

Aiken City Council Minutes

WORK SESSION

Zero Based Budgeting Session

January 4, 2011

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

Absent: Councilmembers Clyburn and Homoki.

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Richard Pearce, Kim Abney, Ben Moore, Ed Evans, and Sara Ridout.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 5:20 P.M. and stated this was a work session on zero based budgeting, as requested by Council.

Ms. Kim Abney reported that she had mentioned the utility audit being conducted. She reported we had received a refund check for over \$50,000. The City of Aiken will only get about \$25,000, as the agreement for conducting the audit is that we only get half.

Mr. LeDuc pointed out the Finance Department was always looking for ways to save money. One of the more innovative things he felt they had done was to have a private company do our mailing. In doing this the company is able to save us money on postage by bar coding and bulk mailings. The City is saving also by not having to have a postage machine, personnel time, etc.

Mr. LeDuc stated the City's Pension Attorney will be at the January 10, 2011, meeting to talk about the pension plan and some updates which need to be made to the plan. He will answer any questions Council may have.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Mr. Ed Evans, Planning Director, reviewed for Council the organization of the Planning Department, pointing out there are six full time employees and one part time employee. He reviewed the duties of the staff members. He reviewed the duties that are basic to all three planners and the Zoning Official. He pointed out that Sandra Korbelik is the staff support for the Board of Zoning Appeals. She is also involved in transportation studies, the Open Space Element, assists with updates to the Comprehensive Plan, GIS, state mandated education for board members and the census.

He stated that Susan French was the staff support for the Design Review Board. She prepares Design Guidelines, conducts historic surveys, works with Preserve America program, maintains contact with State Historic Preservation Office, assists with updates to Comprehensive Plan, façade grant program, and is the back up to Senior Planner with GIS.

Councilmembers asked questions regarding the work involving the Census. It was pointed out a lot of work is involved prior to the actual census in checking housing units, annexations, etc. There will be some work involved after receiving the Census figures in verifying the count. They also discussed at length the possibility of districts being redrawn because of an increase in the census figures. It was pointed out Bobby Bowers has helped the City in the past in redrawing district lines. They also discussed the 4-2-1 district plan and the 5-1-1 plan, which was not passed by the voters. It was pointed out that because of the housing rehabilitation on the northside, the population may have increased on the northside. It was pointed out that the issue with elections was that an African-American could not get elected at large. It was felt it would be interesting to see

the census figures to see what changes have been made in population and if the population has increased on the northside. Infrastructure on the northside was discussed as well as sewer capacity with the Public Service Authority. It was pointed out the problem with the PSA regarding capacity had not been resolved yet.

Council also discussed the possibility of a full time Traffic Engineer. A question was what department a Traffic Engineer would work in. It could be the Planning Department or the Engineering Department.

Mr. Evans then continued to discuss the personnel in the Planning Department. He stated Rachel d'Entremont is the contact for all applications for annexation, rezoning, utility requests, rezoning, subdivisions, concept plans, etc. She works closely with the Planning Commission, the traffic engineer on the need for traffic studies, helps with Level of Service map update, and assists with updates to the Comprehensive Plan. She prepares letters to the Justice Department regarding annexations. She also works with state mandated education for Planning Commission members.

Mr. Evans stated Tommy Paradise, Zoning Official, assists the Planning Director with interpreting the Zoning Ordinance, assists with drafting ordinance amendments, sign permits, zoning enforcement, enforcement of conditions of approval for annexations and utilities. He attends meetings of the Planning Commission, BZA and DRB. He also posts and removes public notice signs.

There was discussion on the status of the Dougherty Road Study. Mr. Evans stated the department is in the process of developing the RFP. Mr. LeDuc stated we are doing the extension of SC 19 and the northside study. He said we wanted to get those going before starting the Dougherty Road study. He said we want to plan for growth on the northside and look at some possible traffic issues with growth on the northside. He pointed out Highway 19 and US 1 go in the same direction, but there is only one road connecting SC 19 and US 1, that being Reynolds Pond Road. He said we need to look at developing some cross roads and other north-south roads on the northside and on the southside. There was discussion on possible development and planning for development with cross roads to help with traffic issues. There was discussion on the Powderhouse Road connector, development in the area, and planning for the road to help with traffic issues. It was pointed out two landowners in the area want to develop their property and would probably work with the city in providing a roadway in the area. He discussed the Municipal Improvement District (MID) as a means to help pay for improvements in an area. The MID places a special assessment on land to be developed, with additional taxes helping to pay off the MID, which would be used to make improvements in the area.

There was discussion on areas that are in the County to which the city provides water service. It was pointed out that sometimes the city approves the development, but then it is discovered that the development does not meet County requirements. The question was how to solve the issues before the request is before City Council. Mr. Evans stated the applicant is informed that they must meet city and county regulations. Also, Aiken County is always copied in all correspondence, so the County is aware of the proposed developments as well as the applicant.

Mr. LeDuc then reviewed the line items for 1701- Planning Department. He pointed out 32-10 Professional Services and stated the Traffic Engineer services are paid from the account, as well as the various studies contracted by the Planning Department. Many of these studies are paid from Special Holding Funds where money is set aside for engineering, planning studies, etc. Presently we are paying a Traffic Engineer about \$40,000 a year. It was pointed out that the Planning Department has to do a lot of advertising and posting of properties, some requirements by state law and others by city law. He also pointed out 90-69 the Façade Grant. When the Design Manual was approved for the downtown area, the city agreed to pay 50% of façade improvements up to \$20,000 made by businesses in the downtown, with the highest amount for the city then being \$10,000 per façade improvement.

LEGAL SERVICES

Mr. Ben Moore, Staff Attorney, stated the Legal Services Department consists of Gary Smith, Ben Moore, and Hope Hawes. He reviewed for Council the duties of the City Attorney, Staff Attorney, and paralegal. He stated that Gary Smith, City Attorney, advises Council, acts as parliamentarian, and works with the Planning Commission. He prepares the ordinances for Council for items from the Planning Commission. Mr. Moore stated as Staff Attorney, he prepares some ordinances for Council. He also attends the Board of Zoning Appeals, prepares their Orders, and represents the City in Circuit Court for appeals from BZA decisions. He also attends the Design Review Board and advises that Board. He said he does a lot of advising on all kinds of matters, which makes the job challenging and interesting. He said he prepares deeds of dedication, prepares closings on real property purchases, and handles Freedom of Information requests.

Mr. Moore stated the other part of his job is City Solicitor, which is prosecuting cases in City Court. He said he attends City Court every morning Monday thru Thursday. He approves all plea bargains or dismissals. He prosecutes all jury trials in City Court, which are held on Fridays. He said he conducts training for officers on legal updates and assists with development of Public Safety policies. He represents the City in DUI administrative hearings and represents the City on cases appealed to the Circuit Court. Council then discussed the various duties, how cases are handled in court, and the number of pending suits, which are six.

Mr. LeDuc then reviewed the budget line items for 1201- Solicitor Div. He pointed out funds in 32-02 Legal are primarily fees for Gary Smith and Pat Corey who was recently hired to help with jury trials. Mr. Smith is paid a retainer fee of \$3,000 per month. The retainer is for 24 hours of work, and occasionally fees go over the retainer. He also pointed out 64-01 Dues and 64-02 Subscriptions. He said much of this is used for legal research work.

MUNICIPAL COURT

Mr. LeDuc stated the city receives fines and forfeitures in excess of the cost for the Legal Services and Municipal Court divisions.

Mr. Moore pointed out the number of cases continue to increase, but there have been increases in revenue as well. He reviewed some of the figures for the Municipal Court. He said there is an average of 10 jury trials for potential disposition on any Friday. Fines and Forfeitures for fiscal year 2009-10 were \$1,507,985, an increase of \$283,814 over last year. Over 12,485 criminal cases were processed in the Municipal Court for fiscal year 2009-10, which was an increase of 619 cases over last year. DUI's increased from 189 in 2008-09 to 237 in 2009-10.

Mr. LeDuc stated Tracey Carroll is the City Judge and was hired through Aiken County. She is a Magistrate for Aiken County. Her salary is paid to the County, who then pays Judge Carroll. Her salary is paid from 32-10 Professional Services, as well as the salary for Pat Sullivan. The salaries account includes the salary for the Clerk of Court and the Ministerial Recorder.

CITY COUNCIL

Mr. LeDuc then reviewed the line items for 1101 City Council. He pointed out 32-10 Professional Services includes fees for Bob Knight, of Public Strategies, for public relations with the State and Washington. He pointed out 56-01 Professional Development which includes funds for Councilmembers to attend the two Municipal Association meetings, one in the winter and one in the summer. Sometimes some Councilmembers attend the National League of Cities. Also, usually the Mayor goes to Washington with the joint Chambers of Commerce from Augusta, North Augusta, Aiken, and Columbia County to meet with officials in Washington. Account 65-00 Specialized Supplies covers fees for the Awards Luncheon and the Volunteer Luncheon.

There was discussion on how liability insurance and Workers' Compensation might apply to Councilmembers who may be injured in conducting city business. It was pointed out Councilmembers are elected officials not employees of the city and not covered by Workers' Compensation. There was also discussion as to whether Councilmembers could be paid by a 1099 rather than a W-2 form. Ms. Abney is to research this matter.

ELECTIONS

Mr. LeDuc reviewed 1102 – Elections. He said money is always put in the budget for an election, whether it is an election year or not, as there could possibly be a special election. It was pointed out 2011 will be an election year. It was also pointed out that if the candidates are chosen in the primary, the city will not hold an election, according to state law.

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

Mr. LeDuc reviewed the line items for 1301-City Manager's Office. He reviewed the personnel in the office, including the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, City Clerk, Administrative Assistant and a part-time Secretary. He pointed out a part-time secretary position is frozen at this time.

He stated 32-10 Other Professional Services includes fees for Steve Hale, who writes the articles for the newsletter that is included with the water bill. He said at some point Council may want to consider having a full time communications or community relations person. A comment was that the newsletter was a great way to communicate with the citizens. It was felt that pictures always interest people, too. Account 55-01 Forms Printing includes the cost for printing the monthly newsletter to the citizens. He stated the city used to send an Annual Report to the citizens. It was felt that a newsletter would be more interesting to the citizens than the Annual Report.

MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Mr. LeDuc reviewed the line items for the Municipal Building. Account 1901-419.10-01 pays for the salaries of the two building custodians. Funds are included for building maintenance, electrical cost, water, etc. It was pointed out that 59-01 Vehicle and Equip. Depreciation does not include enough funds to fully depreciate the telephone system. It was pointed out that IT is responsible for the phone service. The costs for the various maintenance contracts for the building were reviewed. Councilmembers pointed out that having Public Safety in the adjacent building has been good PR for the city. Account 74-05 includes funds for an upgrade to the sound system and computers for Councilmembers.

NON-CITY SUPPORT

Mr. LeDuc reviewed the funds for 001-8390 and 002-8390, which include miscellaneous items. He pointed out there was funding for salaries for the Senior Tax Work Off Program, Contingent Fund for special unexpected expenditures, funds for the 175th Celebration, Chamber membership, contribution to the Aiken Library, contribution to the Aiken Downtown Development Corp., Best Friend Express, Downtown Christmas decorations, Character Education Program, Safety Program, and Historic Tax rebate. There was discussion on the funds for the 175th Celebration. It was pointed out that the monies spent for the 175th were donated for the Celebration and are not City money. The Committee raised enough money to pay for the 175th Celebration. The money raised for the 175th is shown in the revenue. The money shown in 8390 is the expenditure of the donated monies. They discussed the Character Education Program and asked about the participation of employees in the program. It was pointed out the program is a review of 46 character traits.

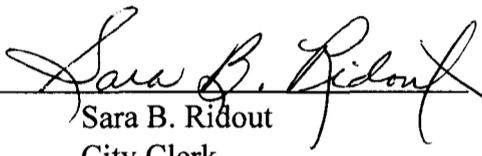
Mr. LeDuc reviewed the line items in 002-8390. The line items include 10-01 salaries for the Senior Tax Work Off Program, 90-10 Contingent Fund, Character Program, and Safety Program. Account 90-20 is the utility Franchise Fee like the fee for SCE & G, Aiken Cooperative, and Atlantic Broadband. This amounts to \$650,000.

Mr. LeDuc stated this completes the review of the budget for Council. At the Horizons meeting staff will have the figures for the first six months of revenue and expenditures for the current budget.

There was a question regarding the purchase of the computers for the police cars, which was included in the 2010 Capital Sales Tax program. Council asked if the computers could be purchased now by borrowing money from the reserves until the money is received from the Sales Tax. They felt the computers would be a labor saving device as well as a safety device. Mr. LeDuc stated the item could possibly be on the January 24 meeting for Council's consideration.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 P.M.


Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk