

Aiken City Council Minutes

WORK SESSION

September 12, 2016

ARBORETUM

Tour  
Trees  
Colleton Avenue  
Park Avenue  
Hopelands Gardens  
Bob McCartney  
Woodlanders Nursery

At 5 p.m. City Council took a trolley tour of the arboretum along Colleton Avenue and other streets in a 4 mile radius of downtown. These special trees were planted by Bob McCartney of Woodlanders Nursery. Those on the tour included Mayor Osbon, Councilmembers Dewar, Diggs, Ebner, Homoki, and Price. Others included John Klimm, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Sara Ridout, Jenny Burghardt, Dan Brown from the Aiken Standard, Andrew O'Byrne from the Aiken Leader, and Preston Willett from TV Channel 12.

Mr. McCartney reviewed the history of the arboretum and along the tour pointed out the special trees that he had planted in the parkways and along the right of way of the streets. It was noted that Aiken is home to one of the most diverse collections of trees found in any municipal landscape. Oak trees from around the world and many other rare tree species are planted in the Aiken area.

WORK SESSION

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

Others Present: John Klimm, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Gary Smith, Sara Ridout, Kim Abney, George Grinton, Dan Brown from the Aiken Standard, and Preston Willett from TV Channel 12.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Osbon called the work session to order at 6:10 P.M. Mayor Osbon stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Silver Bluff Road utility location item which was on the Agenda for Council's action.

SILVER BLUFF ROAD

Widening Project  
Utilities  
Water Lines

Mr. Klimm stated Mr. Grinton is present to discuss with Council the bids received for the relocation of the utility lines along the right of way on Silver Bluff Road for the widening project.

Mr. Grinton stated previously he had given Council background information on the Silver Bluff Road widening project and the need to relocate our utility lines along the right of way of the project which is being done by South Carolina Department of Transportation. There were 10 areas of concern that would require some relocation. JLA consultants completed the design and the city worked with SCDOT and was able to compromise in a

few locations and those were eliminated from the cost. We went out for bids for the relocation of the utility lines and four contractors bid on the project. The high bid was \$949,000 and the low bid was \$742,000. The \$742,000 is the base cost that we will work from. As with any project we expect to have interferences which is to be expected when you are digging up unknown pipelines. We expect that we will need some contingency for this project. We will try to mitigate any unforeseen and unplanned costs through contract with JLA as project manager. We will have an on sight resident engineer looking at the progress of the work with the project manager in the office being able to address any conflicts that show up and the contractor having to make choices on alternatives.

Mr. Grinton stated with the unknowns we are looking at a total of \$855,000 and are asking Council's approval to be able to spend up to \$855,000 for the project. It is expected for the project to be under that amount, but with the unknowns of the condition of the lines underground there could be some problems along the way.

Mr. Grinton stated we have spent approximately 180 hours getting to this point. Just with the City Engineer we have spent about 160 hours trying to find where everything is. He noted that they are doing that so we can expedite the work. He pointed out the citizens are very interested in moving the project along. The contractor is waiting for the utility lines to be moved. AT&T is almost finished with moving their lines. Mr. Grinton stated the request to Council is for Council to approve up to \$855,000 for the project and that staff be given permission for the contractor to start working prior to second reading of the ordinance. He pointed out that Council will not be meeting again until October 10, 2016, and the contractor needs to go ahead and start the work to move the project along. He noted that there are 50 days in the contract for the work to be completed which is a relatively short construction period.

Council then discussed the matter of moving the lines and asked questions. One question was whether the city would be putting in new pipe as we go along. Mr. Grinton stated where a pipe needs to be replaced we would go around and basically we would reroute the water line and new pipe would be used. There are no sewer line conflicts, just water lines. There was one sewer conflict, but we were able to work that out with SCDOT. There was a question as to whether the \$855,000 covered the hours of staff. Mr. Grinton stated money for staff hours was spent in last year's budget through Utilities service time in the operating budget. Cost for consulting services for surveys, design, etc. were done through the Engineering operating budget.

Mr. Klimm stated staff had tried to ascertain the best place for funding of the \$855,000 for the project.

Ms. Abney reviewed for Council the three funds which are proposed to be used to provide funds for the Silver Bluff Road utility relocation project. She noted that \$100,000 is recommended to come from the Water & Sewer System Depreciation funds, \$275,000 from Water & Sewer Special Holding Funds held over from unspent funds in the 2015-16 budget, and \$480,000 from the General Fund Special Holding Funds for roadway enhancement. The General Fund Special Holding funds have been accumulated over the years and designated for roads.

Councilman Ebner pointed out that he had asked for a budget item to cover the costs for the work the city staff did on the Perry Park Restroom facilities. He noted that the cost for the Silver Bluff Road utility relocation project was a non-budgeted item, and it takes away from the normal business that would have been done with the employees used on the project. He said he looks for that expense to be covered, and in this case it probably just comes from one account to another. However, where it has to do with Capital Projects Sales Tax and other funds, we need to apply the cost to the project. He pointed out that there always needs to be a contingency fund for a project, especially for underground or work on old buildings, the contingency needs to be 10% to 20% plus the overhead. He pointed out that the employees were not doing normal work, but doing a special project that was not budgeted. He felt we are not covering our costs for projects.

Mr. Klimm asked if Councilman Ebner was saying that in the future when a budget is projected for a project, he wants delineation not only for the project cost, but also the indirect staff cost. Mr. Klimm stated another matter that he wanted to raise to Council is a special request. He noted that timing is of the essence for the utility relocation project so the Silver Bluff Road widening project can proceed. He pointed out that the item on the agenda to provide funding for the relocation of utility lines for the Silver Bluff Road widening project will be first reading of an ordinance and second reading of the ordinance would not be until October 10, 2016, since there will only be one Council meeting in September. He asked if Council would be agreeable to giving permission for the contractor to start work on the relocation of utilities for the project since timing is of the essence after approval of first reading of the ordinance.

Mr. Grinton noted that the city is trying to work with SCDOT. There is some line of thinking that any expenses SCDOT incurs because the city is delaying the project and not allowing the contractor to start work that SCDOT could possibly ask for reimbursement. Mr. Grinton stated the city had been trying to expedite the relocation of the lines for SCDOT to move forward with the project. It would be nice for the contractor to be able to start work right away rather than having to wait four weeks for second reading of the ordinance before starting the work.

Mr. Gary Smith, City Attorney, stated the ordinance is needed to amend the budget to provide funding for the project. The contract for the project could be approved by a resolution. The ordinance is not needed to approve the contractor to go ahead with the work. He said if Council is in agreement, there is no problem with letting the contractor go ahead and start the work.

Councilman Merry stated this is an interesting scenario as this is one of the complaints that we often hear from the business and development community regarding the delay and timing for approval for projects to be able to proceed with work. He pointed out that in this case it is the city that needs to proceed with work and needs approval to proceed as time is of the essence for the project. Another concern expressed by Councilman Merry was the way the city goes about getting bids and price for work. He noted that \$200 per linear foot for work on the project seems like a lot of money. Mr. Grinton pointed out that there are a lot of special valves and other things that raised the price. Councilman Merry wondered if there was a way to get greater competition than in the current bid process and possibly get some savings. Mr. Grinton stated staff did significant design value engineering up front working with SCDOT. He also noted there are many other considerations such as what areas will lose service during the construction work and how connections can be made so the disconnect/reconnect can be done quickly. He said there had been a lot of effort put into that up front to try to reduce the cost of the project. He pointed out that four contractors had bid on the project and the bids ranged from \$750,000 to \$950,000. He noted that the project is not being done as a developer where there is no one getting in the way, but in this case there will be traffic along the road, and other utilities that have to relocate and contractors factor that in as there will be a lot of interference during the project work.

Regarding internal costs that have and will be incurred for the project will be between \$55,000 to \$75,000 to \$100,000 depending on the hourly rate and the number of hours involved for the project.

Mayor Osbon stated he was understanding there was a consensus of Council for staff to go ahead and let the contractor start on the project for relocation of the utility lines for the Silver Bluff Road widening project. It was noted that the matter would be discussed in the regular Council meeting, and Council needs to include in the motion that the contractor is authorized to go ahead and start work on the relocation of the utility lines.

GEM LAKES EXTENSIONRoadsRepair RoadsMoultrieHuron

Mr. Klimm stated he wanted to give Council a brief update on the road repairs in the Gem Lakes Extension Subdivision. He recognized George Grinton, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Rick Tool's staff, and the contractor for the work on the Gem Lakes Extension roads. They employed an effective communication tool for those affected by the project. A letter was written to every household, so the residents would know exactly what would be done to the roads and when. There have been daily updates on the website.

Mr. Grinton stated the project started two weeks ago. The process is going through and doing a remixing of the road where they actually grind the asphalt and the base. They mix powder and they start introducing water which is done in a controlled fashion. This creates, especially with the number of times the roads have been resurfaced, a road above the level of the curb and gutter. There is a good surface, but there is too much. If it is crowned, we could create drainage issues. The ideal is to put the road back to just below the curb and gutter before paving. The second step is milling. The contractor has milled the roads, but this is tough on their equipment which has broken down a couple of times. There was a big rain on Friday, but the road is in pretty good shape. He said the road will hold up to problems with rain because it is developed and settled quickly. There were two sections which they have had to redo, but other than that the road repair has been more or less as expected with the remixing and reclaiming. Some of the excess material was used at the Kershaw Street building to shore up some poor areas. The contractor completed the milling on Saturday. Now it is just paving when there is good weather to pave. They have finished Moultrie and now need to work on Huron. Mr. Grinton pointed out that a resident engineer from W. R. Toole was on site at all times. He said he was in frequent communication with the engineer and stopped by several times to make sure the project was going well. A drainage problem was corrected in the area where the hill in the back was cut. The resident at 1085 Moultrie called with concerns about an area that had standing water, and some work was done in this area which should correct that problem.

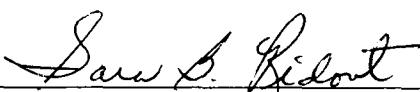
Councilman Ebner commented that he was amazed that there is only one certified contractor in this area when Rick Toole had said this work is common practice. Mr. Grinton responded the biggest challenge was to find the contractor that had the right equipment. The original bidder was using a much smaller mixer and a much less precise mixing ratio, and they had problems with their milling machine. That was the reason for going with the Miller Group since they had the best equipment.

BUDGET – ORDINANCEAmendmentFiscal Year 2016-17Unspent Funds

Ms. Abney reviewed for Council the ordinance on the agenda for first reading to amend the budget for Fiscal Year 2016-17 to include unspent funds from the 2015-16 budget to complete some projects which were in the process at the close of the fiscal year on June 30, 2016.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

  
Sara B. Ridout  
City Clerk