

Aiken City Council Minutes

September 9, 2002

WORKSESSION

Present: Mayor Pro Tem Clyburn, Councilmembers Cunning, Price, Smith, Sprawls and Vaughters.

Absent: Mayor Cavanaugh

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Bill Huggins, Gary Smith, Larry Morris, Ed Evans, Richard Pearce, Sara Ridout, Karen Daily of the Aiken Standard, Josh Gelinias of the Augusta Chronicle, and 13 citizens.

Mayor Pro Tem Clyburn called the meeting to order at 6:10. P.M.

CAMELLIA TRAILER PARK

Camellia Street
Sundy Drive
Edrie Street
TPN 30-083.0-03-002

Mr. LeDuc stated several weeks ago he asked Council if they had any particular name for the new development at the former Camellia Trailer Park. This development will need to have a name on its site plan and also a name for the interior roadway so we can begin subdivision of the property. In order to begin this process we temporarily named the road Edrie since it extends into this development from Sundy. We could continue to use this name or give the County a new name depending on Council's wishes. Once you have decided on a name we will then submit this both to the City and County Planning Departments for the official record.

Ms. Charlotte Raiford, 719 Sundy Drive, was present representing the neighborhood around the proposed subdivision. She presented a petition to Council with some prospective names to consider naming the subdivision to be developed on the old Camellia Trailer Park area. Some names suggested were Ashe Haven or Ashe Crest in memory of Ruth Ashe who used some of her own funds to help charter the Croft House. She worked with the Council on Aging in establishing the Croft House and helped establish Mattie Hall nursing facility. They also requested that the interior circle be named Beverly Circle in honor of Beverly Clyburn.

Mr. LeDuc asked if anyone else had any other suggestions.

Councilwoman Vaughters stated she did not like to see Council name places, streets, etc. after people who are still alive.

Mr. LeDuc stated others had had this same opinion in the past, but Council had named some streets after people in the past.

Councilman Cunning stated he felt the city should be careful in naming an area as the name affects marketing. He said he felt Council should consider what the community wants, but consider the marketing aspects also. He said he felt Beverly Circle was fine for a street name.

Mr. LeDuc stated the staff would suggest several names and the matter would be placed on the agenda for Council's action at the next regular meeting.

DEMOLITION PROGRAM

York Street
Richland Avenue
Jackson, William C. III
Pownell, Virginia F
Gas Station
Service Station
Garage
Barnwell Avenue
Williamsburg Street
Cagle, John

Mr. LeDuc stated that at the work session of July 22, 2002, Council discussed the possible demolition of the gas station and the garage at York and Richland at the request of the owners, W. C. Jackson and Virginia Pownell. Council asked that the matter be discussed further with the owners to find out what they would be willing to do towards the demolition, and if they had any current plans for this site. They are willing to level the building and are asking the city to landfill the debris. Once the debris is removed they would then grass the area to make it a green site until it sells. At this point in time they have no plans for the land and would like the city to assist in removing the building from that corner. The owners of the property have an environmental report which states that it is safe and clean.

Mr. LeDuc stated several individuals in the community have stated that they would like to see the building currently used by the Salvation Army turned into an African American Museum. He said such a project would take a lot of community effort.

Last fall Council discussed the removal of abandoned commercial sites, and funding was put aside to help with this work. We are currently receiving a new price for the removal of the asbestos for the building at Barnwell and Williamsburg and hopefully will have this resolved. The owner of the property at York and Richland also will remove the asbestos prior to its demolition.

Mr. LeDuc stated staff would like to get Council's consensus as to whether or not the city should participate in the demolition of the buildings at York and Richland. He said the involvement of the city would be hauling the debris to the landfill, which would probably take a couple of days.

Council discussed the request at length. It was pointed out this is a primary corner at the entrance to the city, and the only cost to the city would be the time and gas to take the debris to the landfill. It was pointed out removal of the buildings would make the property more valuable and beautify the corner. It was pointed out that possibly someone should be talking to the owner of the adjacent property to see if it might be available for the museum. It was stated with clearing the lot the corner property and the adjacent property would probably increase in value.

Mayor Pro Tem Clyburn stated she felt the city should go ahead with the clearing of the lot on the corner, but in the meantime should move on the adjacent property if there is to be an African American Museum. She said she felt the matters were two separate issues.

Councilwoman Vaughters stated she felt this was something that needed to be discussed. She pointed out the city had not been in the museum business and this could be expensive.

Mr. LeDuc stated if Council approves demolition of this building, this would be the third commercial building that Council has given approval for demolition. He said the demolition program was a program approved by Council. He said the buildings already approved are at Union Street and Richland Avenue, and at Barnwell and Williamsburg. He said he had also looked at other buildings to possibly be included in the program.

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Councilwoman Price stated she was concerned about the clearing of the property and what plans there were for the corner property. She was also concerned about the value of the adjacent property and this property increasing in value so the price would be too high for consideration as a museum. She stated she felt the corner property could be purchased cheaper now before it is cleared than after it is cleared. After it is cleared the property will be more valuable.

It was pointed out the demolition program helps clean up blighted areas, but it also makes the property cleared more valuable while using taxpayers money to do the clearing. It was stated, however, that making the property more valuable and usable puts the property on the tax books at a higher value and adds to the tax base.

Councilman Sprawls pointed out the building had been for sale for 10 years, and if the city wanted the property it should have purchased it before now. He said he understands the property now has a new owner, as it was just recently sold.

After hearing that the property had been sold Council felt the matter should be deferred for further information. It was the feeling that the city should not be clearing the property for the owner if he has already sold the property. It was felt that if the owner has a purchaser, then the owner or purchaser should clear the property. The reason the city was interested in helping demolish the building was to clear an area that had been blighted for many years. Council asked the staff to check into the status of the property at this time.

CHANNEL 4

City Channel

Mr. LeDuc stated the City has used Channel 4 exclusively for city events and announcements since its inception in the mid-90's. The County has requested permission from the City to use it to identify items such as location of recycling facilities, voting precincts, where to register to vote, where to pay residential and vehicle taxes, location of recreational facilities, Best Friend Express and Dial-A-Ride schedule, how to appeal taxes, and other possible information for Aiken citizens. For this reason you may want to consider use of this channel by another governmental agency. At the same time, the Aiken County School District would also like to place similar type information on Channel 4, which we as a staff feel would not cause any problems. Since most of this information is static and will not need constant updating, only a few hours of our time would be needed to upload this data if they give it to us in an electronic format. Over the last few years the School District and Aiken County have been working with us on several projects, and this would be one more step towards an even greater partnership with both of these governmental agencies. Since they are both government entities, we feel we could honor their request, while at the same time restrict other entities that may desire to be on the channel, since it would be for local governmental use only. If Council is in favor of this, we will contact the County and the School District and begin the process of putting on information that would be helpful to all the citizens in our community.

Mayor Pro Tem Clyburn stated she felt this was a good idea and that allowing the additional information would cause more people to watch it. She felt the information proposed to be included would be of interest to all city residents.

Council discussed the requests at length. Council also discussed the present status of Channel 4. It was pointed out the city needs to add more to the Channel to make it more interesting. It was also pointed out that there have been problems with the Channel in the last few weeks.

Ms. Segura stated that the equipment had been upgraded, and everything previously used has to be converted to a new format. She stated this conversion has taken much longer than anticipated, and there may also be another problem. It was felt the city probably needed some technical advice about the equipment.

Council felt allowing Aiken County and the School District to have information on the Channel was a good idea and would make the Channel more interesting. It was felt the

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program should be evaluated in about six months to see how the program is working. Council also felt the city should seek assistance in getting the Channel up and running properly again.

REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

Curb and Gutter Subdivisions

Mr. LeDuc stated that in the early 60's the City established a policy to reimburse developers for concrete curb and gutter in new subdivisions. Initially the city paid \$4 per linear foot, which was later raised to \$8 per linear foot in the late 80's. Developers are reimbursed at 25% intervals when the houses are occupied in those developments. The premise was that by giving the developer this incentive the property would annex into the city instead of staying in the county, like Gem Lakes when it was built in the early 60's. It has been a successful program, however in the early 90's Council began requiring annexation agreements in exchange for the provision of water and sewer. With this new policy we have not had a problem with any annexation of property since that time. We would like Council to consider whether or not the policy of reimbursing the developer for curb and gutter is still necessary. Another factor is that funding for it comes from our Utility Fund, which averages about \$100,000 per year for this reimbursement. The staff has discussed this policy and feels that the original premise for providing this incentive may no longer be necessary. We bring this to Council at this time because Mallard Lake is requesting curb and gutter reimbursement and currently does not have a developer's agreement stating they should be reimbursed for curb for this development. If Council desires to reimburse Mallard Lake, we would need to pass an ordinance which would continue the policy for this development and also indicate Council's intent to continue this policy in the future. Should Council wish to discontinue this program, we would still honor those agreements that have been made in the past concerning reimbursement based on previous developer agreements for various subdivisions.

Mr. LeDuc said staff is recommending that Council consider discontinuing the curb and gutter reimbursement program. He said there may be a project in the future that Council may want to reimburse for curb and gutter, and Council would have to consider that in the future.

Councilman Cunning pointed out the reason the program was started was to promote better and longer lasting streets. He said developers will install the cheaper asphalt and roll curb unless required to install concrete curb and gutter.

Mr. LeDuc stated Council may want to consider amending the Subdivision Regulations to require curb and gutter.

Councilwoman Vaughters stated she did not agree that curbs and gutters are always needed. She felt that Kalmia Hill was an example. She said to save trees curb and gutters may not be wanted.

It was pointed out that the Subdivision Regulations state that there will be curb and gutter reimbursement, so the developers are asking for the reimbursement.

Council discussed the program at length. They asked how many subdivisions are presently under the program and will require reimbursement in the future. Council felt they needed to talk about the program in more detail and also consider whether the Subdivision Regulations should be amended regarding the curb and gutter reimbursement program.

Mr. LeDuc stated the staff would get additional information for Council regarding the program and bring the information back to Council.

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OLD AIKEN MASTER PLAN

Consultant
Study
LDR
HNTB

Mr. LeDuc stated earlier this year City Council during their meeting with the Planning Commission discussed the development of a Master Plan for Old Aiken. At that time we discussed using a consultant for some aspects of this study. The Old Aiken Steering Committee would like to use a consultant to help with the evaluation of the draft plan and to help prepare some of it, especially the graphics. The Steering Committee and the Planning Department would still do most of the work and be responsible for the recommendations made to the Planning Commission and City Council. We have funding in the budget for this work, and prior to going forward with the hiring of HNTB, formerly LDR, we wanted to bring this before Council so if you have any questions as to what we are doing we could answer them. Ed Evans and James Holland, the Chairman of the Old Aiken Master Plan, are present to answer any questions concerning the use of the consultant.

Mr. LeDuc stated the proposal presented was for a cost of \$54,000 from HNTB, formerly LDR, which had done the Whiskey Road Corridor Study.

Councilwoman Vaughters stated she felt \$54,000 was too much for the study. She said she would like for the city to get some other proposals. She said she had heard a presentation from Community Builders, and she was impressed with the presentation. She said the Municipal Association works with Community Builders, which was formerly Main Street Program. She said she would like for the city to consider other bids.

Councilwoman Price stated possibly volunteers could be used for a lot of the work. She said a lot of retirees have time and talents that could possibly be used.

Councilman Cuning also stated he had a problem with \$54,000 for a consultant. He said he would like to also consider other planners.

Mr. LeDuc pointed out Council was going to want some kind of report on the study made with graphics. He said this would be beyond the scope of the staff and probably beyond the scope of any citizens that may be involved in the study. He said at some point a consultant would be needed to help pull the study together.

Council discussed the matter at length. The consensus of Council was that staff get proposals from other consultants, including Community Builders, and bring the matter back to Council.

PROCLAMATION

9-11, 2001

Mr. LeDuc stated Mayor Cavanaugh had asked that a proclamation concerning 911 be placed on the agenda for Council's approval. He said this would need to be added to the agenda.

BARNWELL AVENUE

Barnwell Avenue 204
York Street
Kennedy, Keisha L.

Mr. LeDuc also pointed out that for the first item under New Business, concerning the sale of property on Barnwell Avenue to Keisha L. Kennedy, Mayor Pro Tem Clyburn had a potential conflict of interest and would not participate in the matter. He said Council needed to appoint someone to chair the meeting for this issue. Council selected former Mayor Pro Tem Lessie Price to chair the meeting for this item.