

Aiken City Council Minutes

REGULAR MEETING

May 11, 2015

Present: Mayor Cavanaugh, Councilmembers Dewar, Diggs, Ebner, Merry and Price.

Absent: Councilmember Homoki

Others Present: John Klimm, Roger LeDuc, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Gary Smith, Charles Barranco, Tim Coakley, Kim Coleman, Alicia Davis, Kim Abney, George Grinton, Tommy Paradise, Sara Ridout, Maayan Schechter of the Aiken Standard, and about 75 citizens.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. and welcomed John Klimm, City Manager. Councilwoman Price led in prayer, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

GUIDELINES

Mayor Cavanaugh reviewed the guidelines for speaking at the Council meeting. He asked that those who would like to speak raise their hand and be recognized and limit their comments to five minutes. He asked those wishing to speak to come to the podium and give their name and address. Mayor Cavanaugh pointed out the 5 minute clock on the screen. He said the purpose of that is so the person speaking will know how long they have been speaking. He said the 5 minute limit would not apply to special presentations.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Mayor Cavanaugh asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda.

MINUTES

The minutes of the work session of April 21, and the regular meeting of April 27, 2015, were considered for approval. Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Merry, that the minutes of April 21 and 27, 2015, be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

RECOGNITION

Public Safety Department

Reaccreditation

CALEA

Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies

Mayor Cavanaugh stated City Council would like to recognize the Public Safety Department for its reaccreditation from CALEA.

Chief Barranco stated he would like to introduce retired Chief John Gregory who is the Regional Program Coordinator for CALEA.

Mr. John Gregory stated he is the Regional Program Manager for the Mid-Atlantic Region for the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. Mr. Gregory stated he wanted to formally present the Reaccreditation Certificate to the Aiken Public Safety Department. The Aiken Department of Public Safety has distinguished itself among the about 1,000 in the nation and local law enforcement agencies approximately 680 agencies that are nationally accredited by the Commission of

Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies. CALEA was established in 1970's and was built out of finding best practices and the best way to go about measuring Public Safety communications law enforcement. He said Chief Barranco has led the agency very professionally in the last few years to maintain the standards that were established in 1998 when Aiken first became part of CALEA. They distinguished themselves with excellence. They have been recognized with meritorious awards for continuous service. Once they adopt CALEA accreditation is not just a certificate. This shows that they have standards to maintain, and everyone knows what they do is measured. This agency has distinguished itself through troubled times and good times, and the way they do that is maintain the standards and operate under those standards. The staff that Chief Barranco has put together work to maintain the standards. They establish credibility not only for the city, but throughout the country and this region. Larger cities like Charleston, Columbia, Lexington, and Rock Hill don't have anything on Aiken. Aiken is among the elite of the elite. He said that does not mean that things don't go wrong, but when they do they know how to handle them. There would not be continuous problems because there are time standards dedicated to them to keep in focus on doing the right thing at the right time, the right way, for the right reasons. He said Aiken was recently reaccredited in Reno, Nevada, in March, 2015. They were given the Meritorious Award for 15 years of continuous accreditation. They were assessed under the gold standard. The gold standard distinguishes not just by having the process, but they re-monitored the outcomes not just the process--the actual outcomes from being accredited. He said he would congratulate the staff and Chief Barranco for their professionalism in maintaining the highest standards in Public Safety. He presented the Aiken Public Safety Department the meritorious award. He said this means they have maintained the standards and as they transition to the new generation of assessment, the system is based on outcome not a process. This is not a certificate to say they have done something good and earned a certificate. This is actually based on outcome to measurable achievement. He congratulated Chief Barranco and presented the award to Chief Barranco.

Chief Barranco stated he was at Aiken Public Safety when Chief Busbee called staff into a department head meeting and said the department was going to be accredited. At the time some thought it was a horrible word, but was something they became very familiar with. He said the men and women who serve on the force today don't know anything different. This is what we expect from them every day. He recognized some of staff who were present at the meeting who had worked hard on the accreditation team. He named Accreditation Manager Captain Phil Kestin, Lt. Ben Harm, Stephanie Christensen, Lt. Brian Key, Missy Hook, and Nan Corley who is on vacation. Pictures were then taken of Council and the staff of Public Safety who worked on the reaccreditation.

PROCLAMATIONS

Better Hearing and Speech Month

Mayor Cavanaugh stated a proclamation had been prepared to declare May as Better Hearing and Speech Month. He read the proclamation. He pointed out that Dennis Saylor and Don Bartelmay, the President-Elect for Sertoma National as well as serving on the board of Hearing Charities of America, for the Sertoma Club, were present to accept the proclamation. Mr. Bartelmay said it was great to have the proclamation and recognition by the city. He thanked the City of Aiken on behalf of the 500+ Sertoma Clubs and 13,000 Sertomans nation-wide and internationally. He said hearing health is their national mission. They have most recently done something locally. They have looped an induction looping in the Playhouse Theater. Hard of hearing can attend performances there and hear them. He said earphones are also available. He said the mission of Sertoma is so important because it is not recognized by so many people about hearing health. He gave some statistics. He said hearing is the number one health issue in men over 65, and number four with women. Hearing loss, over a period of time, breaks down communication and causes isolation of those who do not want to participate in activities because they can't hear. Hearing loss is irreversible. It even affects high school students. 17% of the high school students in this country have some type of hearing loss at this time. Many people do not recognize the fact that the noise at Nascar races, for instance, can cause hearing loss in small children. Even some band recitals, etc. can affect hearing and the small children should be wearing safe ears which are available from Sertoma. He said he wanted to call this to the attention of the citizens of

our city, and thank City Council and the City for this recognition of Sertoma's national mission of hearing health.

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month

Mayor Cavanaugh stated a proclamation had been prepared to declare May as Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month. He read the proclamation.

Americans with Disabilities Act Awareness Day

Mayor Cavanaugh stated a proclamation had been prepared to declare May 30, 2015, as Americans with Disabilities Act Awareness Day. He read the proclamation.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Appointments

Doris Begley

Arts Commission

Donald Moody

Recreation Commission

Mayor Cavanaugh stated Council needed to consider appointments to the various city boards, commissions, and committees.

Mr. Klimm stated Council has 10 pending appointments to fill vacancies on different City boards, commissions, and committees. Two appointments are presented for Council's consideration and vote at the meeting tonight.

Mayor Cavanaugh has recommended the reappointment of Doris Begley to the Arts Commission representing the Performing Arts category. If reappointed Ms. Begley's term would expire April 11, 2017.

Councilwoman Diggs has recommended the appointment of Donald Moody to the Recreation Commission to replace Robert Aaron who has resigned. If appointed, Mr. Moody's term would expire September 1, 2017.

For Council consideration is the reappointment of Doris Begley to the Arts Commission, and the appointment of Donald Moody to the Recreation Commission.

Councilman Ebner moved, seconded by Councilman Dewar, that Council approve the reappointment of Doris Begley to the Arts Commission and the appointment of Donald Moody to the Recreation Commission. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mayor Cavanaugh asked for nominations for the next meeting. There were no nominations for the next meeting.

HOSPITALITY TAX – ORDINANCE 05112015

Re-Investment

Economic Reinvestment Fund

Hospitality Tax Fund

Mayor Cavanaugh stated this was the time advertised for second reading and public hearing of an ordinance to adopt a Local Hospitality Tax.

Mr. Klimm read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 38 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF AIKEN TO ADOPT THE LOCAL HOSPITALITY TAX.

Since last summer Council has expressed several concerns about the City of Aiken approaching a zero growth rate and a stagnant economy. Council has suggested ways to

improve the economy by means of investment programs, through business vitality plus the creation of reserve funds to help assist new businesses. On March 19 Council held a budget work session to discuss ways to create a business investment fund. The consensus from that meeting was to establish a 1% Hospitality Tax which will be used for the dedicated purpose of improving services and facilities for tourists and the citizens of Aiken. Over 100 municipalities in South Carolina levy a hospitality tax and in fiscal year 2012-2013 over \$105 million was received state-wide.

By enacting this local Hospitality Tax, the City of Aiken will be able to set aside funding in the General Fund budget that will be earmarked for economic development investment in the City. All proceeds from the Hospitality Tax and Economic Investment will be kept in a separate fund segregated from the City of Aiken General Fund. These two funds were provided for Council's review. The Hospitality Tax would allow Council to create funding for approximately \$1.2 million in new businesses and capital investments. As a comparison to generate this amount the City would need to increase the millage by 7.5 mills on all businesses, homes and personal property. Whereas we estimate that over 60% of the hospitality tax would be paid by those living outside the City.

City Council approved this ordinance on first reading at the April 27, 2015, meeting. For City Council's consideration is second reading and public hearing of an ordinance to adopt a local Hospitality Tax in the City of Aiken.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated he felt there were a lot of people present who wanted to speak. He asked that those who would like to speak to raise their hand and come to the podium.

Mr. Howard E. Hillman, 410 Capella Drive, said he was speaking against the Hospitality tax. He said he was going to use personal experience. Mr. Hillman asked that the chart that was shown two weeks ago on Expenditures and Expected Costs be posted on the screen. He said the chart shows inflation in red and projected tax income in blue. He said he would tell his experience to refute that. He said he purchases a sandwich from Subway once in a while. In September his sandwich was \$5.00. The tax at that time was 7% so he paid \$.35 in taxes on his sandwich. The sandwich was \$6.00 in a couple of months so he paid 7% x \$6 or \$.42 tax. He said he did not get any more food; he just paid more tax. Along comes the County and they add a tax. Now he pays 8% x \$6 which is \$.48 for his sandwich that he does not get anything for. He pointed out on the chart that as inflation increases, taxes seem to go up with the inflation even though Council does not increase the taxes. He said you don't have to increase the tax to get more money. Inflation and taxes go up parallel. He said the chart should show that the blue line and the red line go about the same. He said that is why he is speaking against the Hospitality Tax. He said he knew he was barking up a hollow tree, but he was barking.

Mr. Mike Stake, 165 Equinox Loop, stated City Council has proposed a 1% Hospitality Tax for the purpose of making funds available to the Aiken Hotel with a \$2.5 to \$3 million parking structure among other projects. He said he did not believe in having private partnerships. He said that like the federal government, they would be picking winners and losers in business. He said Hotel Aiken becomes a winner in this scenario while the City Billiards becomes a loser for not being part of the project. Hotel Aiken wins while Boots, Bridles, and Britches goes out of business. As recently as last year the City has raised the trash rates and the water rates, and there are expectations that next year the water rates will increase. While it is true that the City has not raised the millage rate since 1989 that is not to say that the millage rate has not been increased. The School Board raised their millage rate of 5.6 mills prior to the November vote for the 1% increase in sales tax. He said they have the ability every year to raise the mills 8 mills. The School Board also received \$125 million in the form of a bond and a 1% additional sales tax. He said they may have supported the vote for both the bond and the sales tax. The State is planning an \$800 million gas tax bill that will raise three existing taxes and create a new tax or fee. The City has come late to the buffet for the taxpayer. The School Board has taken the lion's share. Business creates business. He said Council had overstepped their function and expertise, including income producing ventures. Jane Page Thompson had a column in the Aiken Standard that was filled in demonstrating this point. Willow Run has sat vacant for 12 years, not creating a bit of income for the City of Aiken, but loses by the very existence. The Center for African-American History sits

vacant. The Aiken Railroad Museum is a financial drain. Crosland Park won't make money, but continues to slide downward. According to the article the city has overpaid for the Brinkley building by three fold. Athol Avenue was overpaid by three fold. He said he would like to think that each of Council has the city and the people of Aiken at heart. He said he really would like to believe that.

Mr. Stake stated there are avenues yet to be explored, before implementing a 1% Hospitality Tax. He said it would be unfair for him to be critical of the proposal without offering a solution. He said he had a five year plan that would renew hope as a city. We don't have a money problem; we have a spending problem. He said the 2008-2009 downturn was never implemented into the city's budgets. He said Councilmembers Dewar and Ebner had made attempts in the past to make the proper adjustments. He said his proposal is this. Reduce the city's budget by 5% across the board annually for the next five years. Sell Crosland Park, the African-American History Museum and the property it sits own. Privatize the Railroad Museum. Your roles as a city are significant, and be creative. Reduce or eliminate business fees. What is good for the Hotel Aiken should be good for the rest of the businesses within the City of Aiken. He said he doubted Council would invest in all the businesses in the City of Aiken. He said he sent Councilman Ebner, as his representative, an email encouraging him to vote "no" on the second reading. He said he would encourage Council to vote "no" on second reading of the ordinance. We encourage all to vote no on the second reading. He said if Council would explore these options, he was sure they would find a better financial footing. Business creates business. Let's do what we do best.

Ms. Eleanor Myers, 852 Boardman Road, stated she and her husband moved to Aiken 26 years ago, and they have experienced the development of the City of Aiken. There were growing pains along the way, and it seems we continue to grow painfully as residents. She said she did not come to throw arrows at what is proposed, but Mr. Stake said very eloquently how she feels. The performance of public endeavors have not served us well financially. They may have eased the burdens at the moment, but they have not been financial successes, and they continue to drain the city. She said her mother was a wise woman, and when she made failures over the same thing over and over again, she used to tell her—if you always do what you always did, you will always get the results you always got. She said she felt it was time we learn from the past and take a different approach as recommended by Mr. Stake. She felt a tax is not the only approach. She said a threat of increasing the property tax is a scare tactic. She said they are all smarter than that. She said municipalities in other places have improved their communities without taxing their citizens over and over.

Mr. Jet Beckum, 188 Governor's Lane, thanked Council for letting the citizens speak. He said that is a great privilege for the citizens to be able to disagree or agree and that is what makes this country exceptional. He said he opposes the proposed Hospitality Tax basically because the name of Hospitality Tax seems to him that you are being hospitable to somebody. He said that is not a good way to share hospitality. He said it seems we are trying to get more tourists to come to Aiken and then we tax them. They won't be here but for a while, so while they are here we get them. He said that does not seem to be a nice way to tax. He said it seems the way we tax in general, local, state and federal, we seem to tax the people who can't disagree or vote against us. We tax the people who don't have quite enough representation to cause a lot of trouble. He said that does not seem fair to him. He said like the school tax, if you want good schools, tax everybody. If you want a good city, tax everybody. Don't pick out those who can't politically have power. He said that seems what we do over and over again. He mentioned the graph which was shown earlier. He said every person in this city has the same problem that the city has. He said in his business suddenly there was no building permits, no more income, but the same expenses. He said the City is not the only one who has that problem. Every citizen in this city has that problem. He pointed out the interest on savings. He asked what kind of return do you get on your money if you have any in the bank. He said the City is having that problem too, but you can't just look at that, you have to look at everybody. He said we don't need any more taxes. He said if the income is falling off, and it goes down, in his family they have to look at ways to cut. He said he could not keep spending the same money he was spending in his business when he does not have any income. He said in the information, it seemed the city was bragging about

not cutting anything. He said most families when they run out of money, and they don't have the same income, they start cutting somewhere. He felt everyone here wants to have a nice, prosperous city, and he felt anyone who comes and wants to live in Aiken wants to see things go down. He said you have to have some common sense. If you don't have the money, you can't spend it.

Mr. James Wittig, 18 Brookline Drive, said he spoke against the proposed tax two weeks ago. He said he had done some more research on it and some research on Aiken and its finances. He said he objects to the Hospitality Tax for several reasons. First, the city used to have a Hospitality Tax some years ago but dropped that tax with a promise to the voters that if they would pass the Capital Projects Sales Tax the city would eliminate the Hospitality Tax. He said to pass this tax now would be reneging on that promise. That is not fair in his book. He asked if it was honesty. Secondly, as stated in many letters in the Aiken Standard and Letters to the Editor and one by Gary Bunker last week, is it winners or losers that are treated unfairly by giving a few special tax breaks—like the hotel suddenly gets a parking garage. No other hotel in town is getting a parking garage. If the parking garage is so desperately needed, put it on the list of Capital Projects budget for the next round of Capital Projects Sales Tax and let the voters agree or disagree with Council. He felt that was a reasonable request. He asked why the solution was more taxes. He said he had read the audit reports, and in the Management Discussion of analysis of the financial information in the June, 2013 Audit Report it stated the budget is balanced using a conservative fiscal approach. He said he applauds Council for that. He said it continues to focus on spending within our needs, and at the same time preparing for our future use. He said in the Audit Report a year later, June 30, 2014, it changed to: "We continue to determine what revenues we need to increase versus what expenditures could decrease to balance the budget. He asked why the sudden change. He asked why we are now only revenue oriented and no orientation toward reducing expenses. He said that does not seem right. He asked if it was Council's responsibility as the citizens' representatives to look at both revenue increases and expense decreases at the same time. He said the only expense reduction he had read about in the local paper has to do with a private company, Dumpster Depot. They came and made a proposal about handling the recycling and saving the city trips to North Augusta and nothing on your part. He said he did not feel the city was making an honest effort on behalf of the citizens as their representatives to really fine tune the budget and bring expenses into line with existing revenues. Rather than cutting expenses you are looking for new revenue sources. He said we need to look at how we are spending our money and get the most for our money. Speaking about ideas for expense reductions, what kind of incentive program do you have for staff to come up with ideas. Do they get a percentage of the savings they might recommend. This is common in some other municipalities across the U.S. and very common in the business world. It might be a business practice that the city ought to adopt. He said business growth does not magically happen. Just because you might have a Hospitality Tax that you might do some infrastructure changes, fix a few roads, etc., does not mean businesses will come to town. He said right now businesses have a big problem called lack of capital. It is very hard for a new small business to get a bank loan. Regulating banks has been a disaster on small community banks. They are scared to death to make a loan because they have regulators looking over them. He said you need credit to loosen up so people will go out and borrow and banks will lend. Without lending there will be no new businesses coming into Aiken. He said you might get a few people to fill up some of the vacant store fronts, but nothing is going to bring in 200 to 300 employees. He said that is just not going to happen. He said he did not think Congress realizes what a mess they created with that regulation.

Mr. Wittig stated he had read the discussion about the water rates and garbage collection fees still not being adequate to cover the cost of the enterprise funds. He said he was not opposed to an increase in those taxes because they are providing him and others with an essential service. He said he would rather see those services pay for themselves rather than be paid by the other funds of the city and some fancy footwork on how to validate the Hospitality Tax revenue. He said maybe we don't have to raise money on a parking garage not approved by the voters. He said that expenditure needs further approval. He said the new City Manager has been on board for about a month. He has experience in other municipalities. He said why not give him the opportunity to look over the budget very carefully and see where there might be some savings. The other question is why not

put the whole proposition on hold for six to nine months, and let the City Manager look over the budget. He said perhaps we could look at adding the Hospitality tax as an advisory referendum in the November election. Let the people say they are okay with it, or no they are not. We know if they say yes, it is not binding, and if they say no it is not binding. At least you would hear the public opinion at the ballot box. He said Council has done a fairly decent job over the years and so good no one chose to run against them. He said most of Council ran unopposed. The only thing that comes to mind as a problem was the ice storm clean up. There was a problem with that, and you dealt with the cause of the problem. He said he was not sure Council was reading the public right and how much opposition there is to the tax and what that might cause to happen at the next election. He asked that Council consider postponing a decision on the Hospitality Tax until they have done more homework on expense reductions rather than focus on revenue increases and using Hospitality Taxes to build a parking garage that seems to benefit only one business in town.

Ms. Ann Dicks, 213 Jehossee Drive, stated she appeared before Council at the last meeting and expressed her concerns in opposition to the Hospitality Tax. She said her views had not changed. She said since it appears that it will pass, she has several questions she would like to ask. First, at the last meeting Mr. LeDuc stated that approximately \$1.2 million annually is estimated to be raised in revenue. She asked what happens if the revenue is significantly less than that. Would Council come back seeking a millage increase. She pointed out that Council has said the millage rate has not been increased, but when the County raises the value of your house the city does get the profit from that increase even though the city has not changed the millage rate, but if a house goes from \$120,000 to \$150,000 the city benefits from that. She said it had also been stated that the revenue would be used to entice new businesses to the area. She asked what percentage would be allocated to the northside business development. There is a great need for incentives to get businesses to invest in the northside. She said she heard one Councilmember say that the money is on the southside. She said she would like for Council to be aware that many great empires have fallen because a section of its constituents felt they were disenfranchised. Thirdly, will the projects proceed only as the money is available to complete them. She said she as well as others are looking to Council to use our revenue wisely to benefit all of the constituents of the City of Aiken. She asked that Council be good stewards of our tax dollars.

Ms. Stephanie Biddle, 1124 Carriage Drive, thanked Council for hearing every one and their concerns. She thanked the Public Safety Officers who were recognized for their accomplishments in making Aiken safe and successful. She said she has several concerns about the Hospitality Tax, some of which have already been addressed. She pointed out that the citizens are just being charged for the 1% School tax that was quite popular with the voters. She said the state is also looking at increasing the gasoline tax. Now the City is saying they need another 1% tax. She said it seems in the pitch that was given there was talk about how this will better city development. She asked how this will affect the people in the County; they will pay the tax. She said we have the snowbirds here for three or four months, and we are counting on that to be a major contributor to this because they are going out and spending money. They are out and about in Aiken. She asked how this affects us the rest of the year. She said she has a serious problem of having to pay this tax and being told that the solution is to buy a cheaper steak rather than let's find some other wasteful things that we can take out of the equation so we don't have to absorb this. She said our citizens pay taxes regularly and through the School Tax. She said she felt it was only fair to have an advisory referendum and the citizens should be able to decide if the Hospitality Tax is something they want after being presented with actual materials and suggestions. She pointed out that if the median income is down which is what they have been told, how would the tax be helpful to the citizens. She asked how the tax would be helpful to the citizens if we have a median income that is low right now. How is it helpful for them to have to pay another 1% Hospitality Tax on prepared foods. This also affects low income families when they go to the grocery store. She said there is no way to justify charging the Hospitality Tax for the residents of the city for a year and expecting it to fund projects that may or may not pan out. She asked how many times do we see big government throw money and incentives at things that never happen. She asked how they know that we won't be looking at that after the tax passes and where does the money go. She said if this is something that we truly need to

develop the city, she would ask that Council take into consideration the concerns of the people and put it on the ballot for an advisory referendum. At least Council would hear the people and hear what they have to say. If it is popular and people agree that it would help us, then very well. However, if not then it falls on Council to take into consideration how the people feel and how it affects everyone. She thanked Council for letting the citizens speak.

Chris Clark, 123 Arcuturus Drive, said he had been reading a lot of suppositions and conjectures in the papers and heard a lot of rumors. He said his background is mathematics. He said he was a numbers guy. He said he wanted to see what the situation would look like. He said currently the sales tax rate is 8%. There is only one county with municipalities in South Carolina that has something greater. Charleston's is 8.5%. If this tax passes that situation could change, and suddenly Aiken would be the leader in sales tax at 9%. He said he had also heard through the paper that this tax would fund some new positions in the city. He said he did not see anything in the funding except for buildings, advertising and infrastructure. He said he did not see anything in there for funding positions. He said he read in the paper that there was a certain percentage of the Hospitality funds allotted for funding two new positions in the city. He said he had a question about that.

Councilman Dewar stated he was confused about the numbers that Mr. Clark said he got. He asked what he sent that Mr. Clark was referring to. Mr. Clark said about funding of additional positions in the city that he read about. Councilman Dewar asked if he was talking about the additional position in the Hospitality Tax for Economic Development.

Ms. Jane Page Thompson, 240 Knox Avenue, stated that at the last meeting Mr. LeDuc mentioned the staff members the tax would fund. Ms. Thompson stated she has a problem with the city hiring someone to basically go into the job of real estate agent. She said she was not here as a real estate agent, but as a citizen. She said she spoke two weeks ago about her concerns because of the burden of taxes and the 1% increase already imposed by the School District, about her concerns about people on fixed income on the senior level and the young people that we are trying to attract to the City of Aiken who are starting out. There are young people moving here, and we want to encourage that, not discourage that. She said one thing we found out about why the Chamber of Commerce did that report, was that we were losing so many young people to North Augusta and losing them across the river to Evans and to Columbia County. She said she started talking to some of the young people because she wanted to know why. A lot of them said because there are no places to have fun in the City of Aiken. It is mostly for retirees, and they wanted to go to places where they could have fun and have a great night out and enjoy themselves. Now you would be taxing their fun. She said taxing will not encourage young people to move here if we start taxing fun. If we want the under 35 year olds to come here, taxing their night out isn't the way to do it. She said she started thinking what other opportunities we have. She said she knew that Council was reluctant to look at the millage rate. She pointed out that in a reassessment year now is the time to look at it. It will cause the least impact to property owners. She said Council went down to 62 mills when they could have gone to 66 mills in 2011. She said the city would have had a little bit of money to do some of the things they want to do. She said the millage rate is something to look at. She pointed out that we are in a reassessment year at the County and the City gets their information from the County. We have an equalized basis in a reassessment year so it would equalize itself out. She said the economic impact going to 66 mills from 62 mills probably would not be that significant because property tax values have declined since the last reassessment. Now would be the time to increase the millage rate if you are going to do one. Beyond that solution she thought about another one. She suggested that we reach out to York, Anderson, Orangeburg, Berkeley, and Colleton Counties. She said those six counties including Aiken could create a piece of legislation that would pass the House and Senate probably pretty easily with the fierce lobbying power of the Municipal Association and what if you had to reduce the Accommodations Tax from \$900,000 gross to \$500,000 gross. That would put Aiken in the league with the other counties like Charleston, Spartanburg, Florence, Georgetown, Richland, Beaufort, and Horry that have the same property taxes and entertainment taxes that Aiken is proposing tonight. She said if Aiken wants to be in that league, let's be in that league and fairly even and on the same footing. She said create the legislation,

reduce the Hospitality Tax on accommodations so you can then add, if this is truly the tax that 60% of the people don't live in the city and this is really a tax to tax people who just eat out at nice restaurants in the City of Aiken. It is not intended to hurt prepared foods for fixed income people. It is not intended to impact people who are closest to the convenience stores that we have. She said if it is really to get those people who do have that income get it through the Accommodations Tax. Join together with those five other counties and go after a piece of legislation that makes sense. She said she wanted to encourage Council to work with the Chamber of Commerce. She said she had heard the Chamber of Commerce is behind the study that Council has looked at that has encouraged two Republicans on Council to vote in favor of a new tax, which is shocking to her. Work with the Chamber of Commerce and their new Angel Ambassador group. They might come up with the money to build the parking garage for Hotel Aiken. She asked that Council put this vote for a new tax on an advisory referendum in November and let the citizens speak out. She pointed out that tonight is Celebrity Waiter Night to benefit Children's Place. Most of the restaurant owners who would have been here tonight are at their own restaurant waiting tables for one of our most critical charities in this town. She said the restaurant that she is working at tonight gave her an hour off from her waiting duties so she was going to leave. She said she hoped Council would do the right thing and change that 6 to 1 in favor of the Hospitality Tax to a 6 to 1 against it.

Mr. Lane Bradford stated he lives in the county, but he has ownership of property in downtown Aiken and on University Parkway. He said two weeks ago he was watching on his computer the Council meeting and Council voted 6 to 1 in favor of the tax. He said they must be kidding him. Not another tax. He said when he got off work today and was eating dinner and watching the Council meeting on the computer, he was getting angry so he decided to drive down to the meeting. He said citizens get taxed every way we turn. He said if this tax goes into effect, when he buys lunch for his employees he will pay an extra 1%. He said 1% may not sound like a lot, but when you are working with Medicaid and Medicare and other things with health services, 1% is quite a bit. He said he would ask Council not to vote for the Hospitality Tax, but hold an advisory referendum like others have mentioned. He pointed out that support for the Hospitality Tax is not here. He urged Council to do the right thing.

Mr. Sam Leverette 319 Saddlebrook Trail in Graniteville, stated he is a 30 year old with a family of three small children and a wife. He said he was fortunate enough through his business that he can go out in the City of Aiken and spend money and not have to count the pennies to see if he has enough to pay his utility bills. However, he said he has some friends and family members who are not as fortunate as he is. He said he sees them count the cost to see if they can go out and have a good night out on the town with their family members for dinner. He said we would be talking about a difference of \$5 making a big difference to them. He said he was thinking about people like that. They would normally go out every Saturday night and try to have some family time. The proposed tax could potentially prevent them from going out on the weekend and enjoying a nice meal. He said for him and his house, he realizes if he had a spending problem, getting more money will not help him out at all. It will just go from buying one shirt to now maybe buying two shirts. He asked that Council consider other ways they could cut money out of the budget, and try not to just bring in more money from people who already have given their fair share. He asked that Council consider that as a spending problem. We don't need extra money, but need to find ways to cut the budget and try to keep the middle man in mind when Council votes on whether or not to charge 1% on processed food.

Ms. Betty Witham, 306 Grace Avenue, said she had lived in Aiken for 56 years. She said she was appalled about this tax. She felt this is an unfair tax at this time. She said she feels very sorry for people on fixed incomes. She felt the Hospitality Tax was an unnecessary tax. She felt the city is not in a position to get into a business situation at this time either. She said she would like to go on record that she does oppose the Hospitality tax very strongly. She asked that Council take that into consideration.

Mr. Kent Cabbage, 136 Laurel Ridge Circle, said he is on the Planning Commission, but he is present speaking as an individual citizen. He said a lot of practical reasons had been given to not have the Hospitality Tax. He said he wanted to give a different approach and give more of a conceptual and philosophical reason. As a taxpayer and citizen of Aiken

for the last 15 years, he has seen the certain mind set take hold. He said they are slowly but surely asking and kind of overstepping their bounds of the proper role of government. He said we have seen the city as venture capitalists, a city of real estate agents, and the city picking winners and losers. He said he has seen this grow and morph. He felt it is the perfect time with the new City Manager to finally disengage from that mentality. He said he knows there have been a lot of good intentions by some of the things that City Council has gotten involved in during the last few years, but there is no getting around the fact that many of these things have been boondoggled; in fact there has been one after another after another. He said he wanted to look forward, and not backward, but he said he really wanted to see us, especially with the new City Manager, this old mindset finally be gone. This tax does not take us forward. It takes us back to a failed mentality. It is very frustrating as a taxpayer and citizen of Aiken. He said as he sees this tax coming about again, he felt conceptually and philosophically we have the perfect time with a new City Manager and possibly some new faces on City Council this year to break away from a failed mentality. One thing that has troubled him for years is the projects that the city has gotten involved in over the last years that have been failures. He asked if anyone had tried to get a water leak fixed. He said he did not blame Public Works as he felt they are underfunded, and they are doing the best they can do. He noted Crosland Park and said that has failed and all of the property acquisitions that have failed, and it takes a month to get a water leak fixed, we have completely taken our eye off the ball as a government. He felt this was the perfect time to step back and disengage from a failed mindset and look forward. He said he wants to look forward and wants the city to move forward. He said the proposed Hospitality tax does not bring us up to 2015 with the other municipalities in South Carolina. It takes us back to 2005 and the failures thereafter. He felt it would be fabulous if we could put this to rest and move on. We all want to move on and be positive. Break away from a failed mentality and not have one last legacy boondoggle.

Ms. Gail Delorey, 123 Bennington Lane, stated that she is secretary to the Aiken County Republican party. She said this last Thursday the Aiken GOP Executive Committee unanimously passed a resolution calling for the Aiken City Council to make the Hospitality Tax a ballot referendum. She read the resolution.

Whereas, Aiken City Council is attempting to increase a tax that the public has spoken out against; and
 Whereas, Aiken has seen an increase in sales tax by 1% in March of this year; and
 Whereas, the state legislature is debating an increase in the gas tax; and
 Whereas, a ballot referendum on the Hospitality Tax is not legally binding, however, can be used as an advisory ballot; and
 Whereas, the majority of City Council and the Mayor of Aiken were elected as Republicans to uphold conservative principles; and
 Whereas, the Aiken County Republican Party charges these Councilmembers and Mayor who were elected as Republicans to adhere to the Party platform;
 Therefore, be it resolved that the Aiken County Republican Party calls on the Aiken City Council and Mayor to vote against the Hospitality Tax at the second reading, and the Aiken County Republican Party wishes to have the Hospitality Tax voted on by the public as a ballot referendum in the next General Election on November 3, 2015. And the Aiken County Republican Party calls on the Republican Councilmembers and Mayor to adhere to the outcome of the Advisory ballot.

Councilwoman Price stated she has to say something. She said the City of Aiken is a city for all people—Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, etc. We are a government for all the people. She said she did not think that anyone she knows would want to separate themselves and vote based on a political party. She said she had to say that.

Councilman Dewar stated that the city also voted to retain its partisanship on Council. That was put to the voters, and we agreed that we would remain a partisan office, one of the few in the state, but we let the people decide that. He said while he respects what Councilwoman Price said, he felt she should respect the right of the Republican Party and its views. He said he would love to hear what the Democratic Party would want to say about the tax.

Councilwoman Price stated she does respect the right of the Republican Party and its views. She said the Democratic Party did not have anything to say. She said this concerns her because we don't operate like this in this town. That is just not the way we do things.

Ms. Delorey stated she respects Councilwoman Price's opinion, and she certainly understands her position. She said if the Democratic Party had sent someone here to speak against the tax, she knew that the Republicans on Council would have gladly listened to what they had to say. She said she knew that they were elected as Republicans or Democrats. She said Councilwoman Price ran as a Democrat. Councilwoman Price stated, however, she received Republican support. Ms. Delorey stated she was sure Councilwoman Price did. Councilwoman Price stated the Republicans that she knows look as individuals at the issues rather than confine themselves to the group. Ms. Delorey stated she would encourage the Democrats to speak out on the issue as well.

Ms. Jane Vaughters, 707 Hayne Avenue, stated she was here to ask questions about the tax before it is reinstated. She said Council eliminated the tax several years ago. She said if Council would pause before reinstating the tax, we might find that there is a real public consensus about what positive could happen with this. She said one of the reasons there is not in her opinion, is, for example, with the parking garage. We don't know whether the city will have to buy land for the garage. She said she knows there are plenty of people in Aiken that think we need a parking garage downtown. She said she had heard that for many years. She said she feels that Hotel Aiken needs to be renovated. She said in 10 years she does not know what will happen to that big structure without improvements in that major piece of property downtown. She said she also sees towns where there are parking garages that she knows have been funded by other sources rather than local taxpayer money. She felt we should look into that. She said she did not think that had happened yet. She did not know there had been time to do that. She was hoping that Mr. Klimm might look at Stanton, Virginia, and Chattanooga, Tennessee. She said there are parking garages every other block in Chattanooga. She said she did not feel that they were all privately built. She said in downtown Augusta, there are a lot of downtown urban parking garages. She said there is money for urban projects. She said whether Aiken is a big enough urban project to qualify for funding, she did not know. She felt that some of this work that we may think is necessary could be a popular issue if we had an idea of where the project started and stopped and even if there is room for a garage in the first place. She said she did not know that for sure. She said she did not know how much of a radius it takes for a garage. She felt that citizens are very willing to pay taxes if they can see what it is for. The city has tried to do that, and she felt we should try again on this issue and get some more solid figures and see if there is maybe another way that we can get those kind of things we want all through our town. She said another thing that bothers her is about the business license excise tax and relief as there is a need for that. She said however, the relief is for new businesses. She said we are asking local restaurants and grocery stores, etc. to collect the tax and provide it to the city to be used for projects that are deemed worthwhile. The businesses have to do all of that, and as she understood it, and there would be a three year tax relief for new businesses. She said the businesses are collecting the money and spending money to collect the money as that does not happen for free, as that is not a major activity of the businesses. She said collecting taxes and sending them on takes some work by somebody employed there. She said it seems to her that maybe we should be giving the tax relief to the businesses that have to collect this money and send it to the city.

Councilman Merry stated there are actually two tax relief components. One is for new business start up. It is a business license rebate that steps down each year for the first three years. The first year would be 100% of their business license tax which for most businesses is about \$50 for each of the first three years. For restaurants the relief would be 50% of what they pay in business license tax because of the burden of collecting and remitting the money to the city. There are two components of tax relief. Ms. Vaughters stated she felt we definitely need to have a component of tax relief to the businesses that collect the tax. She said when it is said that we are going to lure and encourage growth by eliminating the business license excise tax, they know how she feels about that as she harped on that for years. She said you don't encourage people to come into the city with a business license tax. They will come in for other things such as services and

infrastructure. She said some of the tax is for infrastructure repair. She said we have paid property taxes, business license taxes, raising sewer fees, local option sales tax all for infrastructure repairs. She said she looked at the definition as to what the Hospitality Tax is supposed to be used for, and she felt it was for about the same thing as the Accommodations Tax is supposed to be used for. Councilman Merry stated it is very similar. Ms. Vaughters stated she did not recall that being used for infrastructure repair. She said she did not recall that being an option. She said the city has used it to fund projects for tourism, etc. She said when she goes to a local restaurant, she mostly sees local people in there. She felt if it passes, it will be paid mostly by local people. She said if it is to be paid by local people, we need to say so. She said she did not feel that the tax would be paid by out of towners predominantly. Ms. Vaughters stated she felt if we had the answers to some of the questions about what projects will really cost, we might find there is some support where voting right now does not generate that support.

Mr. Tony Coffaro, 659 West Pleasant Colony Drive, said to hear everyone speak so eloquently regarding the Hospitality Tax he sees a lot of opposition. He would think the best thing Council can do is to table this for a little while; let the new City Manager immerse himself a little more on what is going on in Aiken and come up with another plan. He said he felt we should solicit input from the public and maybe put the matter on the ballot. He felt the best thing that could be done right now is to table the matter. He felt that would be the wisest thing Council could do. He felt there had been some great speakers, and a lot of good input. He felt the best thing right now is to table the issue and let the new City Manager get more involved and immersed in it and then come up with a program with citizen input involving the taxpayers.

Mr. Ron Felder, 966 Old Indian Trail, said as a taxpayer and business owner in Aiken that taxes is something that are eating up business owners and property owners. He said you can't continue to keep raising taxes on people. He said he has six vehicles, and it seems he gets tax bills from the Treasurer almost every day for vehicles. He said when he goes to Richmond County and Columbia he tries to get back to Aiken in order to not pay the taxes on food. He said he was opposed to any new taxes. He pointed out we just had the 1% tax on schools and now Council is talking about adding a 1% tax on foods, and that is just too much.

Mr. Richard Johnson, 428 Marion Street NE, stated he had been a resident of Aiken for 59 years and had been paying city taxes for that long. He said the City of Aiken provides excellent services for its citizens. He felt the 1% Hospitality Tax as he understands it is really a volunteer tax because if you do not desire to purchase a meal you do not have to pay it. If Council raises the property taxes, that is mandatory and the citizens don't have a choice. He said his personal opinion is that he would be in favor of the 1% Hospitality Tax.

Ms. Dee Dee Vaughters, 1022 South Boundary, stated she was looking at some information that was provided at the GOP meeting the other night. In 1989 the median household income was about \$55,000. In 2013 the median income is \$45,000. She asked why we would raise taxes on people when they have \$10,000 less income than they did before. These are the citizens and people Council represents. They are hurting. She said people don't have to go out to eat, but if people don't go out to eat businesses fold and people lose their jobs. We need people dining out. We need them to support our local businesses, and the citizens have a lot less money to do it in 2013 than they had in 1989. She said don't raise taxes on these people. These people are already hurting. They cut their budgets, please cut the city's budget.

Mayor Cavanaugh asked if there were other citizens who would like to speak and no one responded. He stated the matter was now back to Council for consideration.

Councilman Dewar moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council waive the rules so Council can discuss the issue. The motion was unanimously approved.

Councilman Dewar stated he had about 10 or 11 items to mention, but he did not need to repeat them because the speakers covered almost every one of them. He said he would reiterate some of the more important ones. One would be the sensitivity. He said he felt

we need to recognize that this tax comes on right after an increase in the 1% sales tax that the School Board imposed, and it is coming right before whatever the Legislature is going to do about the gasoline tax. He said he had heard everything from 6 cents to a 6% increase in fuel tax that the Legislature is considering, including bills to raise money for road maintenance. He said he had been consistent in saying he felt we don't know enough about this issue to impose the tax at this time. He said while he generally does not think that we should send items to a referendum, at least for this year it would not cost us anything because we are going to have a city-wide election. He said he recognizes that a referendum is not binding, and the tax would not be imposed until at least four members of Council approve it. He said his recommendation would be to defer the tax, give the City Manager time to look at it, and to answer some of the questions related to the business rebate. He said he was not sure all that is legal. He said we need more questions answered on the parking garage. We need to see if we can get a little more comfortable with the estimate of how much money the tax will raise. He said he would not repeat what everyone else had said. He said Council has heard from the people here at this meeting that they would be satisfied if Council would be willing to defer the tax for more study to make a better case for it. Some would be pleased if Council would defeat the tax. He said if Council needs to consider it again next year as Council gets the budget for next year, then Council could consider it at that time. His feeling is that we would be able to save enough money from our budget that we might be able to do those things without the Hospitality Tax.

Councilman Merry stated he would like to make a few comments. He said he could not cover it all, but would make a few points. He said in so many ways he finds himself agreeing with some of the speakers, but there is so much more to the story often than what is communicated. The important thing is that he believes we do, in fact, need to continue to look at our budget going forward. He said he agrees with comments Councilman Ebner has said in past meetings that we are not out of the financial woods yet as far as covering our expenses. In fact, the rate of growth and our expense side of the ledger will accelerate as more of the Capital Projects Sales Tax projects come on line. With the new Senior/Youth Center, the Northside Recreation Facility, Silver Bluff Water Treatment Facility, etc., we are looking at those things alone probably being \$750,000 to \$1 million a year in additional expenses. We have a lot of work to do to cut our budget to cover those things. He said he does think there is that left to be done. The problem is that we are going to be facing that every year. We will face that kind of challenge every year until such time as we can generate revenue from growth. There are two ways to offset the ever increasing march of higher expenses. That is, you either get more revenue from more people or you get more revenue from the same people. Growth is the smarter choice because as you broaden the tax base you can generate more revenue at a smaller incremental amount from more people, more businesses, and more individuals. He said he would rather tax more people than fewer people more. He said that is a way of looking at it. Ultimately with proper investment of these funds, if we can do it successfully to encourage growth, this will, hopefully, stave off or at least reduce the severity of future property tax increases. In 25 years, but if Council passes the upcoming budget it will be 26 years, we have not had a millage rate increase and in fact we have had a millage rate decrease at least five times in that period. He said a lot of people point out, and he has been one of those over the years, that through that period of time property values have increased. The assessed value of houses has increased in that period of time. He said he went in and indexed those two things. He looked at the actual millage rates from 1989 until today. He said he indexed it against inflation from 1989 until today. Our tax rate indexed through inflation has gone up 18% in 26 years. The inflation rate has gone up 91.9% in that same period of time. In other words, the City of Aiken has increased taxes at one-fifth the rate of general inflation. He said that is something to be applauded. He said he does not get to take credit for that as he was not on Council. He pointed out, however, that Councilmember Price and Mayor Cavanaugh were on Council during that time. The rest of Council were on Council during some of that time. He felt Council deserves some credit for that. We have been able to keep our effective tax rate at a rate of 18% above what it was in 1989 when adjusted for inflation. That has been a great thing, but it has also incurred a cost to the city. We have not had the money, especially since 2006 as shown in the revenue chart when the first speaker came up, to do some of the reinvestment to help carry us forward into the future. We really need to plant the seeds for tomorrow's growth, businesses, and Young Professionals that we all covet.

This is all about investing in the future; about being responsible today, in planning for the future. He said he cannot disagree with the idea of looking at the budget and cutting costs. If we could miraculously find millions of dollars to cut, it may be as Councilman Dewar suggested, we could do these things out of that. The budget cuts we have looked at so far have not been able to accomplish that. He said he would applaud Roger LeDuc, Interim City Manager. He said it is often overlooked that in the proposed budget for 2015-16 we cut in personnel costs alone over \$400,000 through combining jobs, changing cost basis for jobs and eliminating 5.5 positions. We have been looking at positions and benefits. He said we have cut significantly in that regard. We have cut in a lot of other ways. Budget cuts have been done. When we had it laid in front of Council last October that we had a \$700,000 budget shortfall, we all knew that was pretty dire. Through some of the fee increases that we have implemented and through some of the budget cuts that Mr. LeDuc put together, we have been able to solve that problem. However, that is a very temporary solution. He said we will have to do it again and have to keep doing it unless we invest in our future and try to ultimately grow our tax base and build our way out of this rather than always pulling our arms in and trying to keep shrinking our government. He said he is not in favor of smaller government in terms of shrinking our services to our people. Rather than doing that he felt we should try to grow the base and broaden it so we can grow the city to be able to maintain and enhance the quality of life that we have come to know and love and ultimately make it a better city for our children to return to. He said that is the reason for this.

Councilwoman Price stated she had listened to the comments this evening and she did want to thank the citizens for coming out to express your feelings to Council. She said she hopes the citizens appreciate that Council is here to listen. Some of the things that they have heard are new to them. She pointed out there are a lot of silent folks. They are folks who will not come to the Chambers and speak as so many of those present who have the confidence to come and sit and speak have done. She said we can't let those folks go unheard as well as those who have sent emails with their opinions. She said she wanted to thank all those folks for expressing their concerns. She said she did not know how many had had a chance to go online and look at the cities that have Hospitality taxes. There are a number of them in South Carolina that have up to 2%. She said while she recognizes that Aiken is different than Charleston, Greenville, Anderson, Mount Pleasant, York, Beaufort, Columbia, and Goose Creek, people come through those towns like they do Aiken and North Augusta. The question is are we so different that we do not want to maximize our potential tax base with them coming through our town. We are satisfied to go to their communities and eat, stay overnight, and let them tax us whatever they will, and we say to them when they come here we are cheaper, but our services are good. She said she does not like any taxes. She said she has said that before and will say it again. She said when she looks at the revenue that is generated by some of the other towns, for example Columbia, SC has generated millions of dollars based on the Hospitality Taxes. Since 2002 they have generated about \$77 million. Right now there are issues in Columbia as to how those taxes are being spent given the amount of revenue that is coming in. Should the Hospitality tax pass at this meeting, there will be the same issues so we will have to figure out how we are going to allocate some of these monies for projects without causing an uproar of someone saying they are not getting their fair share. She said she would say that some of the things she has heard tonight concern her as an individual because of the number of years that she has lived in Aiken. She said the people that she knows in this community who are good, good people look at those who are underserved and those who have abundance. She said we have a town that has been blessed with people who have been abundantly blessed. She said when she heard comments about the Center for African-American History, Art and Culture, she would ask the person who mentioned that to look at the history of that center and what the City actually put into it, and how they are still working to try to get that Center built. She said there were several examples of that nature that she listened to. She said when we speak out on things we should do the investigation before we start pinpointing as to how the City wastefully spent their money. She said we have had some very successful projects in Aiken. She said sometimes there is a population that likes to think of the negative rather than the positive. She said Aiken is a great town with a lot of great things going on. She said she will always carry that message no matter who is sitting in these chairs where Council is tonight that Aiken is a great community. We are not going down hill, but we are moving forward. She said she felt we will move forward with the Hospitality

Tax. She said she will vote and support the tax. She said citizens may not vote for her again and may vote her out of office, but she said she will vote her conscience. She said she is voting for the future of Aiken and that is why she will support the Hospitality tax tonight.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated he also appreciates everyone being here and making comments. He said he understands very clearly how hard this issue may be. He said Council has run into a lot of issues over the years that have been extremely hard. He said he and Councilwoman Price could remember Citizens Park as an example. That was at a time when the SRS Site was reducing employees at the Site. He said it was a hard decision to make as to whether to go ahead and buy the land and build what we have today. He said Citizens Park has been a wonderful park for our citizens. He said there was a lot of concern about that. People did not want the city to do the Park. It was done by a 4 to 3 vote. He said he feels it is a wonderful complex, and one of the best in the Southeast for our kids and citizens. He said he was glad that it was done. He said back in the 70's there was concern about accepting Hopelands and Rye Patch. The vote for the gardens and Rye Patch area was a hard decision. It was passed by a 4 to 3 vote. People thought we were wasting money and did not have the money to keep it up and do the things we need to do. He said four votes on Council at that time felt that it was a worthy project and today Hopelands and Rye Patch are wonderful facilities and gardens that citizens and visitors enjoy. That property could have been used for a number of houses in the area. Instead we have a beautiful area. He said when the concept of Woodside came up it was supported by all, but when The Reserve came up, it was a questionable vote. He said he struggled a lot of what to do on that issue up until the last minute of the vote. He said he supported it, and it passed. Now we have a wonderful Woodside Reserve area. He said he was putting the issue that we have at this meeting in that same category. He said he was going to vote for the Hospitality Tax. He said he was going to review some of the reasons he feels we need the tax. He said we have a lot of things down that we want to do and may do. All of them are good. He said some of the projects depend on the money that comes in and what Council wants to do with it. He said he was going to go back and point out the fact that we have not had a property tax millage rate increase in 26 years. He said not 25, as he heard; it is 26 years. He said he was real happy about that. We try not to tax our citizens during those period of times when we could have. We didn't do it. He said he was one that did not want to increase the millage rate. He said because of where we are now with thousands of Savannah River employees no longer at the Site and many of those, probably 40% to 50%, lived in Aiken, we are not getting that kind of revenue that we used to get. Our economy is still not back to where it should be. He said it is time, as far as he is concerned, to have this 1% Hospitality Tax. He said he had heard all the things which had been said about the tax and what it will do and what it will not do. He said it is always easy to criticize. He asked who has heard anyone come up and say we need a tax increase. He said we don't hear that. Council has to make decisions that are hard many times, and this is one of them. He said for the many reasons that have been stated, he felt the Hospitality Tax is needed. He pointed out that we are using our reserve funds to balance the budget. He said there was a time when we had \$6 to \$7 million in reserves. We are down to \$3 million now. We have had to use the reserves in order to balance our budget. He said it may not mean a lot to some, but it means a lot to Council. He said we will probably have to do it again next year, if we don't do something. He said the Hospitality Tax will give us money to do some of the things that we need to do. He said he was talking about infrastructure. He said someone had mentioned infrastructure. He said this is a serious problem. We have had some water problems, and probably have some 50 year old pipes underground in the area where we are that need to be replaced. He said there are a lot of things we have to look at and make sure that we do move our city forward. We want to do some things that make it nicer, such as The Alley. He said he could go on and on, and it might not make any difference to anyone. He said he was going to support the Hospitality Tax because he felt it was the right thing to do at the right time. He said he felt we need it for the right purposes.

Councilman Dewar stated he would like to make a few comments before obviously the Hospitality Tax passes. He said every time we make a tough decision we hear about Hopelands and Rye Patch and Citizens Park. He said he would love to know how much money we have spent on Hopelands and Rye Patch in all those years. He said we are

now in the process of rebuilding the stables at Rye Patch, and yet there are no horses to go in the stables. He said he was not sure that they might have been wise decisions, but the thing we have heard from our folks is that we need to make decisions and consider financial impacts on those decisions, not just that it is a beautiful facility. He said Rye Patch is a beautiful facility. A lot of people have been married there, and tonight there are a lot of people at Hopelands listening to music. We talked about the Hospitality tax and only 9% of the 270 municipalities in the state collect more than \$1 million and most of those are along the coast. He said he did not know why we think we are going to collect \$1 million. He said he hoped as we go through that we maintain a firm control, and that we don't spend it until we have it. He hoped we don't borrow from Reserves, we wait until we get the funds. Then we look to see how much we have to spend. He said he was amazed that 20 people have the courage to come to speak in front of Council. He said he remembers the first time he did that in the communities where he has lived. He said as comfortable as he is in front of a microphone, he was really nervous speaking to a Council. He said he admired those who had the courage to come up and speak and tell us that you think we are heading down the wrong track. He said he agrees with that. He said he would not beat a dead horse. He said he thought Council was set on approving the tax. He said he was disappointed. He said it is not the first time that Council has had a room full of people opposing something and yet Council has done it. He said we will just have to live with it.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated we need to remember that we have thousands of people who are not here, but it does not mean that they disagree or agree with the issue. He said he knows a lot of people who have called him and say the Hospitality Tax is the right thing to do at this time. He said he knows that everybody here does not want the tax, and he understands that, but there are a lot of people who do.

Councilman Merry stated that in 2014 there were 142 restaurants that did \$108,835,000 in gross revenue. That would raise \$1.08 million for the city in 2014 not counting prepared foods and beverages from bars, grocery stores, convenience stores, etc. Also, North Augusta raises over \$600,000, and they have around 40% of the number of restaurants that Aiken has. They raised over \$600,000 using the same 1% tax. He said \$1.2 million is a round number, and we don't know exactly if it would be \$1.25 or \$1.15 million. He said it is felt that \$1.2 million is a conservative estimate.

Mr. Lane Bradford asked Mayor Cavanaugh why he was opposed to putting the question of whether there be a 1% Hospitality Tax on the ballot. Mayor Cavanaugh stated he felt we need the 1% tax now and for other reasons that he had mentioned earlier and heard others say.

Mayor Cavanaugh pointed out that not many people came to the work session when Council had work sessions discussing the budget, the proposed Hospitality Tax, and other matters. He said Council has had a number of work sessions since Mr. LeDuc came to help us. He said there was so much on the table that needed to be done. He said he felt that we are not rushing to judgement. This matter has been on the table and talked about at the work sessions. All the work sessions have been open to the public. No decisions have been made in any meetings that was not open to the public.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated Council needed to move on regarding this matter.

Councilwoman Price moved, seconded by Councilman Merry, that Council approve the ordinance imposing the 1% Hospitality Tax. The motion was approved by a vote of 4 in favor and 2 opposed. Mayor Cavanaugh and Councilmembers Diggs, Merry and Price voted in favor of the motion. Councilmembers Dewar and Ebner opposed the motion.

REZONING – ORDINANCE 05112015A

Michael Calhoun
Findley Brothers, LLC
Town Creek Road
TPN 106-18-19-012
TPN 106-18-19-004

Mayor Cavanaugh stated this was the time advertised for second reading and public hearing on an ordinance to rezone property on the west side of Town Creek Road at Seven Oaks Drive from RS-6 to Office/Institutional.

Mr. Klimm read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE ZONING OF REAL ESTATE OWNED BY
MICHAEL D. CALHOUN FROM RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY (RS-6) TO
OFFICE / INSTITUTIONAL (O).

Mr. Michael Calhoun has requested the rezoning of two newly created lots totaling 1.867 acres located on the west side of Town Creek Road from RS-6 to Office Institutional (O). The property is located across the street from Seven Oaks Drive.

The Planning Commission at their April 14, 2015, meeting reviewed this request and determined that it is not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the proposed zoning is not compatible with the surrounding uses. The Planning Commission has recommended denial of the rezoning of this property to Office/Institutional (O) by a 4-2 vote.

City Council discussed this rezoning request at the April 27, 2015, meeting and asked that Mr. Calhoun work with Mr. Paradise, Interim Planning Director, and Mr. Gary Smith, City Attorney, regarding possible conditions to be included in the ordinance for the rezoning of the property on Town Creek Road.

Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Smith and Mr. Paradise met and discussed Council's concerns. In order to provide control over tree removal and development of the area between the rezoned parcel and the residence at 616 Whippoorwill Court, Mr. Calhoun has proposed gifting that area to the owners of 616 Whippoorwill Court. This area would be made a portion of the lot at 616 Whippoorwill Court and would need to be rezoned to RS-15. The area to be gifted is shown on a map given to Council.

In order to address Council's concerns the following conditions were suggested as an amendment to the ordinance.

1. In order to provide for an adequate buffer between the Office use and the residents of Gem Lakes, the applicant will convey a triangular portion of Tax Parcel Number 106-18-19-011 that is approximately 7,000+/- square feet to the owner of Tax Parcel Number 106-18-18-020 as shown on Exhibit A prior to the annexation becoming effective.
2. The condition shall be met within 90 days of approval by Council.

City Council approved this ordinance on first reading at the April 27, 2015, meeting, with the condition that the ordinance be revised to include conditions that were discussed at the April 27, 2015, meeting. For Council consideration on second reading and public hearing is an ordinance to rezone two lots on Town Creek Road across the street from Seven Oaks Drive from Residential (RS-6) to Office Institutional (O).

Councilman Dewar moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council approve on second reading an ordinance to rezone two lots on Town Creek Road across the street from Seven Oaks Drive from Residential (RS-6) to Office/Institutional (O) with the conditions listed in the ordinance. The motion was unanimously approved.

ANNEXATION – ORDINANCE 05112015BOld Aiken Airport RoadLevels Church RoadGaul and CaldwellTPN 137-13-05-009

Mayor Cavanaugh stated this was the time advertised for second reading and public hearing on an ordinance to annex 27.27 acres on Old Aiken Airport Road and zone it PR Planned Residential.

Mr. Klimm read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE TO ANNEX TO THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF AIKEN CERTAIN PROPERTY CONSISTING OF 27.27 ACRES OF LAND, MORE OR LESS, OWNED BY GAUL & CALDWELL, LLC AND TO ZONE THE SAME PLANNED RESIDENTIAL (PR).

Gaul & Caldwell LLC owners of 27.27 acres located on Old Airport Road and Levels Church Road have requested annexation of the property and PR Planned Residential zoning. It is proposed to include a total of 239 housing units on this property. The request includes 9 single-family residential lots, 86 townhomes, and 144 apartment units. There would be a clubhouse and pool for the apartment complex.

The Planning Commission reviewed this request at their April 14, 2015, meeting. The Planning Commission has recommended that the annexation and zoning be approved if the applicant satisfied certain conditions.

This item was discussed at length at the April 27, 2015, meeting with the representative for the developer regarding several of the conditions. The developer was asked to work with Mr. Paradise, Interim Planning Director, and Mr. Gary Smith, City Attorney, to revise the ordinance regarding conditions 2, 3, and 4 recommended by the Planning Commission

Representatives for the developer met with Planning Department staff on May 6, 2015, and they recommend the following conditions:

1. That the development comply with the Concept Plan submitted and that there be a note added to the plan that the project comply with the provisions of the Planned Residential zone at 4.2.6.
2. That an interconnection between the apartments and parcel B be required with the site of the interconnection to be approved by the Planning Director when the plans for the apartments are submitted;
3. That a 10-foot deep buffer be installed between the existing seven single-family residences on the eastern side of Old Airport Road west of the project that are contiguous to the townhomes as required by Section 4.6.7.E;
4. That prior to annexation taking effect, a revised Concept Plan listing any conditions of approval be submitted; and
5. That the applicant execute an agreement listing the conditions of approval within 90 days.

City Council approved this ordinance on first reading at the April 27, 2015, meeting on the condition that the developer work with city staff to revise the ordinance regarding conditions 2, 3, and 4. For Council consideration on second reading and public hearing is a revised ordinance to annex 27.27 acres located on Old Airport Road and Levels Church Road and zone it PR Planned Residential.

Councilman Ebner pointed out that at the last meeting Council asked that conditions be added for the annexation of the property. It was pointed out that the parties involved met

and the ordinance was revised to include conditions that Council discussed at the last meeting. It was pointed out that conditions 2, 3, and 4 of the original ordinance were amended.

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council approve on second reading a revised ordinance with conditions to annex 27.27 acres located on Old Airport Road and Levels Church Road and zone it PR Planned Residential. The motion was unanimously approved.

ANNEXATION – ORDINANCE 05112015C

Mississippi Avenue

Habitat for Humanity

Aiken County Habitat for Humanity

TPN 104-15-19-009

TPN 104-15-19-010

TPN 104-15-19-011

TPN 104-15-19-012

Mayor Cavanaugh stated this was the time advertised for second reading and public hearing on an ordinance to annex four lots on Mississippi Avenue owned by Habitat for Humanity and zone it RS-10 Residential Single Family.

Mr. Klimm read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE TO ANNEX TO THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF AIKEN PROPERTY CONSISTING OF 1.76 ACRES OF LAND, MORE OR LESS, OWNED BY AIKEN COUNTY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY AND TO ZONE THE SAME RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY (RS-10).

Mr. Richard Church on behalf of Aiken County Habitat for Humanity has requested the annexation of four lots on Mississippi Avenue into the city. The property is contiguous to the city limits on the east and south. Habitat for Humanity plans to build single-family homes on the lots. Habitat is requesting annexation to receive city water as well as the other benefits of annexation such as reduced water rates, trash pickup, and elimination of the fire fees. Sanitary sewer is not available to this property.

The Planning Commission at their April 14, 2015, meeting reviewed this request for annexation and recommended to Council that the property be annexed and zoned RS-10 Residential Single Family zone. The proposed zoning is consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan which recommends Low-Density Residential use for the property. The property is within an established neighborhood with a mixture of detached single-family dwellings.

City Council approved this ordinance on first reading at the April 27, 2015, meeting. For Council consideration is second reading and public hearing of an ordinance to annex four lots on Mississippi Avenue to the city and zone the area RS-10 Residential Single-family zone

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council approve on second reading an ordinance to annex four lots on Mississippi Avenue to the city and zone the area RS-10 Residential Single-family zone. The motion was unanimously approved.

BUDGET – ORDINANCE 05112015D

Amendment
2014-15 FY
Water Line
SC 19 N

Mayor Cavanaugh stated this was the time advertised for second reading and public hearing on an ordinance to amend the FY 2014-15 budget for emergency work to relocate a water main on SC 19 North.

Mr. Klimm read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET OF THE CITY OF AIKEN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2014 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2015.

As part of SCDOT intersection improvements at Edgefield Highway [SC 19] and Good Springs Road, about 455 feet of our 12-inch water line, as well as a fire hydrant and valve needed to be relocated. This work had to be done as an emergency repair beginning April 20 because SCDOT and their contractor did not anticipate the existing location would interfere with construction. Engineering and Utilities staff solicited bids from four vendors, and the lowest bid was from Gene Ray Fulmer Construction of Ridge Spring, South Carolina for \$95,637.00. Because this work is an unbudgeted item, and to account for contingencies, we need to bring to Council an ordinance amending the FY 2014-15 budget to spend up to \$105,000.

Since our revenue in Fund 002 is higher than anticipated this fiscal year, there are sufficient Water and Sewer Utilities funds to make this budget adjustment.

Council approved this ordinance on first reading at the April 27, 2015, meeting. For Council consideration is second reading and public hearing of an ordinance to amend the Fiscal Year 2014-15 budget to allow expenditures from the Water and Sewer Utilities Fund for emergency work to relocate a water main at the intersection of SC 19 and Good Springs Road.

Councilman Ebner moved, seconded by Councilwoman Diggs, that Council approve on second reading an ordinance to amend the Fiscal Year 2014-15 budget to allow expenditures from the Water and Sewer Utilities Fund for emergency work to relocate a water main at the intersection of SC 19 and Good Springs Road. The motion was unanimously approved.

TAX MILLAGE – ORDINANCE

Budget FY 2015-16
Millage Rate

Mayor Cavanaugh stated an ordinance had been prepared for Council's consideration to set the millage rate for FY 2015-16.

Mr. Klimm read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE LEVY OF TAXES FOR ORDINARY CITY PURPOSES AND FOR CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES IN THE CITY OF AIKEN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2015, SET THE MILLAGE AT SIXTY-TWO (62) MILLS AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE EXPENDITURES THEREOF.

Every year Council adopts a budget for the following fiscal year. By a separate ordinance, Council sets a millage rate. Council has reviewed and discussed the proposed budget on several occasions. It is being recommended that the millage rate remain at 62 mills. The City's millage rate has been at 62 mills since 2012. The last increase in the millage rate was in 1989 when it was raised to 120 mills. The millage rate has been lowered several times since 1989 from 120 mills to 62 mills. The millage rate has not

been increased for 26 years.

For Council consideration, is first reading of an ordinance to set the FY 2015-16 millage rate at 62 mills.

Councilwoman Price moved, seconded by Councilwoman Diggs, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to set the millage rate at 62 mills for FY 2015-16. The motion was unanimously approved.

BUDGET – ORDINANCE

FY 2015-16

Mayor Cavanaugh stated an ordinance had been prepared for Council's consideration to adopt a budget for Fiscal Year 2015-16.

Mr. Klimm read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING A BUDGET PROPOSED BY THE CITY MANAGER, CONTAINING ESTIMATES OF PROPOSED REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES BY THE CITY OF AIKEN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2015, AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2016, AND DECLARING THAT IT SHALL CONSTITUTE THE BUDGET OF THE CITY OF AIKEN.

For the past several years we have been facing difficult economic times within our community, state and nation. Although the economy in South Carolina is improving, the City of Aiken's is still experiencing zero growth and our economy is growing at a rate much slower than the State. We believe with the City's approval of the Economic Re-Investment funds we will see improvements in the business community and a long term increase in revenue. We are still finding that our building permits, state funding, Aiken County shared funds, and interest revenue will be well short of our peak in 2007. Next fiscal year we project that we will continue to fall short of the revenues that we received then, by 50% for building permits, 14% for state revenue, and 95% for interest Earned on Investments. This amounts to a total loss of over \$980,000 since then. In addition, the funding loss from vehicle taxes and fees from our Utility Fund amounts to another \$300,000.

In last year's budget we eliminated all the requested new positions, and in this year's budget we cut 5 1/2 positions from the budget. For the last several years two outdated pieces of software costing over \$700,000 were cut from the budget due to lack of funds and are included in this year's budget. This includes new software for the entire City's records management and the software package for Public Safety. Request for Proposals have already been received for both items, and we will be reviewing our options for both upon approval of the budget. We have lowered our capital purchases and Holding Fund transfers by approximately \$660,000 and \$466,000 in comparison to the last three years. This year's major capital funding from the General Fund consists of new servers, computers and software to store emails, 10 new police vehicles, radio equipment for the E-911 center, an excavator, and a dump truck.

The budget reflects a new Hospitality Tax of 1% which will pay for several items previously in Buildings and Grounds and the Parks, Recreation and Tourism budgets. This year's funds will help develop additional public parking in the downtown and several other economic initiatives requested by Council. These are shown in a separate fund (027), and Council will need to approve most of this funding before they are committed to a specific project. In the future Council can use these funds for additional economic projects or use some of these funds to offset the additional costs anticipated at the Eustis Park Senior/Youth Center and the North Side Regional Recreational site.

The budget includes a cost of living increase of 1 1/2% and the first merit increase in seven years of 1 1/2% for all full and part-time employees. We are adding a new \$1,500 deductible health care plan for all new employees. All current employees who remain on their health plan will see major increases.

Surveillance cameras are being added to the Racing Hall of Fame, and we have several major renovations planned for the other major recreational sites. These include the resurfacing of the tennis courts at Virginia Acres - \$120,000; building renovations at H. O. Weeks and Smith Hazel totaling over \$232,000; new railing at the Carolina Bay shelter - \$30,000; and the sealing and resurfacing of parking lots – \$63,000.

We have not eliminated any funding within the budget for any of the agencies that we have supported in the past. This includes the Library for \$12,000, ADDA \$60,000, Lower Savannah Council of Governments (Best Friend Express) \$15,000, Economic Development Partnership \$10,000, and from the Victims Advocate budget \$12,000 for the Child Advocacy Center and \$12,000 for the Cumbee Center. We also provide \$6,000 from our Accommodations fund for the Center for the Arts to help provide assistance for public restrooms at their facilities. The budget also includes funds in Planning to continue the façade grant program and a major 10 year update of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

We prepared the budget to try to meet the goals that Council has expressed to us since the beginning of our work sessions last June. Council requested staff to develop two new Enterprise Accounts for Solid Waste and Storm Water. To balance the Solid Waste budget Council approved a rate increase from \$14 to \$17/month in March and several other minor rate adjustments that Council discussed at the work sessions are in the budget.

There are several new capital and EPA requirements addressed in the Storm Water budget. To create a balanced Enterprise Fund budget for Storm Water, we need to raise the rates by \$2.20/month. In the future we believe there will be additional storm water projects as the laws and EPA requirements keep evolving.

For City Council consideration, this is first reading of an ordinance to approve the budget for the City of Aiken for fiscal year 2015-2016. Upon City Council consideration, a second reading and public hearing will be held.

Councilman Ebner stated if the City Manager needs some extra audits done on the budget or anything to finish the budget, please let Council know and we will go from there.

Councilman Dewar asked if Mr. Klimm was comfortable on what changes need to come back to Council for approval based on the rules. Mr. Klimm stated he was learning more every day. He said he felt he had a basic understanding, and his rule of thumb is when in doubt come back.

Councilman Ebner moved, seconded by Councilwoman Price, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to approve a budget for the City of Aiken for fiscal year 2015-2016 and that second reading and public hearing be set for the next regular meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

SILVER BLUFF ROAD – ORDINANCE

SCDOT

South Carolina Department of Transportation

Right of Way

Widening of Silver Bluff Road

Indian Creek Trail

Richardsons Lake Road

Sell Property

Mayor Cavanaugh stated an ordinance had been prepared for Council's consideration to sell some city owned property along Silver Bluff Road to the South Carolina Department of Transportation in order to widen Silver Bluff Road.

Mr. Klimm read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF AIKEN TO CONVEY REAL PROPERTY TO THE SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

As part of Silver Bluff Road improvements from Indian Creek Trail to Richardsons Lake Road, SC DOT is currently acquiring necessary rights-of-way. SCDOT has requested to purchase the following property from the City of Aiken for the amounts listed:

1. A portion of Tax Parcel Number 107-13-01-007 containing 0.072 acre / 2,712 square feet of land - \$8,300.
2. A portion of Tax Parcel Number 106-18-12-016 containing 0.028 acre / 1,209 square feet of land near Hidden Haven Drive - \$2,900
3. A portion of Tax Parcel Number 106-18-09-001 containing 0.003 acre / 145.90 square feet of land near Indian Creek Trail and Seven Oaks - \$400.
4. An area near Hidden Haven Drive containing 0.141 acre / 6,154 square feet of land - \$17,000.

SC DOT is offering us \$28,600 for the purchase of these properties. Staff has reviewed this offer and recommends Council approval.

For Council consideration is first reading of an ordinance to sell property located along Silver Bluff Road to the South Carolina Department of Transportation for the purpose of widening Silver Bluff Road from Indian Creek Road to Richardson's Lake Road.

Councilman Dewar moved, seconded by Councilwoman Diggs, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to sell property located along Silver Bluff Road to the South Carolina Department of Transportation for the purpose of widening Silver Bluff Road from Indian Creek Road to Richardson's Lake Road. The motion was unanimously approved.

BORN LEARNING KITS

Parks
Smith-Hazel
Virginia Acres
Library Park
Recreation Commission
United Way

Mayor Cavanaugh stated a request had been received for permission to install Born Learning Kits at three city parks.

Mr. Klimm stated the Recreation Commission recently reviewed a request from the United Way of Aiken County to install Born Learning Kits in several City parks. These kits are provided at no cost to the City and are designed to provide an interactive learning experience for young children in an outdoor setting. While no kit is currently installed in any of our parks, the United Way installed one at the Freedman Parenting Care in Graniteville. If approved, these kits will be installed by volunteers with guidance from City Parks, Recreation and Tourism staff. Three parks were recommended for installation: Smith-Hazel, Virginia Acres and Library Parks.

The Recreation Commission unanimously approved this request for their installation at their last meeting.

For Council consideration is approval to install Born Learning Kits at Smith-Hazel, Virginia Acres and Library Parks.

Ms. Ann Dicks, 314 Jehossee Drive, stated she would like to make a general comment. She said she hoped that these kits would be placed in other areas. She said a lot of people talk about the train station being a failure. She said she was not from Aiken, but she has learned a lot. She said she took her grandchildren to the train station. She said many things benefit the growth of our children. She said she would urge Council to approve the request. She said it would be nice sometime to be able to walk by the City of Aiken

building and push a button and listen to a recording about the building. She felt educational tools are an excellent idea. She said children at a young age just soak up information like a sponge. She asked that Council approve the request for the learning kits.

Councilman Dewar asked if we had a sense of which parks in the city are used by the most children. It was pointed out that the three parks mentioned are used by the most children

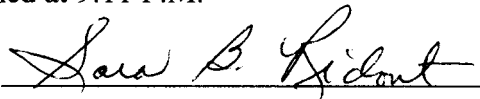
Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Merry, that Council approve the request to install Born Learning Kits at Smith-Hazel, Virginia Acres and the Library parks. The motion was unanimously approved.

ISSUES

Councilman Dewar said that it was interesting to note that Master's traffic was down this year at the Aiken Airport from last year. He said that came as a surprise.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:11 P.M.



Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk