

**CITY OF COLUMBIA
CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MINUTES
JUNE 7, 2011 – 2:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.
CITY HALL - 1737 MAIN STREET**



The Columbia City Council met for a Work Session on Tuesday, June 7, 2011 in the City Council Conference Room located at 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Stephen K. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.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 Brian DeQuincey Newman. The Honorable Belinda F. Gergel arrived at 2:07 p.m. and The Honorable Leona K. Plough arrived at 2:14 p.m. Also present were Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

1. Pedestrian Safety in the Congaree Vista – The Honorable Brian DeQuincey Newman

Councilor Newman stated that the premise of this item being on the agenda is for us to draw attention to our pedestrian safety in the Vista; some people like to speed down Gervais Street; and we've informed our Police Chief and made efforts to improve the likelihood of people walking in one of our strong hospitality districts, but we need to do more. Particularly, we need to do something with the roads and the crosswalks, a potential streetscaping. It will increase the likelihood that we would get more businesses and more retail in the area. The Vista Guild has initiated a subcommittee, conducted studies and developed plans for our review.

Ms. Rosie Craig, Vista Guild Board of Directors / Committee Chair said that retailers are in need of better parking and more foot traffic. That's where this plan came from; we are trying to define the heart of the Vista. The Convention Center and Colonial Life Arena representatives support this idea, because it makes it a one park event; you park your car, walk a block or two and you're right there. We can also use this to support more of our events. It will not harm the traffic counts, but it will slow people down. The intersections at Assembly Street and Huger Street are not included, but I do have those numbers. It would be ideal to have the intersections at Assembly and Gervais Streets and Huger and Gervais Streets completely paved with this stamped brick-like material. We are recommending the StreetPrintXD™. In Columbia we are using material that requires a lot of maintenance costs. We have a one cost application at a time when DOT is going to pave, because we've torn up the streets installing new water lines. We asked if there would be a credit for us since DOT doesn't have to do to the regular paving.

Councilor Rickenmann said that he is interested in this product. Times are challenging so this won't happen overnight, but there's still an issue of the walk-ability and traffic. I've been seeing more signs throughout South Carolina reminding us that State law require motorists to stop at crosswalks. Are we going to utilize that as an option until something is worked out? There is an immediate problem that needs to be addressed, but this is a long-term solution.

Ms. Rosie Craig, Vista Guild Board of Directors / Committee Chair said that has not been a part of our discussions. When I found out that DOT was going to repave Gervais Street in total, at the end of the water main construction that made me throw this into overdrive.

Councilor Newman agreed that there were options that should be explored immediately to include painting and increasing the size of the crosswalks. At almost all intersections, people stop and don't leave any room for pedestrian traffic.

Councilor Devine requested to see the numbers for Huger and Assembly Streets.

Councilor Davis asked if DOT would consent to participating in the cost of the material since it is a DOT maintained street.

Ms. Dana Higgins, City Engineer said that DOT fully supports us doing this, as long as we pay for it. She explained that the StreetPrintXD™ is applied separate from the paving process as a topper and there would be no savings for DOT.

Mr. Paul Gawyrch, Asphalt Concepts, LLC said that the Town of Lexington was one of the first municipalities to use the StreetPrintXD™. They had brick crosswalks on Main Street, which were failing. Three years ago, they took all of the bricks out, repaved the road and we redid all of their crosswalks in 2 nights.

Upon a single motion made by Mr. Newman and seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to endorse the concept of paving the way to create the heart of the Vista and to direct staff to conduct additional research to determine what we can fit, budget-wise into DOTs timeline for repaving Gervais Street; to consider the connectivity of Gervais Street with Huger Street and Assembly Street; to consider short-term measures that can be used to improve pedestrian safety; and to submit an application for Hospitality Tax funding.

Councilor Davis said that he is very interested in the pedestrian safety measures and this information should be shared with the North Main Business Association.

2. Follow-up on the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report – Mr. Bud Addison, Senior Audit Manager / Webster Rogers, LLP

Mr. Bud Addison, Senior Audit Manager / Webster Rogers LLP presented an overview of the City's 2010 A-133 Report. He reiterated that the City of Columbia has shown significant improvement and has added approximately \$8 million to the General Fund balance. He reviewed page 9 of the report, which outlined the Financial Statement Findings. Finding 2010-1 addresses the timely requesting of reimbursement of grant expenditures. Roughly 95% of the City's grants are on a reimbursable process and the City of Columbia will spend the money upfront and then request federal reimbursement three to four months later. He explained that the Finance Department is not responsible for the administration of any grants; it is up to that department to accumulate the federal expenditures and bill the government for the cost of the work. The City receives approximately \$16 million in federal grants annually and at June 30th \$7.5 of that was in receivables, which means that they have incurred \$16 million in expenditures and only received reimbursement of less than \$10 million. The City has fronted \$7.5 million. Most federal agencies reimburse through the electronic transfer of funds and it takes up to ten days to receive your money back once you submit the request. Finding 2010-2 relates to sub-recipient monitoring of federal grants to ensure that the recipient is following the grant requirements. This monitoring requires

certain documentation and this was not consistent from grant to grant. Finding 2010-3 addresses the Community Development Block Grants / Entitlement Grants. After talking with the Finance Director, I understand that most of this has been more of an accounting issue and record keeping over the past couple of years and that has been cleared up with HUD. The records of the department that administers the grants should be substantiated with the records in the Accounting Department. Mr. Addison reviewed the 2009 findings related to the Community Development Block Grants/Entitlement Grants. This concluded his report.

3. **Auditor Selection

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager reported that the 2010/2011 audit will be conducted by the current firm, Webster Rogers, LLP. The Finance Department is drafting the Request for Proposals for a new auditor and we will bring the top three responses to Council for consideration for the next three year period. He explained that if an Auditor is presently involved with you for more than 6-months then it is recommended that you use that firm during the audit. Since we didn't get the audit done in December, it makes sense to have Bud do it for this year.

Ms. Jan Alonso, Deputy Finance Director concurred with Mr. Gantt, adding that you are asking an outside audit firm to accept everything that the previous audit firm has done.

4. Accidental Death Policy – Ms. Hattie Halsey, Deputy Director of Human Resources

Ms. Hattie Halsey, Deputy Director of Human Resources reported that we only received one response from Guardian, which is our long-term disability insurance provider. The SC Retirement System's Accidental Death Policy only covers those under Police Officer Retirement; that's our police and fire personnel. Whereas, Guardian will cover all employees that work at least 30 hours per week; they will cover accidental deaths, whether the employee is on the job or not. I did a report on our base salaries and the cost to the City is roughly \$28,000 per year. She reported that the SC Retirement System would payout a monthly benefit of 50% of an employee's annual salary, but Guardian would pay 100% of the annual salary. She added that Guardian has a 50% benefit reduction at the age of 70, for the spouse it pays a lifetime, but for dependants it stops at age 18. A cost increase is not anticipated for either vendor. Exclusions would include being illegally intoxicated; voluntarily using a non-prescription controlled substance; through intentional self injury; while participating in civil disorder or committing a felony; traveling on any type of aircraft while having any duties on that aircraft; as a result of a disease or bodily infirmity; by declared or undeclared war or active war or armed aggression; or while a member of the armed forces.

There was a consensus of Council to obtain a sample contract from both the SC Retirement System and Guardian Life Insurance Company for review by the City Attorney and to ensure that we are knowledgeable of all exclusions prior to June 21, 2011.

5. Servicing of Bulk Containers (Veterans Administration) – Mr. Robert Anderson, Superintendent of Solid Waste

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager explained that there has been an ongoing problem with contractors rattling the dumpsters at the VA early in the morning. We've had some discussion about enacting an ordinance prohibiting that. Staff would prefer going another route.

Mr. Robert Anderson, Superintendent of Solid Waste said that there are 13 private contractors and there are locations that you must dump before 6:00 a.m., because the

landfills are closed at night. He recommended that staff be allowed to write a letter to all of the private solid waste contractors asking them not to do collections near residential areas prior to 7:00 a.m. We are asking that you notify us of problems as they occur and allow us to work with the contractors.

Councilor Plaugh asked that Mr. Anderson look at Woodcreek Farms.

Councilor Rickenmann asked that Mr. Anderson look at Allen University.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon a motion made by Mr. Rickenmann and seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 3:13 p.m.

6. Discussion of employment of an employee
 - City Attorney Evaluation – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
7. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements – *Items were discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
8. ****Discussion of appointment of employee - *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.***
9. ****Receipt of legal advice which relates to matters covered by attorney-client privilege - *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.***
 - Council adjourned the Work Session at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Salley
City Clerk