

**CITY OF COLUMBIA  
WORK SESSION MINUTES  
MAY 12, 2010 – 9:00 A.M.  
CITY HALL - 1737 MAIN STREET  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor – COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM**

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The Columbia City Council conducted a Work Session on Wednesday, May 12, 2010 in the Council Conference Room located on the second floor of City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mayor Robert D. Coble called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann and The Honorable Belinda F. Gergel. The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III arrived at 9:12 a.m. Also present were Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk.

**ORDINANCE – SECOND READING**

1. Ordinance No.: 2010-082 – An Ordinance Authorizing the City of Columbia, South Carolina, to enter into a Development Agreement with the Mast General Store, Inc.; and other matters relating to the foregoing – *First reading approval was given on May 5, 2010. Approved on second reading.*

Mr. Jim Gambrell, Director of Economic Development reported that the language in the agreement has been revised to be more consistent with City Council's desires. It gives the City a lot of control in what Mast General Store does as it relates to the operating hours, employment and other matters.

- **Mr. Finlay joined the meeting at 9:12 a.m.**

Upon a motion made by Ms. Devine and seconded by Mr. Rickenmann, Council voted unanimously to give second reading approval to Ordinance No.: 2010-082 – An Ordinance Authorizing the City of Columbia, South Carolina, to enter into a Development Agreement with the Mast General Store, Inc.; and other matters relating to the foregoing. Mayor Coble abstained from voting due to a conflict of interest. Mr. Gambrell is to work with the developers to coordinate construction of the Mast General Store with the construction of the Nickelodeon Theater in an effort to minimize disruptions on Main Street.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

2. Fiscal Year 2010 / 2015 Consolidated Plan & Fiscal Year 2010-2011 Annual Action Plan – Ms. Dollie Bristow, Community Investment Manager

Ms. Dollie Bristow, Community Investment Manager reported that the plans are in draft form; any comments received from the public will be included in the plan; HUD has a 30-day comment period once the plan is submitted; and adjustments may occur within the 30-days.

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager said that they need to be more focused on their efforts with all of the funding. I would hope that we would establish priorities; target initiatives; and timeframes for accomplishing those goals.

- **Council opened the Public Hearing at 9:29 a.m.**

Ms. Ellen Cooper, President of the Coalition of Downtown Neighborhoods appeared before the Council to express concerns related to the omission of funding for the Housing First Program from the plan. It appears that Housing First is no longer a priority. Are we going to stop it midstream? We want you to consider that.

▪ **Council closed the Public Hearing at 9:35 a.m.**

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager explained that the City received more than \$300,000 in grant funds for a program that closely mirrored the Housing First Program. For the next couple of years, we should reduce our General Fund obligation. The Housing First Program is in the plan. Council members have recommended that we allocate General Fund money to support Housing First and other programs. On yesterday, we agreed to recommend to Council that the Housing First Program be extended for six (6) months and we are looking to initiate other programs with additional grants.

There was a consensus of Council to schedule a Work Session discussion on the City's overall approach to homeless services and collaboration among other service providers.

**RESOLUTION**

3. Resolution No.: R-2009-083 – Resolution appointing Assistant City Manager Allison Baker as City Chaplin for the purpose of giving or arranging for the giving of invocations at City Council meetings

Upon a motion made by Mr. Davis and seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted five (5) to one (1) to approve Resolution No.: R-2009-083 – Resolution appointing Assistant City Manager Allison Baker as City Chaplin for the purpose of giving or arranging for the giving of invocations at City Council meetings. Voting aye were Mr. Davis, Ms. Devine, Mr. Rickenmann, Mr. Finlay and Mayor Coble. Dr. Gergel voted nay.

**BUDGET WORK SESSION**

4. Vacancy Report – Mr. S. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager presented a General Fund Vacancy and Operational Review to the members of Council. There are currently 144 fulltime and 8 part-time budgeted vacancies in the General Fund for fiscal year 2010/2011. He recommended that a total of thirty (30) fulltime and two (2) part-time vacant positions be eliminated from the budget. This will allow departments to use temporary labor for temporary workload increases; to redistribute assignments and create more streamlined operations; and to reclassify administrative or supervisor positions to other areas. This would also reduce the fiscal year 2010/2011 General Fund Budget by \$1 million. He noted that twenty (20) positions have already been eliminated from the budget.

There was an in-depth discussion. No action was taken.

5. GASB 45 – Mr. Bill Ellis, Director of Finance

Mr. Bill Ellis, Director of Finance provided a briefing on the Annual Required Contribution (ARC) for GASB 45. There are three (3) components to ARC: retired employees, active employees and normal costs. He explained that health care benefits and the number of employees drive GASB45. He noted that the actuarial computations can not be adjusted. The budgeted fiscal year 2010 GASB 45 amount is \$12,852,109.94. He added that GASB 45 is 9% of salaries plus the amount paid for retirees. Per the 2009 AON Consulting report, the actuarial liability for fiscal year 2010 is \$15,431,034.

6. Fiscal Year 2010 / 2011 Budget Review – Mr. Steve Gantt, City Manager

- General Fund

Mr. Jeff Palen, Treasurer provided a comparison of property taxes imposed by the City of Columbia to the City of Charleston, City of North Charleston, City of Greenville, City of Rock Hill and the City of Spartanburg. He noted that the City of Columbia has one of the higher millages, but after the local options sales tax our citizens are paying a smaller tax bill on the same value-type property.

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager reviewed options for reducing the General Fund budget for fiscal year 2010/2011. He reported that the Reserve Fund needed to go back to \$2 million. The dollar equivalent of 3.8 mils was moved out of the Operating Budget to the Capital Replacement Budget, which will provide sufficient funding for the issuance of General Obligation Bonds and allow us to catch up on our capital replacements for Fire, Police, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, technology upgrades for the entire City and a business license software system. As we move forward with that, I would like for the bonds to be very specific in how that money can be used. Funding the GO Bond will save the General Fund approximately \$700,000 that is currently budgeted for the internal capital replacement program as well as an estimated \$400,000 in fleet repairs. The 2-year SAFER Grant we received for the Fire Department can be used to cover 7 to 9 firefighters and allow us to use the General Fund money elsewhere. We need to discuss reducing the budget for outside legal counsel.

Councilor Devine said that she would like to discuss the use of outside legal counsel in more detail.

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager agreed to look at the whole package. The Community Promotions Committee will receive \$200,425 and the agencies will receive \$234,775 for a total amount of \$435,200. Funding for Together We Can will be reduced by \$25,000 and the school crossing guards provided for Richland School District One will be reduced by \$135,000.

- **Mr. Finlay left the meeting at 11:46 a.m.**

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager said that he would provide the information requested on the number of school crossing guards and their locations. He continued to explain that they need to consider pulling the School Resource Officers out of the schools and putting them back out on the street. My understanding is that the Sheriff would be more than happy to provide that service for Richland School District One. In 2010/2011, we will net \$150,000 in savings from vacancies and retirements after pay-outs and buy-outs. The services provided by the Internal Auditor were to look at what was done in the past and they did an outstanding job. I would suggest that we issue a Request for Proposals for external auditing services that focus on how we do things better in the future and that we reduce that line item by \$50,000. Our total savings would be \$4,893,375 if we did all of the things that I am putting on the table.

The members of Council held an in-depth discussion on the recommended budget reductions and additions.

There was a consensus of Council to schedule a Budget Work Session on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 at 9:00 a.m.

\*\*Upon a motion made by Mayor Coble and seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to appoint Mayor-Elect Steve Benjamin as the City of Columbia's representative to the U.S. Conference of Mayors to be held in June 2010 and to authorize the City of Columbia to pay for Mayor-Elect Benjamin's expenses associated with his travel, meals and attendance at this conference.

- Parking Fund

The Parking Fund was not discussed.

- Water & Sewer Fund

The Water & Sewer Fund was not discussed.

- **Mr. Finlay returned at 1:19 p.m.**
- **Council adjourned the Work Session at 1:19 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Salley  
City Clerk