



CITY OF COLUMBIA  
WORK SESSION MINUTES  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2013  
2:00 P.M.  
CITY HALL – 1737 MAIN STREET  
2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

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The Columbia City Council conducted a Work Session on Tuesday, November 12, 2013 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 2:20 p.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Leona K. Plough, The Honorable Brian DeQuincey Newman, The Honorable Cameron A. Runyan and The Honorable Moe Baddourah. The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine was absent. Also present were Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Moore, City Clerk. This meeting was advertised in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

A motion made by Ms. Plough and seconded by Mr. Baddourah to remove a contractual matter from Executive Session and place it before the people for a discussion with City Council, failed by a vote of two (2) to four (4). Voting aye were Mr. Baddourah and Ms. Plough. Voting nay were Mr. Runyan, Mr. Newman, Mr. Davis and Mayor Benjamin.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Runyan and seconded by Mr. Newman, Council voted unanimously to amend the agenda by removing the discussion of security cameras from Executive Session and discussing the matter in open session.

### **CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE**

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said this week's City Manager's Update continues with the theme of community and citizen response. She said we want to start meeting our communities where they are in terms of the quality of life issues they face. She said we deal with a lot of issues related to code enforcement, abandoned buildings, over occupancy, etc. She said they hope to implement an approach in many communities across the city where the calls for service appear to be elevated. She said the objective of the analysis is to determine quantitatively which neighborhoods would benefit most from outreach based on the calls for service.

Mr. Sung Jun Kim, GIS Coordinator said they analyzed data from the 911 Center and code and zoning violations from Planning and Development Services. He said there were 173,217 service calls received from January to August 2013 with over 300 different call types. The top five (5) call categories were used for this analysis.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager explained that as we look at the neighborhoods that come in with elevated numbers, we will get into those neighborhoods with the hope of staying there until the calls for services decrease. She reported that Community Development, Parks and Recreation, and Planning and Development Services staff will be working in the Martin Luther King Neighborhood from Thursday to Saturday of this week. She reported that Parking Services also initiated an effort to talk with students and

neighborhoods and Public Works will participate. She noted that Lyon Street and Hyatt Park have been identified and we will compliment efforts that are already in place.

Mr. David Hatcher, Housing Official reported that in an effort to rid homes of blighted structures that are an attractive nuisance for criminal activity, fifty-two (52) residential demolitions have been completed over the past two (2) years. He said that another fifty (50) houses are at various stages in the demolition process.

Councilor Davis expressed concerns about the length of time it takes to act on these types of properties. He said that assistance is needed from the state, because one hindrance is proper notice. He hopes there are some specifics we can lay out and discuss with the appropriate parties as well as looking at what we can do; we have to show and tell that we mean business, because it's killing our neighborhoods.

Mr. Aubrey Jenkins, Chief of the Columbia Fire Department explained that the property located at 2706 Main Street, which is formerly known as The Varsity has gone through a long process to reach the point of demolition. He reported that demolition will begin next week and should be completed during the first week in December.

Ms. Kimberly Gathers, Director of Columbia-Richland 911 Communications Center reported that the City of Columbia and Richland County have launched a new alerts program called the Columbia-Richland Alerts System also known as CRA. The system is designed to provide time sensitive information on public safety issues, power outages, missing persons, community events, road closures, public meetings, traffic safety and water/sewer alerts. Citizens register online and can receive alerts through landlines, cell phones, emails and telecommunication devices for the hearing impaired.

### **CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION**

1. [Demolition Delay Proposal](#) – Ms. Amy Moore, Preservation Planner for the Planning and Development Services Department

Ms. Amy Moore, Preservation Planner for the Planning and Development Services Department recalled that members of Council asked for a demolition delay ordinance. She said that the draft ordinance reflects staff's research and recommendations. She said that the ordinance will allow time to determine a building's architectural and/or cultural significance as well as time to explore alternatives to demolition before demolition takes place. She proposed a 180 day delay that would allow time to explore the sale or relocation of structures within the city's Design District and buildings that are fifty (50) years old or older. She explained that once a permit is submitted for demolition, staff would then have ten (10) days to research the property and determine if it has cultural or architectural significance. If it doesn't, staff could issue an approval for demolition, but if it does, the matter would be scheduled for consideration at the next Design Development Review Commission (DDRC) meeting. If the DDRC doesn't find the building to be significant, it could issue an approval for demolition otherwise, they could impose a 180 day delay. She distributed copies of the proposed application that includes criteria for determining significance.

Councilor Newman asked for the range of days other cities used for demolition delays.

Ms. Amy Moore, Preservation Planner for the Planning and Development Services Department said the shortest period was 90-days and the longest period was 365-days.

Councilor Baddourah asked how much time currently lapses between the issuance of a permit and the demolition itself. He asked if we require asbestos surveys.

Ms. Krista Hampton, Director of Planning and Development Services said that permits can be issued on the same day, but the demolition depends on when they start work. She noted that permits are valid for six (6) months. She said that DHEC has regulation over the surveys.

Councilor Plough asked about the level of investment being made by the applicant.

Ms. Amy Moore, Preservation Planner for the Planning and Development Services Department said an applicant will be required to submit an appraisal.

Councilor Plough asked what would happen if demolition is denied and the applicant doesn't have funding to do anything otherwise.

Ms. Amy Moore, Preservation Planner for the Planning and Development Services Department said they can sell or keep the property. She said if the building isn't sold or if it can't be moved, demolition will then be approved.

Councilor Runyan asked if this would constitute an economic taking.

Ms. Amy Moore, Preservation Planner for the Planning and Development Services Department said other municipalities have this in place and it would be the same scenario. She noted that the ordinance was reviewed by the Legal Department.

Councilor Davis said that he supports this, because it will help to maintain the character and significance of a city, community or a neighborhood.

Councilor Plough suggested that they might want to consider buildings that are 75 years or older and shorten the demolition delay period to 90 days. She supports the partial demolitions.

Ms. Krista Hampton, Director of Planning and Development Services said the next steps are to draft an ordinance that would come before the Planning Commission and a Zoning Public Hearing before City Council. She said this cannot be adopted without a text amendment to the zoning ordinance.

There was a consensus of Council to request feedback from the impacted parties and the additional information that was asked for and to schedule a public forum.

2. Long-Term Solutions for the Drop off of Ex-Detainees from the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center – The Honorable Moe Baddourah

Councilor Baddourah explained that there was a recommendation to change the drop off location to the Police Headquarters in the Vista and then it was changed to the Emergency Shelter after hearing from businesses in the Vista. He recalled that there was a discussion as to whether or not the city is responsible for accepting prisoners or coordinating the drop off location. He said the prisoners are free and we are making it faster for them to commit crimes downtown. He asked why we are coordinating the drop off location inside the city limits. He asked if the proposal to build a sidewalk from the jail to Bluff Road is still on the table.

Councilor Runyan said it is more of a partnership between the Columbia Police Department, Richland County, the Detention Center, the Winter Shelter and the City of Columbia. He said this has been a persistent problem of releasing ex-offenders on the streets of the city in the middle of the night. He said the Police Chief was trying to find a way to help protect the citizens of the city and provide help for the people who are being released.

Mayor Benjamin clarified that the city is not transporting anyone downtown. He said we have to think of something that is productive and reasonable in terms of resolving this problem.

Councilor Newman said if the Department of Corrections are arresting people here and they can be released, then it is the prudent thing for us to coordinate that. He noted that nobody will be happy with a drop-off location in the city limits. He asked that Chief Santiago provide guidance on the best location. He said it is our responsibility to do something about this. As we evaluate the other options, he asked that we pull in the leadership for the area and use all available communication tools to inform them.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said there is responsibility on the city and county's part. She said using the Emergency Shelter is temporary. She said that discussions are moving forward on a dedicated route, schedules for bond hearings and other matters.

Mayor Benjamin suggested that there be partnerships with taxi companies. He asked that we assist as many people as possible while the shelter is open. He disagreed with the county dropping off a concentration of people anywhere.

Councilor Runyan said as an incentive, the state is releasing detainees one day early if the detainee is being picked up. He said they are working on other incentives as well.

Councilor Plaugh suggested that a similar model be used with the county.

Councilor Runyan asked if there is a statutory requirement to have bond court overnight.

Mayor Benjamin suggested that it be a directive of the Chief Judge.

Councilor Davis said we all have to know where folks are being dropped off and there has to be an understanding of the results of that particular action and those that are immediately impacted.

Mr. Kenneth E. Gaines, Esq., City Attorney outlined the bond release times for the city and county.

Mr. Ruben Santiago, Acting Police Chief reported that eleven (11) individuals were dropped off over the weekend.

Mayor Benjamin said we must be creative as we meet our obligations to business owners and others in the Vista and Downtown; we also have extended obligations to the residents of Bluff Estates, Eastway Park and others along with the longstanding promise that we won't force folks to walk up Bluff Road.

Councilor Newman stated that the scheduling of bond court is an issue of volume for the Detention Center and the county is considering an 11 p.m. bond court or even a 24-hour bond court.

There was an in-depth discussion with neighborhood leaders.

There was a consensus of Council to collect more data over the next week; determine who is being processed at the Emergency Shelter, how they're being processed and where they are going; get answers to the legal questions posed today; ask Richland County to focus on daytime releases rather than nighttime releases; and consider the use of taxis.

3. City Council [Proposed Meeting Schedule](#) for December 2013 to December 2014

Upon a motion made by Mr. Davis and seconded by Mr. Runyan, Council voted unanimously to meet on December 10, 2013 instead of December 3, 2013 and to approve the 2014 meeting schedule. Mr. Baddourah and Mr. Newman were not present for the vote.

4. Security Cameras

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager provided an update on the citywide security camera project. She reported that a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued, responses were received and staff rejected all responses. She explained that they are rewriting the RFP and intend to release it within the next two (2) weeks.

Councilor Davis expressed an interest in this significant contract benefiting more than one (1) vendor. He said that the locations should be both conspicuous and inconspicuous.

Councilor Plough asked if the city will monitor the cameras.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager said the vendor will monitor the cameras. She said they will have the ability to relocate some cameras and we will own the data.

Mr. Ruben Santiago, Acting Police Chief said they are working to determine where the cameras will be located, but the intent is to capture vehicular and pedestrian traffic on the main arteries into and out of the city.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager sought clarification of Council's will to move forward with the RFP for the vendor.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager said securing the services to monitor and maintain the equipment seems to be a good approach.

Councilor Baddourah asked if the location of the cameras will affect the bid process.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager said no; we are asking for a per unit price for upfront installation and the monthly cost.

Mayor Benjamin said the ability to monitor cameras live has helped us to be incredibly responsive in solving and preventing crimes.

Mr. Kenneth E. Gaines, Esq., City Attorney suggested that this be discussed further in Executive Session.

Councilor Runyan suggested that only movement be archived in order to save storage.

There was a consensus of Council to add 24/7 monitoring to the RFP and to move forward.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Upon a motion made by Mr. Davis and seconded by Mr. Runyan, Council voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 4:15 p.m. for the discussion of **Items 5 and 6**.

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 matters covered by attorney-client privilege – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore  
City Clerk