

Aiken City Council Minutes

SPECIAL MEETING

October 29, 2014

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

Absent: Councilmember Diggs.

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Gary Smith, Sara Ridout, and Maayan Schechter, of the Aiken Standard.

CITY PROPERTY

911 Murrah Avenue
Sale of Property

Mayor Cavanaugh called the special meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. He said the purpose of the special meeting was consideration of the sale of 911 Murrah Avenue.

Mr. LeDuc stated this item came up recently. He stated 911 Murrah Avenue is the property that adjoins the entranceway being proposed to go into the Publix Shopping Center off of Christee Place. At one time Council had directed staff to purchase the property on which there is a brick home built in the late 1950's or early 1960's and to tear down the house. The expense to tear down the home would probably be about \$10,000, a large portion of that being asbestos removal.

Mr. LeDuc stated he has talked to some individuals who would like to have the home. He said he told them that the City could not just offer them the home, but if the city wishes to get rid of the home, it must be advertised under a public bid process. He said he was asking Council to allow staff to post a sign for the next 30 to 60 days or whatever timeframe Council feels is reasonable stating that the city will accept bids for the purchase of the home. This would allow people to give the city a sealed bid on the property. If the offer is accepted the city would deed the property to them. He pointed out that if the city was offered nothing for the property, the City would save \$10,000 as that is what it would cost to demolish the house and the city would not have to maintain the property. He said if the city keeps the property, the City will have to maintain the property. He said he does not see the City having a neighborhood park on the property. He said the good thing about it is the City could sell the property even if we receive \$1 for the property and the property would go back on the tax rolls. It could be a usable piece of property.

Mr. LeDuc stated we have surveyed this property, and we do not need this property for the roadway entrance to the Public Shopping Center. He said to sell 911 Murrah Avenue would not interfere with the new roadway to Publix.

Mr. LeDuc stated the recommendation is for the city to offer the property for sale. He said he was asking Council's authorization to start the process.

Mayor Cavanaugh asked if there was a motion to offer the property at 911 Murrah Avenue for sale.

Councilman Ebner moved, seconded by Councilman Merry, that Council authorize the City Manager to post the property at 911 Murrah Avenue for sale.

Councilman Merry asked if the property would be bordering the access road we are talking about into the Publix Shopping Center. He asked then what happens to the property and if the house would be torn down.

Mr. LeDuc stated the building would stay as we don't want to tear down the building.

Councilman Merry asked why the City would not list the property for sale. Mr. LeDuc stated he is asking to post the property for sale, but if it is listed for sale he thought we would have to put a price on the property. He asked what the sale price of the property would be.

Councilman Merry stated he was not familiar with the property, and he would have to look at the property.

Mr. LeDuc stated we could put a minimum price on the sale of the property. Right now the value of the property is to tear down the house.

Councilman Dewar stated that is our value, but if we put the house up for sale for \$25,000, for example, that is probably a bargain for anyone who lives in that neighborhood. He said he could not imagine any house in that neighborhood going for that low of a price.

Mr. LeDuc stated the air conditioning unit from the house has disappeared; a number of the windows are broken; the door has been smashed in. The house is in bad shape. In response to a question from Councilman Homoki as to the location of the property, Mr. LeDuc stated the property is located at the corner of Murrah and Christee Place. It is a lot and a half, possibly two lots, and we only need the right hand side of the property. He said if Council is not ready to vote on the matter at least he wanted to bring this to Council's attention so Council could look at it and vote on it at the next Council meeting.

Councilman Merry stated he would be more comfortable waiting until the next Council meeting to vote on the matter.

Councilman Homoki pointed out that the lot has to be worth something. He said even without the house the lot has a value. If we were to take the house down, the lot still has a value.

Mr. LeDuc stated he would think the lots in the area do not have a lot of value. He said if we put in a new roadway next to the lot, it will have a lesser value, in his opinion. Councilman Dewar stated even if the lot was bare, he could not imagine anyone building there.

Mr. LeDuc stated we would be reducing the lot from a normal size to a smaller size. However, there is enough room between the lot and the road right of way. Currently the house is on a septic tank.

Councilman Merry asked if there were any drawings of where the road would be and what size the lot would be then. Mr. LeDuc responded that he does have drawings for the lot. Councilman Merry stated before he makes a decision, he would like to see the property and the drawings of the property so we could determine the value of the property. He said if we put a value of \$50,000 on the property, and the best offer is \$10,000, then Council could make that decision. He said it would be backwards if we just take bids as we would not know if the first bid would be the best bid or not. He said he would like to give the property some value.

Mr. LeDuc stated that is why the property would be up for sale or bid for a certain period of time.

Councilwoman Price asked how the city acquired the property. Mr. LeDuc responded that the City bought the property as a piece of property to make a roadway to enter into the Publix Shopping Center. The purpose was that we did not want the house and was going to tear the house down. He said that was done in the last couple of years. The purpose was to get the property to be able to get access into the Publix Shopping Center.

Councilwoman Price asked how much we paid for the property. Councilman Ebner responded the City paid \$120,000 for the property.

Councilman Dewar stated he thought we bought the property this year so we could make a roadway into the Publix Shopping Center.

Councilman Homoki pointed out that we might still need the property when we get approval from Publix to make the roadway entrance.

Mr. LeDuc stated we had the property surveyed and found that we do not need the land to make the roadway entrance to Publix.

Councilman Merry asked if the property is in the city limits. It was pointed out that the property was annexed in May, 2014.

Councilwoman Price stated she would like to take a look at the property. She said the property was discussed in the past and Council was told that we needed the land to provide the roadway to Publix and now Council is being told that we don't need the land. She said that concerns her.

Mr. LeDuc stated we do need the land, but we do not need the house. He said the land is about 140 feet wide. He said the City only needs about 40 feet of it for the road. The rest of the land could be for the house. He said his understanding from staff was that we were going to tear the house down. He said he started looking at it and found that the previous owner's daughter had an interest in the house. He said that is when he thought if there is someone willing to take the house, we would save money by not having to tear the house down.

Councilman Dewar stated the city bought the whole property. He said Council was told that the city needed to buy the land so we could make an entrance into the Publix Shopping Center off of Dougherty Road. Once the city bought the land, the city would tear the house down. He said Council had the impression that the house was in the way. He said he thought Council assumed that the house needed to be torn down in order to make the road. He pointed out now all of a sudden we are coming back and saying the house is not in the way and we want to sell the house.

Councilman Homoki stated going back a couple of years, it seems that we only needed half of the property.

Councilman Dewar stated a couple of years ago he thought we were talking about purchasing a different piece of property for the roadway.

Councilman Homoki stated he would like to see a drawing of what is proposed for the entry into the Publix lot and see where the house is before making a decision on the matter.

Councilman Dewar stated he thought Council got a diagram from staff at some point that lays out the picture of where the roadway would enter the Publix Shopping Center.

Councilman Ebner stated there was a full design done with a detention pond, etc. He said the design for the road has been bought and paid for from CPST II.

Mr. LeDuc stated he would put this matter on the agenda for the next meeting. That would give Council time to look at the lot and house. He said he was glad Council had a chance to discuss the matter so when it is on the next agenda, Council will be prepared to take action on the matter.

Councilman Ebner moved that his motion be amended and that Council continue the matter for the sale of property at 911 Murrah Avenue to a future agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilman Dewar and unanimously approved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

City Manager Applications
Contractual Matter
Sale of Property
139 Newberry Street SW

Mayor Cavanaugh stated Council needed to go into Executive Session to discuss two items. One item is a personnel matter regarding the City Manager applications. The second matter is contractual regarding the sale or purchase of property.

Councilman Homoki moved, seconded by Councilman Dewar, that Council go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter regarding the City Manager position and contractual matters regarding the sale or purchase of property. The motion was unanimously approved.

Council went into executive session at 4:13 p.m.

After discussion Council returned to the Council Chambers at 5:22 p.m.

Councilman Dewar moved that Council come out of executive session. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Price and unanimously approved.

Mayor Cavanaugh reported that Council had discussed two items in Executive Session. The first one was a personnel matter regarding the City Manager position and applications. He said City Council has considered hiring a search company to help in the process of hiring a City Manager.

Mr. LeDuc stated City Council has decided to look at the possible hiring of a search firm to help Council with continuing the process of searching for a City Manager. Proposals were solicited from three firms. Two firms are located in Georgia and the other located in Florida. These firms do national searches for local governments and non-profits. The three firms considered were: S. Renee Narloch & Associates out of Florida, Slavin Management Consultants and the Mercer Group from Georgia. Council has reviewed proposals from these three firms. The three firms all had approximately the same price for the service. They have all stated it will take an addition three to four months to get to the process where Council will interview the applicants. The applications we presently have will be given to the search firm for consideration.

Mayor Cavanaugh asked if there was a motion to hire one of the three firms reviewed.

Councilman Dewar moved, seconded Councilman Merry, that Council hire the firm of Slavin Management Consultants for assistance in searching and hiring a City Manager. The motion was unanimously approved.

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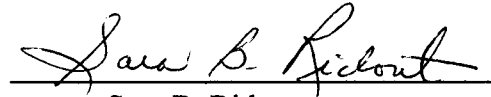
Mayor Cavanaugh stated the second item considered by City Council in executive session concerned a contractual matter regarding the sale or purchase of property.

Mr. LeDuc stated Council had met in a committee meeting and also discussed at their September 8, 2014, Council meeting the disposition of the property at the corner of Newberry Street and The Alley. The City has received some appraisals on the property. Council has discussed whether or not the city should continue to hold the property or to potentially sell the property. The City received some inquiries on the property, and City Council discussed whether or not to sell the property. He said Council can make a decision as to what they desire to do with the property. Mr. LeDuc stated after discussion the consensus of Council at this time was that no action be taken on the sale of the property.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated Council discussed the proposed sale of the property on Newberry Street, but no action was taken by Council at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sara B. Ridout", written over a horizontal line.

Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk