

Aiken City Council MinutesREGULAR MEETING

March 28, 2016

Present: Mayor Osbon, Councilmembers Diggs, Ebner, Homoki, Merry and Price.

Absent: Councilmember Dewar

Others Present: John Klimm, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Gary Smith, Charles Barranco, Jessica Campbell, Kim Abney, George Grinton, Alicia Davis, Sara Ridout, Emory Langston, Dan Brown of the Aiken Standard, and about 25 citizens.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Osbon called the regular meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. Pastor Almeta Nichols, of River of Life Church, led in prayer. The pledge of allegiance to the flag was led by Public Safety Officer Jason Fogle.

GUIDELINES

Mayor Osbon reviewed the guidelines for speaking at the Council meeting. All the meetings are public meetings in which many opinions are expressed and the business of the city must be conducted. He said discipline, honorable and professional decorum is paramount. Courteous and respectful communication is expected. In public hearings all questions and statements from the public shall be directed to the Chair. He welcomed comments from the audience on the agenda items listed for public hearing. He asked that comments be limited to five minutes; that persons speak only one time per topic. He asked that those who would like to speak raise their hand and be recognized and come to the podium and give their name and address.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA

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

Councilman Ebner moved that the agenda be approved as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Diggs and unanimously approved.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Work Session, Executive Session, and Regular Meeting of March 14, 2016, were considered for approval. Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that the minutes of March 14, 2016, be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

PRESENTATION

Carol Johnson
Savannah River Nuclear Solutions

Mayor Osbon stated that Carol Johnson, President and CEO of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, was present to make a presentation to City Council. Ms. Johnson introduced staff members who were present with her, including Carol Barry, Senior Vice President for Workforce Services and Talent Development, Teresa Haas, Director of Public Affairs and Community Outreach, and Elizabeth Harm, Communications Outreach Specialist.

Ms. Johnson stated she was present to provide Council with some information regarding employment opportunities at Savannah River Nuclear Solutions. She pointed out that Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is the managing and operating contractor of the site,

but they are not the only contractor at the Savannah River Site. SRNS has about 5,300 employees. She said that was the portion of the SRS that she would speak to.

Ms. Johnson pointed out that the economic impact for the Savannah River Site in total, including all the SRS contractors, is \$2.6 billion which includes things like payrolls, procurements, medical and dental service, community contributions and a number of other things. The largest portion of the economic impact is in salaries. She pointed out the economic impact of SRNS is \$1.9 billion. A breakdown by county shows that Aiken County's portion of the \$1.9 billion is \$420.8 million. She pointed out there is also an economic impact in other counties including Columbia, Richmond, Barnwell, Edgefield, and Allendale.

Ms. Johnson then presented a slide showing the SRNS Headcount by Worker Category. Staff Augmentation includes contract staff who are not full service employees but are hired for some temporary project. The Craft bar reflects construction workers, union workers, pipe fitters, laborers, and electricians who perform specific construction project work. The Staff Augmentation and Craft ebbs and flows with the work. The non-exempt and exempt bars show the full time, long service employees. Non-exempt employees include operators, mechanics, electricians, lab technicians—typically hands on workers that also have a good bit of training qualifications to serve their function. The Exempt bar shows the professionals such as engineers, managers, scientists, and IT professionals. The slide showed the trend for the past five years. In 2013 there was a dip for a couple of reasons with one being the Recovery Work Act was finishing up at that time and there was a workforce restructuring that year. Since 2013 there has been a rise.

Ms. Johnson stated the average age of the employees at SRNS is 51. She provided a slide showing the number of employees eligible for full retirement benefits. These employees have a defined pension program, depending on the years of service they can leave at age 58 with a full pension. Last year 1,070 employees were eligible for retirement. That number increased by about 300 for 2016. She pointed out that the cumulative number continues to grow over the next five years so in FY 20 there could be close to 2,300 employees eligible to retire. Some will retire sooner and others may delay retirement. She stated the point is that there is a massive number of people that will be retiring. She pointed out that in FY 15 there were 1,070 eligible for retirement, but only about 210 actually retired. About 20% to 25% of those eligible retired. She said they anticipate that the number will increase and the percentage actually retiring will not be 20% to 25%, but will increase in percentage over the next three or four years. She said this is a challenge and opportunity. The opportunity is to hire a lot of early career technical trained people, both hands on workers as well as professionals. She said the number they have been quoting for a while is that 2,000 new hires are planned to be hired over the next five years by SRNS alone. She said the data shows that the number is backfill for retirements.

Ms. Johnson presented a slide showing their prediction for new hires over the next five years. She pointed out that 474 were actually hired in FY 14, 344 in FY 15, and in FY 16 they plan to hire about 340 employees. In six months into FY 16 they have already hired over 100 people. She stated this shows the significant influx of people that will have good paying jobs at the Savannah River Site.

Ms. Johnson stated their job categories run the gamut of the kinds of work. They hire engineers, operators, maintenance mechanics, radiation controllers, program management, information technology, human resources, property management, construction, computer security, quality assurance and work control. They hire engineers in all disciplines: civil, chemical, mechanical, electrical, nuclear, industrial, etc. She pointed out that of particular note is for operators, mechanics, and radiation protection, there are many opportunities in first line and second line management. Those are feeder forms to bring in, have them get some training and experience and then they get promotion opportunities. She said that is their pipeline to their management positions.

Ms. Jonson pointed out the partnerships that SRNS has including USC Aiken, Aiken Technical College, Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College, Claflin University, and Augusta Technical College. She said they would not be successful without the support of the local educational institutions. She said in the technical school arena they try to divide

so each technical school has an opportunity to provide a unique skill set for SRNS. She said they work very collaboratively with the tech schools to ensure they have the right skill sets going into the future.

Ms. Johnson pointed out she had got some data in the past couple of days as to how many young people they had hired below the age of 30. She said they had hired 200 over the last couple of years who were below the age of 30. She asked that City Council take into account the kinds of things necessary today to support millennials and the kinds of things they like to do which could be bike paths, running tracks, and outdoor activities in the city of Aiken. She said that is very important for them. At the site they are starting to look more and more at what makes SRS a compelling place to work and take into account the millennial culture as compared to the baby boomers, and other brackets of age that we deal with. She said it is significantly different what the millennials are interested in as compared to what the rest of the workforce is interested in. She said the millennials is the age group that they will be hiring and lots of them. She said they want them to come to Aiken, like it here, retain them and they make their careers at the Savannah River Site.

Ms. Johnson then answered questions from Council. Councilman Merry asked Ms. Johnson if they find that the millennials are staying in Aiken or are they coming and going. She said they see both. What they see is that when they get to the point of buying a home, getting married, and starting a family they are more likely to stay. In the first two to five years of employment they are at risk of losing the millennials. She said they are looking at ways to retain them. Sometimes it is more than salary. She pointed out that SRNS offers a competitive salary, but there is more to it than that. She said they are looking at a suite of things that would make it desirable for people to continue to stay and work at the site.

Councilwoman Diggs asked Ms. Johnson if she knew where the millennials who work at the site are living. Ms. Berry stated she did not have that figure, but she could look at that. She said it is a mix right now. Ms. Johnson pointed out that in the engineering ranks, they recruit across the Southeast primarily, including Clemson, USC, Georgia, Georgia Tech, Florida State, Florida, and North Carolina. They recruit at the engineering schools in the Southeast. In some cases for specialty engineering areas they have to hire outside the Southeast, but their preference is to hire those as close to this area as possible. She said they find those are more like to stay with us if they are closer to family.

Councilwoman Price thanked Ms. Johnson and her staff for their presence and for coming to the Council meeting to educate Council on what they are doing. She asked if Ms. Johnson had the percentage of employees at the Site that live in Aiken County. Ms. Johnson pointed out on the South Carolina side about two-thirds of the population working at the Site live in Aiken County. Councilwoman Price stated regarding training new workers what other institutions are they using other than Aiken Tech. Ms. Johnson stated they are using Aiken Tech, Augusta Tech, and Orangeburg-Calhoun Tech for the mechanics, operators and radiation techs. She pointed out they had developed a partnership with Aiken Tech a few months ago because of the number of operators needed at the plant. They were primarily hiring from Augusta Tech, but they went to Aiken Tech for retention purposes. She pointed out that SRNS is competing with Vogle with respect to operators. She pointed out that SRNS had lost some operators to Vogle. She said something was set up with Aiken Tech because it was felt that if they are attending Aiken Tech they probably live in Aiken. The program is a two semester nuclear operator fundamental program that teaches them fundamentals. Then SRNS can hire them straight in and they can get facility training. The first class started in January with another one in May and in August. She said if those students are successful coming out of the program she felt they would have no problem hiring them.

Councilwoman Price pointed out that salaries are very good at SRS, but that is not the only thing that keeps people here, and the amenities mean a lot. She pointed out that a few months ago the Lab Director was here along with Teresa Haas and others to encourage Council to support some things that would attract millennials. She said she hoped that we had done that in terms of helping to spark some interest by young people in terms of not only moving here, but also remaining in Aiken as well. Ms. Johnson

stated they would be happy to provide any additional data or information needed. She said it is a very important topic.

Mayor Osbon thanked Ms. Johnson and her staff for being present to share some information with City Council and for being a partner in the community. He said SRNS had made quite an impact on the community. He thanked Ms. Johnson for coming and having the conversation with Council as we see the opportunities before us to bring in the millennials. He pointed out that is part of what the city's strategic plan has been focused on in getting the input. He said we look forward to moving forward with that in the near future.

Mayor Osbon recognized Bill Taylor, Field Representative from the Municipal Association, for being present at the Council meeting.

BANNERS

Memorial Day Parade

Downtown

Mayor Osbon stated a request had been received to place banners in the downtown area promoting the Memorial Day Parade on May 28, 2016.

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council grant permission to place five banners in the downtown area promoting the Memorial Day Parade on May 28, 2016.

Ms. Leslie Hull-Ryde, Chair of the Memorial Day Parade Committee, stated she was present to represent the Memorial Day Parade Committee. She said she was present on behalf of the committee which includes Councilwoman Diggs and Sandra Herrick, a long time educator. She was present for three reasons. One, she wanted to say thank you to Council for their support last year when a very small committee was rallied to put on the parade. She pointed out that Aiken is a patriotic town, and as a veteran she was grateful for that. She said the reason they felt we really needed to have a Memorial Day Parade was not only to salute the veterans, but to also have a dialogue about the ultimate sacrifice that many of our service men and women made in service in defense of this country many of whom were neighbors and friends here. The parade was to honor their service, their sacrifice and their families. She said it gives an opportunity to educate people that Memorial Day is not about the beginning of summer, but it really is a reason to pause and pay tribute to these people. Secondly, she wanted to invite Council to join the parade this year which is to be held on May 28, 2016, at 11 a.m. downtown. She hoped all of Council would be a part of the parade as well as businesses, civic organizations, all types of young, youth activities will be a part of the parade. If they are not in the parade, they hope they will line the streets downtown and pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Thirdly, she wanted to request two banners to be placed at Park and Laurens, two at Laurens and Richland and South Boundary at Whiskey. The banners would be 2' x 8', constructed of vinyl material, and would be red, white and blue. The banners would read "Memorial Day Parade, 11 A.M. May 28, 2016." The request is for permission to place the banners on the traffic light poles from Friday, May 20 through Saturday, May 28, 2016.

Ms. Leslie Hull-Ryde thanked Council for their consideration and for their support of the community effort. She stated a Mead Hall student designed the parade logo for Aiken.

Councilman Merry stated he would like to thank Ms. Leslie Hull-Ryde, Councilwoman Diggs, and the Committee which was called together last year. He felt we owe the Committee a great deal of thanks and gratitude for pulling the parade together. He said he liked the idea of the banners to let people in town know what is going on in the community and promote the great things that are happening in and around Aiken. He said he was in full support of the Committee and their request for banners.

Councilwoman Diggs pointed out that Sandra Herrick, a member of the committee, along with Jean Quattlebaum, traveled many miles last year distributing the poster and flyers in businesses and various other places to make sure people knew about the parade. She

pointed out Ms. Leslie Hull-Ryde, Chair of the Committee, is a very energetic person behind the committee. She said last year there were 130 entries in the parade, the largest Memorial Day Parade we have ever had in Aiken, and there was a large crowd in attendance for the parade. She pointed out there is no fee to participate in the parade this year. She invited all to attend the parade. She thanked Public Safety for their support of the parade last year.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Diggs, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council grant permission to place five banners in the downtown area promoting the Memorial Day Parade on May 28, 2016. The motion was unanimously approved.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Appointments

Mayor Osbon stated Council needed to consider approval and discussion of appointees to various city boards, commissions and committees.

Mr. Klimm stated Council has 15 pending appointments to fill vacancies on different City boards, commissions, and committees. One appointment is presented for Council's consideration and vote at the meeting tonight.

Councilman Dewar has recommended the appointment of Melanie Rattanachane to the Energy and Environmental Committee to fill the unexpired term of Mary Anne Archibald. If appointed Ms. Rattanachane's term would expire December 31, 2017.

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Homoki, that Council appoint Melanie Rattanachane to the Energy and Environmental Committee to fill an unexpired term. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mayor Osbon called for any recommendations for appointments to be considered at the next Council meeting. No names were presented for appointment.

ABBEVILLE AVENUE – ORDINANCE 03282016

Development Agreement

Nehemiah Community Revitalization Corporation

Second Baptist Community Development Corporation

Abbeville Avenue

Mayor Osbon stated this was the time advertised for second reading and public hearing on an ordinance approving a development agreement with Nehemiah Community Revitalization Corporation and Second Baptist Community Development Corporation to develop property on Abbeville Avenue.

Mayor Osbon read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF AIKEN TO ENTER INTO A DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT WITH NEHEMIAH COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION CORPORATION AND SECOND BAPTIST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION.

Councilwoman Price moved, seconded by Councilwoman Diggs, that Council approve on second reading an ordinance authorizing the City of Aiken to enter into a Development Agreement with Nehemiah Community Revitalization Corporation and Second Baptist Community Development Corporation.

Mr. Klimm stated staff has been working with the Nehemiah Community Revitalization Corporation and the Second Baptist Community Development Corporation on a potential housing project that involves four properties on the 500 block of Abbeville Avenue NW. Staff and our partners from Nehemiah and Second Baptist propose reinvesting the proceeds from the sale of Neighborhood Improvement Program [NIP] properties in Crosland Park and Edgewood [approximately \$112,780] by purchasing the four

Abbeville Avenue NW properties. The City would sample the structures for asbestos and lead-based paint, perform necessary abatement, raze the existing structures and then donate the property to Nehemiah and Second Baptist for development of four workforce or market rate owner-occupied housing units with the target market being residents making between 80% and 120% of the median income for the Aiken area. This project would fit into our goal of providing attainable owner-occupied housing in our downtown.

City Council approved this ordinance on first reading at the March 14, 2016, meeting. For City Council approval is second reading and public hearing of an ordinance authorizing the City of Aiken to enter into a Development Agreement with Nehemiah Community Revitalization Corporation and Second Baptist Community Development Corporation.

The public hearing was held and no one spoke.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Price, seconded by Councilwoman Diggs, that Council approve on second reading an ordinance authorizing the City of Aiken to enter into a Development Agreement with Nehemiah Community Revitalization Corporation and Second Baptist Community Development Corporation for development of properties on Abbeville Avenue. The motion was unanimously approved.

WATER TOWER – ORDINANCE 03282016A

Water Tank
347 York Street SE
South Boundary
Lease Space
Verizon Wireless

Mayor Osbon stated this was the time advertised for second reading and public hearing on an ordinance to approve a lease of space on the York Street water tower to Verizon Wireless.

Mayor Osbon read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE APPROVING A LEASE OF SPACE ON THE YORK STREET WATER TOWER TO VERIZON WIRELESS OF THE EAST, L.P.

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council pass on second reading an ordinance approving a new cell tower lease with Verizon Wireless for use of the water tower at York Street and South Boundary.

Mr. Klimm stated we have been contacted by representatives of Verizon Wireless to lease space for cell phone antennae installation on the water tank at York Street and South Boundary.

They have also requested to lease a parcel of land for the installation of an equipment building and an easement for ingress and egress seven (7) days a week twenty-four (24) hours a day, on foot or motor vehicle, including trucks, and for the installation and maintenance of utility wires, poles, cables, fiber, conduits, and pipes over, under, or along a ten foot (10') wide easement extending from the nearest public right-of-way, York Street SE, to the Land Space.

They are proposing an annual lease of \$24,000 with payments made monthly for each month of the proposed five-year term. The agreement will automatically be extended for four (4) additional five (5) year terms unless LESSEE terminates it at the end of the then current term by giving LESSOR written notice of the intent to terminate at least six (6) months prior to the end of the then current term. The annual rental will increase on the fifth anniversary of the Commencement Date and on each annual anniversary thereafter (including any extension terms) such that the annual rental shall equal 103% of the annual rental paid immediately preceding such anniversary.

Engineering and Utilities Director George Grinton and Finance Director Kim Abney have reviewed this proposal, and the Design Review Board has issued a certificate of appropriateness for the building.

Council approved this ordinance on first reading at the March 14, 2016, meeting. For Council consideration on second reading and public hearing is an ordinance approving a new cell tower lease with Verizon Wireless for use of the water tower at York Street and South Boundary.

The public hearing was held and no one spoke. A representative from Verizon was present to answer any questions.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Diggs, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council pass on second reading an ordinance approving a new cell tower lease with Verizon Wireless for use of the water tower at York Street and South Boundary. The motion was unanimously approved.

ANNEXATION – ORDINANCE

Hiren and Rita Patel
1224 Richland Avenue W. (4648)
TPN 104-19-32-006

Mayor Osbon stated an ordinance had been prepared for first reading to annex property behind 1224 Richland Avenue W. and zone it General Business (GB).

Mayor Osbon read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE TO ANNEX TO THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF AIKEN CERTAIN PROPERTY CONSISTING OF 0.25 ACRES OF LAND, MORE OR LESS, OWNED BY HIREN AND RITA PATEL AND TO ZONE THE SAME GENERAL BUSINESS (GB).

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to annex property behind 1224 Richland Avenue W and zone the property General Business (GB).

Mr. Klimm stated Hiren and Rita Patel, owners and applicant, are requesting annexation and rezoning of .25 acres on Richland Avenue W. The property located behind 1224 Richland Avenue W is presently zoned Residential Conservation (RC), and the request is to rezone the property to General Business (GB). The property is located behind the current location of an existing convenience store and gas station. The applicants intend to submit a site and landscape plan for the expansion of an existing building and need the additional property to provide detention and open space. The application was submitted by the owners to correct an oversight and complete the annexation process that owners previously thought had already been done.

The Planning Commission reviewed the request at their March 15, 2016, meeting and recommended annexation of the property with General Business zoning.

For Council consideration is first reading of an ordinance to annex property behind 1224 Richland Avenue W and zone the property General Business (GB).

There were no comments from the audience.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Diggs, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to annex property behind 1224 Richland Avenue W and zone the property General Business (GB). The motion was unanimously approved.

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

Concept Plan
Residential

Mayor Osbon stated an ordinance had been prepared for first reading to amend Section 4.2.9.A of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mayor Osbon read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 4.2.9.A OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE.

Councilwoman Price moved, seconded by Councilman Homoki, that Council approve first reading of an ordinance amending Section 4.2.9.A of the Zoning Ordinance regarding concept plans.

Mr. Klimm stated as part of our efforts to review City ordinances and regulations to be more responsive to business concerns, staff has recommended a proposed amendment to Section 4.2.9.A of the Zoning Ordinance. By striking the phrase "except the standards in this section" we will give City Council additional discretion on a case-by-case basis for working with potential concept plans for attached residential units. City Attorney Gary Smith has reviewed this phrase using South Carolina Code of Laws Section 6-29-740 which establishes planned development districts and believes removal of this phrase is allowed. After first reading of this ordinance, this recommendation will go to the Planning Commission for consideration at their meeting on April 12. Second reading will take place no earlier than April 25, after the Planning Commission's review.

For Council consideration is first reading of an ordinance amending section 4.2.9.A of the Zoning Ordinance.

There were no comments from the audience.

Councilman Merry asked what brought this particular item up. Mr. Klimm stated there were discussions ongoing for three or four potential development proposals. In conversations with our staff it became clear there was a section within the Zoning Ordinance which is very inflexible. He gave an example. He said someone wants to do a multi-family development proposal. Because of the economics of it or because of the configuration of the layout, they might want to do 40% with garages. There is a provision in our ordinance that says you only get 30%, not 31%, nor 60%, you only have 30% under any circumstances for any reason. It is that type of rigidity that he believes hurts business in this community. All this does is allow the flexibility on the part of Council after a recommendation of the Planning Commission to allow for some flexibility. It does not take Council's right away to say they want 30%, but it allows for flexibility on a case by case basis.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Price, seconded by Councilman Homoki, that Council approve first reading of an ordinance amending Section 4.2.9.A of the Zoning Ordinance regarding concept plans. The motion was unanimously approved.

SEWER FEE – ORDINANCE

Aiken County Public Service Authority
Increase Sewer Charge

Mayor Osbon stated an ordinance had been prepared for first reading establishing new charges for sewer service.

Mayor Osbon read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING NEW CHARGES FOR SEWER SERVICE.

Councilman Ebner moved, seconded by Councilman Merry, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to increase the sewer rate fees from \$2.25 per 100 cubic feet to \$2.41 per 100 cubic feet.

Mr. Klimm stated we have received a letter from Andrew Chavous, Aiken County Public Service Authority Director, informing us that the Aiken County Public Service Authority will increase their rates for treatment of our sewer. For 2016-17 they will increase their rate by \$0.10 per 1,000 gallons with their new rate for treatment being \$1.35 per 1,000 gallons, an 8% increase. They state their costs have increased for operating the forty year old plant.

The City of Aiken is seeing an increase in our treatment volume of 16%. The fee that we pay to the ACPSA is a major factor in our sewer rates, and we serve as a pass through for these fees to the ACPSA. Staff has reviewed this information, and in order to accommodate this rate increase from ACPSA we are recommending that our sewer rate be increase from \$2.25 per 100 cubic feet to \$2.41 per 100 cubic feet, which would be a 7% increase.

For City Council consideration is first reading of an ordinance to increase the sewer rate fees from \$2.25 per 100 cubic feet to \$2.41 per 100 cubic feet.

Mayor Osbon asked for comments from the audience.

Ms. Barbara Stafford, 1310 Colleton Avenue SW, stated she felt the city needs to look at the percentage again. She asked how deeply can you tax a budget before bursting at the seams. She pointed out she is on a fixed income and felt maybe she should just give the city her Social Security check now and have it done with. She felt it is not fair to pass the cost increase along to the citizens, but felt the city should look at it again. She pointed out a few years ago there was an increase in the water and sewer rates because it rained a lot and the citizens did not use as much water. She said it was not budgeted in to expense that maybe we would get a lot of rain so the use would go down and the revenues would go down. She asked that Council take a look at things before they once again put the burden on the taxpayer. She asked when is it going to end. Every time you turn around there are increases. She felt Council should take another look and think about the taxpayer. She felt it is getting too expensive.

Councilman Homoki asked if the rate for other customers of the PSA were to be raised. It was pointed out that the PSA serves North Augusta and their rates were also to be increased. It was pointed out that it is our understanding that all who use the PSA for treatment of the sewer will have their sewer rates increased.

Mr. Klimm stated he was, and felt all were, very sympathetic to the comments that Ms. Stafford made. He said he felt it was a brilliant system to set up where the County can just send a letter saying they are raising the rates and we have to raise our rates to pay for their increase. He said he hoped that the same questions that Ms. Stafford had asked were asked of the County Public Service Authority to make sure they have cut to the bone and that each penny of increase they are requesting can be justified.

Ms. Abney, Finance Director, stated that the City of Aiken and the City of North Augusta are the largest customers of the Aiken County PSA. Their other customers are Bath, Breeze Hill, Beech Island, Langley PSA, and a couple of corporations, and Kimberly Clark. She pointed out that she knew that North Augusta got the same letter the City of Aiken got and that they are passing the increase along to their customers. Ms. Abney stated everyone wants to know how the proposed increase would affect the average customers. She said the recommendation that she proposes is a 7% increase on the city's volume charge. She said she did not propose an increase on the base meter charge which is about half of what the average customer would pay. She said we use 800 cubic feet per month as the average. Currently the \$28.73 on the monthly bill with the proposed increase would bring that bill to \$30.01 or an increase of \$1.28 per month.

Mayor Osbon asked that staff have a representative from the PSA present for the second reading of the ordinance.

Councilwoman Price pointed out that the city gets these mandates passed down whether it is gasoline tax, road improvements, etc. She said the city could absorb the increase and not ask the customers who use the service to contribute to the increase, but at some point the city runs out of money.

Ms. Abney pointed out that last year the PSA passed along a 2 cents increase to the customers without fanfare or notification and that was absorbed. It was paid through the city budget. The city's volume of sewer being treated has increased and the flows have been increased. She pointed out the increase is a 10 cent increase on their rate which is an 8% increase. She felt the city could not absorb that increase.

Councilman Merry stated with an increase of treatment volume of 16%, he wondered if there was also an increase in usage of water of 16%. Ms. Abney stated that would be a question for Mr. Grinton. She said they had talked a lot about that, and she could not say yes or no. She pointed out that the volume sent to the PSA is measured by the PSA. Councilman Merry asked if there was data on how our water usage has changed since the year that we talked about customers not using enough water and having to raise our water rates. He wondered if staff had any year to year comparisons. Ms. Abney stated she did not have that information with her, but could have it for the next Council meeting. Councilman Merry stated when we were having a shortfall of water usage if that had necessitated a rate increase, then if we are having an increase in the water usage, then it might create a surplus as a result of that rate increase. He said he would like to see the math. He said he would be interested in seeing those numbers and what trends are happening. He said he echoes Councilwoman Price.

Councilwoman Price thanked Ms. Stafford for coming to the Council meeting and expressing her feelings. She said she represents a large base of constituents who are on fixed income and the proposed increase bothered her when she saw it. She pointed out that every time there is talk about an increase, she has to think about the people who are in the district which she represents. She felt we don't have a good solution except to say we have to share some of the cost.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilman Ebner, seconded by Councilman Merry, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to increase the sewer rate fees from \$2.25 per 100 cubic feet to \$2.41 per 100 cubic feet. The motion was unanimously approved.

PURCHASE PROPERTY – RESOLUTION 03282016B

Aiken County Board of Education

Restrooms

Schofield Middle School

Perry Park

TPN 121-06-04-003 (portion)

Mayor Osbon stated a resolution had been prepared for Council's consideration to purchase real estate from the Aiken County Board of Education.

Mayor Osbon read the title of the resolution.

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF REAL ESTATE FROM THE AIKEN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION.

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilwoman Price, that Council approve the resolution authorizing the purchase of real estate from the Aiken County Board of Education located at Schofield School in Perry Park.

Mr. Klimm stated in September, 2014, City Council authorized the construction of restrooms at Perry Memorial Park, a recreational area adjacent to Schofield Middle School after hearing a presentation from Rev. Paul Bush on behalf of the Concerned Ministers Fellowship. Since we maintain the wetlands area, gazebo and picnic area we expected this project to quickly progress. However, since the property is titled to the

Aiken County School District, our staff and consulting architect had to work with the State Department of Education's Office of School Facilities [OSF], which serves as the building official for all construction on public school property in South Carolina. We believed many of their demands were unreasonable for public restroom facilities as the project has languished through three stages of review by the OSF. In January, staff pursued a parallel path while awaiting review from OSF by developing a preliminary plat of +/- .3845 acre and proposed to School District officials the purchase of this property. By our owning the property, we would work with City building officials and forego regulations above and beyond minimum building codes that, while perhaps appropriate for classroom facilities, seem onerous and unnecessary for restroom-only facilities. A title search was performed for the property and the Aiken County School Board has proposed a purchase price of \$5,000. Funds for the purchase will come from the Northside Recreation line item from CPST II [016-5150-455.71-02 PRNS].

Mr. Klimm stated he would remind Council that this is the second time in a few months that the School Superintendent and dedicated members of our School Board have come forward to assist the city to resolve a challenge that we have faced.

For City Council approval is a resolution authorizing the purchase of real estate from the Aiken County Board of Education.

Mr. Klimm stated some Councilmembers and staff members are upset that this program has taken so long with requirements, requirements, and review and review, etc. He pointed out we had just received another letter with a list of additional requests. He said thanks to our friends on the School Board we have another option which will allow us to finally get going on the project.

There were no comments from the audience.

Councilwoman Diggs stated the project was long overdue, and she was glad to see that it is about to happen.

Councilman Ebner stated he had a couple of questions. He said it kind of sounds like the state does not want us to build the restrooms there. He said they are not just throwing up the roadblocks just to be doing it. He said it sounds as though they are saying they really don't want the city to build the restrooms. He said his question is whether we might be stepping into any type legal issues where we will be building something on a landlocked piece of property where we don't have a lease to get to the property. He asked if there is some type of legal issue that might come up if someone gets hurt. He said it just does not feel right.

Mr. Gary Smith, City Attorney, stated this property would not be any different from any other property that the city owns. If there is a bad floor or someone trips in a bad place, it will be like a sidewalk or driveway that the city owns.

Councilman Ebner pointed out that on page 99 of the agenda package which states "Purchaser shall be entitled to reasonable access to the Property during the term of Seller's occupancy thereof provided that Purchaser's entry does not unreasonably interfere with Seller's use and occupancy of the Property." He asked if the city needed an easement across property to be sure the city can access the property proposed to be purchased. He pointed out that obviously the property and facilities will need continuous service. He said it just sounds like an odd arrangement.

Councilwoman Price pointed out that the property in question is adjacent to a wetlands which the city developed in partnership with the Savannah River Site for science study for the students at Schofield School. She pointed out that we did not go through nearly as much trouble with that project as we are going through for this project to build restrooms on the property. She said it seems that as time goes on we have become more bureaucratic in all of our processes where we create a lot of roadblocks. She noted she realizes that those things are flags for caution. She pointed out that the School Board Attorney, Bill Burkhalter has been working with the city on this project.

Mr. Smith stated he could not answer Councilman Ebner's question at this time, but before closing on the property he could clarify that question.

Councilman Merry pointed out that he felt the clause was meant to provide access for the purchaser up until such time as the property is actually deeded so it guarantees that access for the purchaser insofar as the purchaser's access does not interfere with the seller's use. Mr. Smith stated that was his interpretation as well, but he wanted to make sure he had adequately answered Councilman Ebner's question before Council approved the purchase of the property.

Councilman Ebner stated he felt it was odd that we would have a piece of landlocked property with reasonable access. Mr. Smith responded that it is not unusual prior to closing for the owner of the property to give access to the purchaser so the purchaser can do certain inspections, etc. He felt that is what the statement was intended to do. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Bedenbaugh where the city would gain access to the property proposed to be purchased.

Mr. Bedenbaugh pointed out there is a right of way between Abbeville Avenue and the property line. He felt that is why the surveyor drew the parcel the way it is because of the wide right of way on the portion of Abbeville Avenue on which the property would front.

Councilman Ebner stated he would request that before the closing we should be more definitive as far as the access to the property.

Mr. Smith suggested that if Council approves the purchase of the property, he would make sure there is adequate access to the property before closing. Councilman Ebner stated he would support going ahead with the purchase, but just wanted to make sure the city had access to the property.

Mayor Osbon said he wanted to echo what Mr. Klimm said in his statement of appreciation to Councilwoman Diggs and Price for their diligence and commitment on this project. He said it has been frustrating at times but perseverance has paid off. He knew the community would appreciate that.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Diggs, seconded by Councilwoman Price, that Council approve the resolution authorizing the purchase of real estate from the Aiken County Board of Education located at Schofield School in Perry Park. The motion was unanimously approved.

GRANT

FEMA HMGP Water Treatment Plant Generators

Mayor Osbon stated Council needed to consider acceptance of a grant award from FEMA HMGP for Water Treatment Plant generators.

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Homoki, that Council approve acceptance of a FEMA grant for Water Treatment Plant Generators totaling \$297,000 which includes a city match of \$74,250.

Mr. Klimm stated on August 11, 2014, City Council approved the city proceeding with a full application to FEMA for several mitigation projects.

We have received notification that the City of Aiken was awarded a FEMA grant for the installation of two fixed generators at water wells on Hidden Haven and Robin Road which would allow continuous usage of well pumps to supply water to treatment plants at Town Creek and East Pine Log Road. These generators would allow for continuous treatment of well water and pumping of water from ground level storage tanks in to our distribution system during extended power outages and other emergencies.

The Federal cost-share of this grant is \$222,750 and the City's match is \$74,250 for a total of \$297,000. This is a 75%/25% federal/subrecipient share cost. Council budgeted the grant match in the FY 2015-16 budget in anticipation of the grant award. This amount is found in the Water and Sewer Fund's Well Division budget line item [002-3163-469.74-01].

For City Council consideration is acceptance of a FEMA grant for Water Treatment Plant Generators totaling \$297,000 that includes a City match of \$74,250.

There were no comments from the audience.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Diggs, seconded by Councilman Homoki, that Council approve acceptance of a FEMA grant for Water Treatment Plant Generators totaling \$297,000 which includes a city match of \$74,250.

INFORMATION

York Street Bridge

Mayor Osbon reminded everyone that the York Street bridge public information session which will be conducted by SCDOT will be held on Thursday, March 31, 2016, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Center on Park Avenue.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Osbon stated that Council needs to into executive session pursuant to Section 30-4-70(a)(2) and (5) to discuss negotiations incident to a proposed contractual arrangement and proposed sale or purchase of property and to receive legal advice where the legal advice relates to a pending, threatened, or potential claim or other matters covered by the attorney-client privilege, settlement of legal claims, or the position of the public agency in other adversary situations involving the assertion against the agency of a claim.

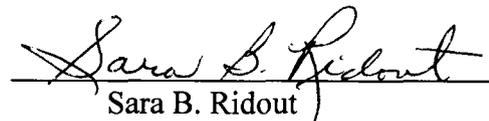
Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Merry, that Council go into executive session for the reasons stated by Mayor Osbon. The motion was unanimously approved.

Council went into executive session at 8:09 P.M.

Council returned to the Council Chambers at 9:09 P.M. Councilman Ebner moved, seconded by Councilman Merry, that Council come out of executive session. The motion was unanimously approved. Mayor Osbon noted that no votes were taken by Council in executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Councilwoman Diggs moved that the meeting adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilman Homoki and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 P.M.


Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk