commercial development. He committed to a rapid development, annexation and consolidation, increased tax rolls, water revenue, affordable housing stock, removal of blight, reduction in crime, and increased personal wealth. Mr. Benjamin further committed to develop a new park and open green space with fiber connections. He estimated the City's return on investment at \$12.50 for every \$1 invested. He said that the community has provided input and that the design guidelines were being developed.

Councilor Davis asked if this development would provide an opportunity for former Roosevelt Village residents to return to the site.

Mr. Steve Benjamin replied that it was the best and only option, an opportunity for people of median income.

Councilor Rickenmann asked if he had considered the integration of multi-incomes in the neighborhood.

Councilor Finlay requested additional financial information and a full development budget. He asked Mr. Benjamin if he was requesting \$2.7 million from the City of Columbia. Mr. Finlay requested that staff review the proposal and provide a recommendation to City Council noting that the request would consume two years of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

Councilor Davis urged his peers to strongly consider the proposal. He explained that this is unheard of and that he has been pushing development, creativity, promotion and partnerships within his district. He recommended that the City of Columbia provide funding support for the project in the amount of \$1.84 million for infrastructure.

Councilor Cromartie recalled a time when people would not drive through the proposed site, because it was such a depressed area.

Councilor Finlay applauded Mr. Davis' vision. He said that it was premature to commit funding without any documentation or agreement. He suggested that they nail down the details, noting that anything could go wrong.

Mr. Steve Benjamin requested that City Council give staff the authorization to move forward.

Councilor Rickenmann said that he is supportive of the concept, but noted that staff has not met with Council, the City Manager has not identified funding for the project and that approval should be contingent upon staff recommendations and finalized budgets.

Councilor Sinclair stated that there should be some kind of incentive. She said that the Affordable Housing Taskforce is researching the best practices of other cities. She explained that the motion was to jumpstart the due diligence phase, for staff to move forward by showing City Council's interest in being a partner in the project. She is supportive of the proposal.

Upon motion by Mr. Davis, seconded by Mr. Cromartie, Council voted unanimously to endorse and approve the concept of The Village at River's Edge, provided that 50% of the housing units are for those making 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) and that 50% of the housing units are for those making 80% to 120% of the Area Median Income. Staff was directed to meet with Mr. Benjamin and to develop a recommendation for Council's consideration. Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager was directed to identify a funding source for infrastructure development in the amount of \$1.84 million.

Councilor Devine recognized Reverend Ezell of Central Baptist Church, which is located near the former Roosevelt Village site along with the City Manager's church. She stated that these two churches have done a lot to improve the area.

B. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement and Green Committee – Mayor Robert D. Coble

Mayor Coble recognized those that attended the meeting in support of the Climate Protection Agreement and the action being taken today. He recommended that they endorse the Resolution as a symbolic gesture unless they decide to compose a Green Committee. He stated that this fits with the City's fuel cell efforts.

Councilor Sinclair urged the members of Council to support the initiative and to move forward with the appointment of a Green Committee within one week. She said that the City of Columbia has been interested in such matters such as climate control and conservation, improved tree canopies, recycling and reduced energy costs.

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Ms. Sinclair, Council voted unanimously to endorse the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement Resolution and to start the process of establishing a Green Committee.

C. No Smoking Ordinance - Mayor Robert D. Coble

Mayor Robert D. Coble suggested that a Public Hearing be scheduled to discuss this issue. He referred to the Attorney General's opinion and explained that if the City of Columbia passed the Ordinance, it would then be necessary to file a Declaratory Judgment on the issue of local preemption. He asked those in favor to raise their hands and then he recognized those that were in opposition to the proposed Ordinance.

Councilor Rickenmann requested that the proposed Ordinance be distributed to those that are interested.

Councilor Devine suggested that City Council conduct two Public Hearings, one in the morning and one in the evening.

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Ms. Sinclair, Council voted unanimously to schedule two (2) Public Hearings for the discussion of the No Smoking Ordinance and staff was directed to post the proposed Ordinance on the City's website. The Public Hearings will be held on Wednesday, September 27, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. and Wednesday, October 4, 2006 at 6:00 p.m.

C1. **Presentation on City Services – Governor Jim Hodges, Johnson Controls

Governor Jim Hodges, Representative for Johnson Controls, started out by saying that he is not asking for money or anything specifically and that they were here to present information on energy cost savings initiatives. He said that Johnson Controls is the market leader in this area and has worked with cities throughout South Carolina and the United States.

Ms. Kim Smith, Johnson Controls, provided background information on Johnson Controls. She described it as a 121 year old, Fortune 100 Company with \$27 billion in annual sales. The goal is to implement infrastructure improvements that provide economic benefits to help reduce costs; improve operations; and enhance customer service. They offer Performance Based Solutions, a bundle of facility and utility improvements and measurements that produce financial benefits that are guaranteed to exceed the total cost of the improvement measurements themselves. The firm that implements them financially guarantees the results. She told the members of Council that lighting has a significant impact on budgets, noting that new lighting technology uses 50% less electricity.

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Ms. Sinclair, Council voted unanimously to establish a small committee of Council to meet with representatives of Johnson Controls to learn more about the various possibilities of reducing cost, improving facilities and operations and enhancing customer service. This meeting should be scheduled within the next few weeks and the appropriate staff was asked to attend. The City would issue a Request for Proposals if a decision were made to proceed.

D. Community Promotions Funding Recommendations for August 2006 – Ms. Libby Gober, Ombudsman

Ms. Libby Gober, Ombudsman, explained that the Community Promotions Advisory Committee did not approve any requests for funding due to the limited amount of funding remaining. The Community Promotions Fund has a remaining balance of \$20,000 until July 1, 2007.

Upon motion by Ms. Devine, seconded by Ms. Sinclair, Council voted unanimously to approve the August 2006 Community Promotions funding recommendations as presented. The Community Promotions Advisory Committee did not approve any funding requests for August 2006.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Ms. Sinclair, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 5:25 p.m. for the discussion of **Item E.** as outlined.

E. **Receipt of legal advice, which relates to a matter covered by attorney-client privilege
This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.

- **Council adjourned the Executive Session at 6:00 p.m. to convene the Public Hearing.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Salley
City Clerk