



CITY OF COLUMBIA
WORK SESSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2013
2:00 P.M.
EAU CLAIRE TOWN HALL
3905 ENSOR AVENUE

The Columbia City Council conducted a Work Session on Tuesday, September 17, 2013 at the Eau Claire Town Hall, 3905 Ensor Avenue, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Stephen K. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 2:25 p.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Leona K. Plough, The Honorable Cameron A. Runyan and The Honorable Moe Baddourah. The Honorable Brian DeQuincey Newman arrived at 4:30 p.m. Also present were Ms. Teresa B. Wilson, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Moore, City Clerk. This meeting was advertised in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

1. General Municipal Election Update – Ms. Erika D. Moore, City Clerk

Ms. Erika D. Moore, City Clerk provided an overview of steps being taken to inform and educate citizens about the November 5, 2013 Municipal Election.

Councilor Plough expressed concerns about opening all precincts to accommodate the library referendum. She said there are four (4) precincts in District Four that historically had little or no voters and for us to pay to have those precincts open and staffed for Election Day doesn't seem right for City of Columbia taxpayers. She doesn't understand why the City of Columbia is expected to pay for that.

Councilor Devine said the County has been willing to negotiate fees in the past.

Mayor Benjamin asked the City Attorney to determine why we are paying FICA and retirement for the poll workers.

Councilor Plough requested a side by side comparison of the 2010 and 2013 election costs.

Councilor Devine asked that Council discuss education efforts, because there is a lot of misinformation out there and the longer we wait, the more confused voters will be.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said we want to clear about how we tag city sponsored initiatives.

Ms. Erika D. Moore, City Clerk presented a new public service announcement featuring the Municipal Election Commission.

2. Update from Voterheads – Mr. Karl McCollester, Chief Executive Officer of Voterheads

Mr. Karl McCollester, Chief Executive Officer of Voterheads announced that they are collecting agenda information and tagging it so that registered users receive alerts and can go online to vote and comment on those items. He announced that Voterheads was featured in [“21st Century Digital City Hall” Government Technology Magazine](#). He also announced that Voterheads recently hired its first employee. He asked the members of Council to check out the website and register with Voterheads. He said they are also looking to add an officials’ page in the near future. Visit the website at www.voterheads.com.

Councilor Devine said this is a great tool for us to interact with citizens, because we always want to keep people engaged and to hear their voices every week when we have issues on our agenda. She would love to see us use it and get more people signed up through our neighborhood associations.

3. [Fiscal Year 2013 / 2014 Hospitality Tax Final Spreadsheets](#) – Mr. John Whitehead, Chair of the Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee

Mr. John Whitehead, Chair of the Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee provided an update on the additional \$200,000 that Council gave to the committee to allocate from the Hospitality Tax Fund. He said the committee members reconvened and reviewed every application again. He said they were able to increase funding for some applicants. He said the committee believes that the city is doing this right and using the hospitality tax dollars to reinvest in the quality of life for this community.

Councilor Davis said they want to have new organizations come online. He said the Cornbread Festival took a drastic cut and they are in an area that the city is concerned about in terms of economic development. He said the organization has a mission and a goal to add to the quality of life and bring people to the area.

Mr. John Whitehead, Chair of the Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee said they were not aware that the Cornbread Festival organizers came to the city for additional funding. He said they were trying to fund them at the level they were funded at during the previous year.

Councilor Devine asked why the two ballet organizations were funded at different levels.

Mr. John Whitehead, Chair of the Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee said the committee looked at both requests along with their budgets and the number of people they brought in and then tried to be more proportionate.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Runyan and seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to approve the Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee recommendations as presented.

4. [Fiscal Year 2013/2014 Outstanding Funding Requests](#) – Ms. Melissa Caughman, Budget Director

- External Organizations
- Eau Claire Community Council
- Federation Center of the Blind

Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget Director presented an updated listing of funding requests from external organizations. She noted that \$65,000 remains from the \$100,000 that was initially allocated from the General Fund. The following allocations were previously awarded: \$25,000 to the Lourie Center; \$5,000 to Alston Wilkes; and \$5,000 to SisterCare. She also noted that \$43,750 is available in the Accommodations Tax Fund for unrestricted allocations.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Devine and seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to fund Together We Can in the amount of \$25,000.00 and the Antioch Senior Center in the amount of \$18,750.00 from the Accommodations Tax Fund.

Councilor Baddourah recommended that Council fund the Federation Center of the Blind in the amount of \$10,000, because they do a really good job with activities for the blind.

Mayor Benjamin said he would like to find additional funding for the Greater Columbia Community Relations Council, Eau Claire Community Council, Senior Resources, Columbia Council of Neighborhoods and IT-ology.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said the \$10,000 in the Community Development Block Grant Fund that was allocated for neighborhoods could be used to fund the Columbia Council of Neighborhoods.

Councilor Plough noted that funding Vital Connections could help with assisting homeless children.

Mayor Benjamin made a motion to fund the following organizations from the General Fund allocation for external organizations. Mr. Baddourah seconded the motion.

- \$32,500 to the Columbia Urban League
- \$10,000 to Senior Resources
- \$5,000 to the Greater Columbia Community Relations Council
- Rescind the \$10,000 previously appropriated to the Eau Claire Community Council from the Hospitality Tax Fund and supplant it with \$7,500 from the General Fund
- \$5,000 to Vital Connections
- \$5,000 to the Federation Center of the Blind

Councilor Plough said the recommendations are very good, but she can't support it because the money is coming from the General Fund and should be used to help pay for fire and water and sewer.

Upon a single motion made by Mayor Benjamin and seconded by Mr. Baddourah, Council voted five (5) to one (1) to allocate funding from the General Fund as outlined below. Voting aye were Mr. Baddourah, Mr. Runyan, Ms. Devine, Mr. Davis and Mayor Benjamin. Ms. Plough voted nay.

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- \$10,000 to Senior Resources
- \$5,000 to the Greater Columbia Community Relations Council
- Rescind the \$10,000 previously appropriated to the Eau Claire Community Council from the Hospitality Tax Fund and supplant it with \$7,500 from the General Fund
- \$5,000 to Vital Connections
- \$5,000 to the Federation Center of the Blind

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said that through the Community Development Department, city staff will appropriate \$10,000 to the Columbia Council of Neighborhoods as requested by City Council and she hopes Council will support management and the Community Development Director in finding additional funding to assist with the great work done by our neighborhoods.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Davis and seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to authorize the City Manager to allocate \$10,000 through the Community Development Department to the Columbia Council of Neighborhoods and to support staff in identifying another source of funding for individual neighborhoods.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Runyan and seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to allocate the following from the hospitality tax surplus funds:

- An additional \$17,500 to the Columbia Urban League for marketing
- \$5,000 for POSCONN
- \$5,000 to the Carolina Marathon Association
- \$15,000 to the North Columbia Business Association for the Cornbread Festival
- \$25,000 to the Conventions and Visitors Bureau for marketing

Councilor Devine asked that the committee consider another round of funding if there are surplus funds.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager recalled that staff has sought to bring about a better process for requests. She sought Council's guidance in order to prevent going through this process in the future.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon a motion made by Mr. Davis and seconded by Mr. Runyan, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 3:49 p.m. for the discussion of **Items 5** through **9** as outlined. Mr. Newman joined the Executive Session discussion at 4:30 p.m.

5. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements - *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 6. Receipt of legal advice which relates to a pending, threatened or potential claim - *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 7. Receipt of legal advice which relates to matters covered by attorney-client privilege - *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 8. Discussion of employment of an employee - *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 9. ****Investigative proceedings regarding allegations of criminal misconduct - *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.***
- **Council adjourned the Executive Session at 6:00 p.m. to convene the regular meeting.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore
City Clerk