

Aiken City Council Minutes

January 29, 2011

Aiken's Horizons

Present: Mayor Cavanaugh, Councilmembers Clyburn, Dewar, Ebner, Homoki, Price, and Wells.

Others Present: Richard Pearce, Gary Smith, Ed Evans, Pete Frommer, Larry Morris, Glenn Parker, Kim Abney, Ben Moore, Sara Ridout, Tim Coakley, Debbie Nix, Keith Bashant, Deedee Vaughters,, and Amy Banton of the Aiken Standard.

The Aiken City Council met at Rye Patch at 100 Berrie Road SW for continuation of their annual Council retreat called Horizons 2011, beginning at 8 A.M. with breakfast.

CAPITAL PROJECTS TIMELINES

Mr. Richard Pearce, City Manager, stated that Council was concerned about the many projects that the city would be working on in the next few years and had asked that staff organize the work and projects and prepare a timeline.

Mr. Larry Morris, Public Works Director, reviewed for Council the timeline that had been prepared for the many Capital Sales Tax projects that Public Works will be working on over the next few years. Mr. Morris had prepared a chart showing the Sales Tax Funding Available for the project, the total cost and the proposed fiscal years that funding for the projects would be spent. The chart showed the timeframe for the design work and construction work and listed a tentative priority listing for the projects.

Mr. Morris pointed out there were some monies from the 016 Sales tax for Hitchcock Woods which had not been used yet and were being held, pending the next phase of work on this project. Also, there were some monies not spent from 016 Sales Tax for recreation projects to be completed, including Citizens Park Parking, Citizens Park restrooms, work on the Recreation Maintenance Center on Banks Mill Road, Eustis Park development land purchase and Senior/Youth Center, Northside Recreation Park at the old landfill, Environmental Center in the old Playhouse building on Price Avenue, purchase of mobile bleachers and mobile stage, and a Splash pad.

Mr. Morris pointed out that high priority on the 017 Sales Tax was the Mobile Vehicle Computers for Public Safety, which Council had already authorized purchasing this year and borrowing funds from the Equipment Replacement Fund until the monies are received from the Sales Tax. He reviewed each of the projects for Council, pointing out the proposed design and construction years.

There was discussion on the city becoming a Local Public Agency (LPA). Mr. Morris stated the city had been working on this for a year. The city must meet regulations of the South Carolina Department of Transportation to become a LPA in order to be able to obtain grants from them and to obtain some permits to be able to do certain work.

Council also discussed the Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study project. It was pointed out that the city would be requesting proposals in a few weeks. After the study is completed we will know what areas of the sewer lines on which we need to work.

Council was concerned that permits be obtained as soon as possible so the city would be able to start the CPST projects as soon as the money starts coming in. They pointed out many times it takes several months and up to a year to be able to obtain some permits from the SCDOT. They were concerned that not having permits would hold up the projects. They were particularly concerned about obtaining permits for work along Whiskey Road and the traffic and road work that needs to be done for the Cracker Barrel to be located on Whiskey Road.

STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

Mr. Pearce pointed out to Council that several members of the Succession Management Program were present at this meeting to observe Council in action. Those present included: Ben Harm, Al Cothran, Lex Kirkland, Alicia Davis, Sarah Herring, Tommy Paradise, Tracy Lott, and Sabina Craig.

Mr. Richard Pearce stated Council had asked for a review of the Strategic Plan update at Horizons. He pointed out that the booklet that was prepared after the Strategic Plan was completed was included for Council's review. He reviewed the schedule for the Strategic Plan with the kickoff event in March, 2010, and several public forums at various locations and times. There was also an online survey. In the summer a public forum was conducted and another online survey for the small business community. He pointed out the results from that forum and survey are in the booklet. The final booklet was presented to the public at the December 18, 2010, Celebrate Aiken Birthday Party.

Mr. Pearce stated Council might wish to review the short and long term goals of the plan.

Councilman Wells stated he would like to discuss the goals for the small businesses. He stated he did not see anything being done for the small businesses. He said Council had promised them that we would try to do something to help them, but we had not moved forward on any of the requests. He said one item was the Shop Aiken First Campaign. He said the Chamber of Commerce had advertised this, but the City had not done anything to promote Shop Aiken First. The second item was the request to change the due date for business licenses. He said he did not see anything being done for small businesses yet. He felt we need to make some changes and go forward.

Councilman Dewar stated staff had not come back to Council on options for the small business requests. He felt the matter should not be delayed and put in the goals for next year, but action taken on the requests now.

Councilwoman Price stated she felt Council needs to move on. The issues don't need to be goals, but the concerns need to be addressed now.

Council discussed this matter at length. There was discussion on the business licenses and the issue of having to show the income tax return to verify the gross receipts for the business license. Staff pointed out that they are now accepting other means to verify the gross receipts, including a letter from the business' CPA, the tax return, and in some cases verification of the gross receipts through the State Sales Tax report. They pointed out this note would be on the license renewal form to be mailed out in May.

After discussion, Council suggested that a work session be held at the next meeting to discuss the business licenses and the shop Aiken first promotion.

GOALS

Mr. Pearce stated each year at Horizons Council reviews the programs and operations of the city and sets goals as to what they would like to see accomplished next year. Council reviewed last year's goals and set goals for budget year 2011-12. The proposed goals will be presented to Council for formal adoption in February.

In the discussion it was felt that construction of the Dougherty Road connector to Publix Center should become a long term goal. It was pointed out that the city was having trouble obtaining the right of way for the connector, as the landowner was refusing to sell or talk about the matter. Council felt the Succession Management Program should continue and become a long term goal of the city. It was felt the program had been a success and very helpful to city employees.

In the goal to continue to provide public access to city information and documents, Councilman Dewar stated he would like to have Council meetings televised and, later, all the boards and commission meetings televised. He pointed out there is new technology where meetings can be streamed, and in some cases this is not expensive. He would like

for staff to look into this matter. He said he did not want the city to spend \$40,000 to \$50,000 for televising the meetings, but felt it would be of interest to many citizens.

Councilman Wells stated he did not hear any comments from citizens regarding the meetings that the Aiken Standard televised. Council discussed Channel 4 and felt it should be upgraded. It was pointed out the city would like to do more with Channel 4, but at this time do not have the staff for the work. It was felt other programs and information could be included on Channel 4. It was pointed out that the city could use USCA or high school students to help with the program.

On the goal to establish a Senior/Youth Center, the short term should be to identify the site with the long term being the design of the Senior/Youth Center.

Council asked that a short term goal be to complete the SSES study, with the long term being implementing the recommendations and upgrades for the infrastructure.

A short term goal was to complete an agreement with the Whitney Trust regarding preserving their land and cooperation in providing some area for correction of drainage problems in the area of the field. The long term goal would be to preserve equestrian areas, large tracts, and open space.

A short term goal would be to proceed with the next phase for use of the former landfill for use as a recreation park.

For Continuing Goals, Council wanted to add support of Yucca Mountain along with the support of current and future missions of the Savannah River Site goal.

Council wanted to continue support of the Wellness Initiative, and asked that staff visit some private industries regarding their health, wellness and safety programs. It was also suggested that bike trails in some areas and a walking track at Citizens Park be pursued. It was also suggested the city work with the hospital regarding obesity programs and nutrition information and to include children of employees in the program.

It was also suggested that some alternative program for energy savings such as hydrogen or electric vehicles be pursued.

It was suggested that a policy be developed regarding street light installation in new subdivisions where the street light system would be dedicated to the city. Council also asked that a review of the Capital Projects timeline be included each year.

Council then discussed staff possibly studying the solid waste programs to see if the frequency of pickup of trash or recycling could be less than once a week. They asked that staff conduct a review of solid waste services for further efficiency, looking at all three services, garbage, yard trash and recycling.

Council asked for a short term goal that city staff conduct a comparison of the city's benefits package with other cities in South Carolina and that further information on the proposed camera system be pursued.

Council suggested that possibly staff could conduct a survey of people's interest in Channel 4, what they would like to see on the channel, and the cost for providing the service.

Council asked that a worksession on business licenses be held regarding the requests by small businesses.

Councilman Dewar stated he would like for Council to again consider making the terms of boards and commission members coincide with the terms of the Councilmembers who appoint them.

Councilwoman Clyburn also asked that a short term goal be the construction of the park at the library and the Governor Aiken Park.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 P.M.


Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk

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