

Aiken City Council MinutesREGULAR MEETING

February 13, 2017

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

Others Present: John Klimm, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Gary Smith, Charles Barranco, Jessica Campbell, Kim Abney, Sara Ridout, Michelle Jones, John McMichael, Nola Grant, Ryan Bland, Dan Brown of the Aiken Standard, and about 75 citizens.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Osbon called the regular meeting to order at 7:04 P.M. Mayor Osbon led in prayer. The pledge of allegiance to the flag was led by Boy Scout Troop 121.

GUIDELINES

Mayor Osbon reviewed the guidelines for speaking at the Council meeting.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Mayor Osbon recognized Mayor Pro Tem Ebner. Mayor Pro Tem Ebner asked if any Councilmembers had any additions or deletions to the agenda. Councilman Ebner pointed out there had been a request that Item 2 under Old Business regarding rezoning and approval of a concept plan for property at 573 Town Creek Road be continued to the next regular meeting of Council. Mayor Pro Tem Ebner moved that the agenda be approved with the change noted. The motion was seconded by Councilman Homoki and unanimously approved.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Work Session and Regular meeting of January 23, 2017, were considered for approval. Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that the minutes of the Work Session and Regular Meeting of January 23, 2017, be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

PRESENTATIONMultiple SclerosisPam Owen

Mayor Osbon stated a request had been received from the Aiken Area Multiple Sclerosis Group for permission to place orange ribbons in the downtown area to advertise the Walk MS Aiken scheduled for April 1, 2017.

Mr. Klimm stated Ms. Pamela Zander Owen, of the Aiken Area MS Self Help Group, has requested on behalf of the Greater Carolinas Chapter of the National MS Society, permission to place orange ribbons in the downtown area for two weeks before the annual Walk MS Aiken scheduled for April 1, 2017, at the Weeks Activity Center at 1700 Whiskey Road.

They are asking for permission to put the ribbons up on Saturday, March 18 and take them down after the MS Walk on Saturday, April 1, 2017. They wish to place the ribbons in the area bordered by Barnwell, Pendleton, Park and Newberry streets. This walk is part of their fundraising event each year in the fight against MS through research and supporting those already living with the disease.

For City Council consideration is approval of the request for the placement of orange ribbons in the downtown area from March 18 to April 1, 2017.

Ms. Owen pointed out Mr. Klimm had stated their request. She asked that Council approve the request. She noted that it is hoped that through the work in the community and across the nation that MS can be wiped out. She pointed out there is a lot of work to do. Councilman Merry thanked Ms. Owen for spearheading the MS Walk. He pointed out that he felt most of the public did not realize the number of people affected by MS. He noted that he lost his mother last year from MS and that MS is a horrible disease. Ms. Owen pointed out there are about 18,000 with MS in North and South Carolina.

Councilman Merry moved, seconded by Councilwoman Price, that Council approve the request from the Aiken Area Multiple Sclerosis Group that they be allowed to place orange ribbons in the downtown area from March 18 to April 1, 2017. The motion was unanimously approved.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Appointments

Tina McCarthy

Kena Black

Accommodations Tax Committee

Catherine Thomas

Arts Commission

Phil Haggerty

Building Code Appeals Committee

Elizabeth Neal

Senior Commission

Andrew Hallen

Energy and Environmental Committee

Mayor Osbon stated Council needed to discuss appointments to various city boards, commissions, and committees.

Mr. Klimm stated Council has 16 pending appointments to fill vacancies on City boards, commissions, and committees. No appointments are presented for Council's consideration and vote at the meeting tonight. However, a list of boards, commissions and committees needing appointments by City Council has been provided to Council. Council may have some nominations for appointments to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of Council.

Mayor Osbon asked for any recommendations for appointments for the next meeting.

Councilman Ebner stated that he would like to recommend the reappointment of Tina McCarthy to the Accommodations Tax Committee, the reappointment of Catherine Thomas to the Arts Commission, and the reappointment of Phil Haggerty to the Building Code Appeals Committee.

Councilman Dewar recommended the reappointment of Elizabeth Neal to the Senior Commission. He stated Mr. Mueller had asked to be replaced on the Accommodations Tax Committee. He thanked Stephen Mueller for his seven years of service on the Accommodations Tax Committee. Councilman Dewar recommended the appointment of Kena Black to fill the position of Stephen Mueller on the Accommodations Tax Committee.

Councilman Merry recommended the reappointment of Andrew Hallen to the Energy and Environmental Committee.

REZONE – ORDINANCE

Concept Plan
573 Town Creek Road
Town Creek Baptist Church
MKP Properties
Mark and Karen Poteat
Senior Activity Center

Mayor Osbon stated the item regarding the rezoning of 4.43 acres +/- located at 573 Town Creek Road from Residential Single-Family (RS-15) to Planned Institutional (PI) and approval of the Concept Plan had been continued to the next meeting.

REZONE – ORDINANCE 02132017

York Street
Bushwillow Drive
Concept Plan
Max Elbe
Peachtree Housing Communities
Longleaf Senior Village
Senior Housing

Mayor Osbon stated this was the time advertised for second reading and public hearing on an ordinance to rezone 6.14 acres on York Street at Bushwillow Drive from General Business to Planned Residential and approve a Concept Plan.

Mayor Osbon read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE ZONING OF REAL ESTATE LOCATED AT THE INTERSECTION OF YORK STREET AND BUSHWILLOW DRIVE FROM GENERAL BUSINESS (GB) TO PLANNED RESIDENTIAL (PR).

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Merry, that Council approve on second reading an ordinance to rezone 6.14 acres located on York Street at Bushwillow Drive from General Business to Planned Residential and approve the Concept Plan for Phase II for Longleaf Senior Village with the conditions recommended by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Klimm stated at the Planning Commission meeting on January 10, 2017, the Commission considered a request for rezoning 6.14 acres located on York Street at Bushwillow Drive and approval of a Concept Plan. The applicant, Max Elbe, Peachtree Housing Communities, proposes to develop an additional phase to the existing Longleaf Senior Village Phase I. The 6.14 acre site is planned to consist of 49 one and two bedroom units housed in a 3-story building with an elevator, and 20 one and two bedroom units in four 5-plex single-story buildings. The request is for rezoning of the property from General Business (GB) to Planned Residential (PR) in order to construct a Phase II to Longleaf Senior Village, a senior housing development for residents 55 and older. No children will reside in the development so there will be no impact on the schools and the impact to traffic will be minor.

After review of the request for rezoning and the proposed Concept Plan, the Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval with the following conditions:

1. That a turn-a-round be added to the terminus of the parking lot drive;
2. that the height limitation for the proposed three-story structure be granted a waiver to allow a height up to 40 feet;
3. that a revised Concept Plan listing any conditions of approval be submitted within 180 days;
4. that upon Concept Plan approval a survey plat indicating the area to be rezoned be recorded at the RMC Office within 180 days; and
5. that the applicant execute an agreement listing the conditions of approval within 180 days.

City Council approved this ordinance on first reading at the January 23, 2017, meeting. For City Council consideration is second reading and public hearing of an ordinance to rezone 6.14 acres located on York Street at Bushwillow Drive from General Business to Planned Residential and approve the Concept Plan for Phase II for Longleaf Senior Village with the conditions recommended by the Planning Commission.

Mayor Osbon called for comments from the audience and City Council.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Diggs, seconded by Councilman Merry, that Council approve on second reading an ordinance to rezone 6.14 acres located on York Street at Bushwillow Drive from General Business to Planned Residential and approve the Concept Plan for Phase II for Longleaf Senior Village with the conditions recommended by the Planning Commission. The motion was unanimously approved.

BUDGET – AMENDMENT – ORDINANCE

FY 2016-17

Chesterfield Street

Park Avenue

Sinkhole

Storm Water Pipe

Emergency Repair

NuPipe

Mayor Osbon stated an ordinance had been prepared for Council's consideration on first reading to amend the FY 2016-17 budget to include funding for the emergency repair of a sinkhole at Chesterfield Street and Park Avenue.

Mayor Osbon read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET OF THE CITY OF AIKEN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2016 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2017.

Councilwoman Price moved, seconded by Councilman Homoki, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance amending the FY 2016-17 Budget to include funding for the Chesterfield Street –Park Avenue storm drainage repair.

Mr. Klimm stated a sinkhole has developed in the southbound lane of Chesterfield Street at its intersection with Park Avenue near the Aiken County Courthouse. Recently it increased rapidly in size to the point that it has been covered with metal plates for the safe passage of vehicles.

Upon inspection, Utilities and Engineering Manager George Grinton has attributed the cause of the sinkhole to the failure of the storm water pipe below. This corrugated metal pipe was installed in the 1970s and is failing at the joints, especially just past the manholes in the line. The section of pipe runs from the westbound lane of Park Avenue along Chesterfield to the railroad cut. Due to the emergency nature of this failure, he had authorized the repair work to begin. It began on Feb. 7 with a completion date no later than February 17.

A copy of the quote from NuPipe to repair the breaks in the joints, stabilize the soil around the pipe and fill the voids that have developed and then spin cast 1 inch of repair mortar in the affected section was provided to Council. The cost of this repair work is \$191,210.

For City Council consideration is first reading of an ordinance to amend the 2016-17 budget to allocate funding for the emergency repair of a sinkhole at the intersection of Chesterfield Street and Park Avenue.

Mayor Osbon asked for comments from the audience and City Council.

It was noted by Council that the figures in the information of \$187,750 and the breakdown do not total \$191,210. Ms. Michelle Jones, Public Works Director, noted that there was a typing error. The correct amount of the bid for the work is \$191,210 as shown on the bid.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Price, seconded by Councilman Homoki, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance amending the FY 2016-17 Budget to include funding for the Chesterfield Street –Park Avenue Storm Drainage repair project. The motion was unanimously approved.

EUSTIS PARK

Community Center
Grant Application
SC Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging
Senior Center Permanent Improvement Program
Letter of Support

Mayor Osbon stated staff had requested a Letter of Recommendation from City Council to include in an application for a grant for the Eustis Park Community Center.

Councilwoman Price moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council approve providing a Letter of Support for the application for a grant from the SC Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging for the Eustis Park Community Center.

Mr. Klimm stated as Council is aware, the City is in the design phase of the Eustis Park Community Center facility project. There exists an opportunity to apply for a grant that will provide an additional \$350,000 to the funding previously allocated for this project. The grant is made available by the SC Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging. This Senior Center Permanent Improvement Program grant is intended to help fund the construction of projects that provide services to the senior community, which is among the missions of the Eustis Park Community Center. Any award would require a match to be funded through capital projects sales tax funds previously allocated by the City for this project.

Based on existing programming and hours of the other facilities operated by the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department and the planned offering of the Eustis Community Center, the grant's requirements for service to the senior community will be met or exceeded at the facility. For Council consideration is approval of a Letter of Support for the application of the grant from the SC Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging for the Eustis Park Community Center.

Mayor Osbon asked for comments from the audience and City Council.

There was a question as to when the grant would be awarded. Ms. Gillespie stated if the city is awarded the grant, notification will be received in late March or early April. In answer to a question regarding the County being notified of the grant application, Ms. Gillespie noted that a requirement is that a Letter of Support be provided from Aiken County as well. Council asked that a copy of the grant application be provided to the Aiken Delegation.

Councilwoman Price commended Ms. Gillespie and Ms. Campbell for applying for grants to help supplement funds for projects.

Councilman Homoki asked if there might be any grant money available for Hitchcock Woods. Ms. Gillespie responded there may be some possible grant opportunities that we may work for with our consultant.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Price, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council approve the letter of support to be included in a grant application for a matching grant of \$350,000 from the SC Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging for the Eustis Park Community Center. The motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENTUpdate
Crime Rate

Mayor Osbon stated that Chief Charles Barranco would provide an update to Council on the crime rate in Aiken. He thanked Chief Barranco and the men and women of the Public Safety Department for bringing a quick closure to the South Aiken High School shooting.

Chief Barranco thanked the personnel of the Public Safety Department and the community for coming forward with support with letters, calls, emails, text, Council support, etc. to be able to bring the case to a quick resolution. He presented a handout to Council and reviewed some of the categories of crimes and compared the numbers for the 2015 and 2016 calendar year crime numbers. He noted the Department had just gone through a records management software update. He pointed out that in transferring the files over some of the addresses are not verified on the old system so he could not put the information in the districts, but they are continuing to work with the software program to be able to accomplish that.

Chief Barranco pointed out the graph showing the comparison of numbers for 2015 and 2016. He pointed out the increases and decreases in aggravated assaults, breaking and entering autos, burglary-residential and commercial, purse snatching, shoplifting, theft from buildings, theft from autos, murders, robbery, fondling and child molestation, and forceful rape and sodomy. He noted that these categories of cases are reported to UCR, SLED, and the FBI. The chart showed an increase in aggravated assaults which includes domestic violence from 81 in 2015 to 102 in 2016. There also was an increase in breaking and entering autos with 336 in 2015 and 577 in 2016. The breaking and entering reports came from all over the city and not just one area of the city. He noted that probably 80% of those cars were left unlocked. He pointed out that in November the Department had arrested a ring of juveniles and some adults who were breaking into cars. Since those arrests, the numbers have started going down. It was noted that the chart showed a decrease in the numbers for most of the categories.

Council then asked questions and discussed the increases and decreases in the categories.

Councilwoman Price stated she had received a call today regarding gun fire from two cars passing each other on Senate Drive. She noted there had been a number of those kinds of occurrences in addition to gun fire into people's homes. She wondered where those stats were recorded. Chief Barranco responded those stats regarding shooting into a dwelling would be under malicious injury and were not included on the graph presented to Council at this meeting. Councilwoman Price stated she would like to see the numbers because there has been an increase in shooting at cars as they pass each other and into homes. Chief Barranco stated we have to work with the community to have people come forward and tell us what they know about these situations so we can make arrests because without the assistance of the community it will be very difficult for Public Safety to get enough probable cause to arrest anyone.

Councilman Homoki asked how Aiken compares with other similar cities with population of between 30,000 and 50,000 as far as crime and volume. Chief Barranco responded that he had a graph that he could share with Council later.

In response to a request as to the number of cases, Chief Barranco responded that the numbers on the graph were not just arrests or the arrest record. The numbers are the occurrences of the crimes. There was also a question as to whether there were active community watch programs. Chief Barranco responded there are many community watch programs and some are more active than others.

DOWNTOWN PROJECTCalendar
Renaissance

Mayor Osbon stated that City Manager John Klimm would make an update on the projected calendar for downtown discussion.

Mr. Klimm stated as you know, last year we held a series of public meetings with our residents to discuss the future of our downtown area. Several hundred residents attended or participated in workshops, interviews and focus groups as did every member of City Council. Several recurring themes were repeated to us over and over again.

First, the plea that housing opportunities need to be made available to meet the needs of both our millennials and young professionals, and thus meeting the needs of their employers including those at the Savannah River site trying to recruit and retain young professionals here in Aiken. We also heard from young retirees interested in the vibrancy of a downtown area, needs that have shifted from living outside the central downtown area to a new desire to want to move downtown.

Secondly, we heard about the need to expand retail opportunities for more uses that complement our existing business mix downtown, as we held additional public workshops several months ago to hear the recommendations of those with specific expertise in the downtown retail mix. And lastly, we certainly heard a strong desire to address, once and for all, the parking challenges that we face and that have been discussed ad nauseum with no resolution for years.

At the same time, we also strongly support and clearly have heard the concerns of those who want us to protect the uniqueness and the charm of our downtown area with any growth that comes our way.

When we heard that a major block in the downtown was coming up for sale, we acted by requesting options on the property so that we could have a greater say in the future of not only these critical parcels, but also the entire downtown. Simply stated, we care about what is being proposed, we care about who is proposing it, and we care what it looks like.

We put the property out for RFP's and the City has worked with interested Development Teams on our Request that we issued on December 2, 2016. When the deadline came and went on February 3rd, four impressive development teams had submitted their proposals for our consideration. So now, we have four accomplished development teams competing against each other to bring forward the highest quality development package for our Downtown. Yes, we could have just let the private market prevail, but we all know that if a developer had come along and proposed an objectionable use or an architectural design not in keeping with tradition, the only question that the Council and staff would have to answer over the next decade and beyond is, "How could you have allowed that to occur?"

So what are the next steps for us to consider?

First, our staff, our attorneys, and technical advisors are reviewing each proposal to insure that each meets the minimum criteria for basic RFP compliance. We plan to conclude that process in a few days. We then plan to release the proposals to the general public. We have begun the process of meeting with each development team to make sure we are fully understanding of every aspect of their proposal, including their qualifications, past experience and their commitment to assist existing tenants. We then will come forward soon with our recommendations on the ranking of each development team's proposal based on objective qualifications-based criteria.

When Council approves the ranking of those proposals, which we propose at the next Council meeting, we will then begin to negotiate each component of the overall revitalization plan with the preferred development team. I strongly believe that a Citizens' Advisory Team should be formed to assist in that process, specifically as it

relates to the issues of architectural design and also the issue of appropriate uses for the downtown area.

At the same time, this Council since day one has been very clear that public workshops, hearings, and meetings will be held on the Revitalization Plan and specifically about the two major components, the parking garage and the city hall portion of the plan, and we will recommend those be held in early March.

Mr. Klimm stated that is the timetable that we are proposing. We are not asking for any approvals or votes at this meeting and plan to bring forward the ranking recommendations as early as the next Council meeting.

Mayor Osbon thanked Mr. Klimm for the update on the downtown project.

ACCOMMODATION TAX FUNDS

Request

Aiken Trials

Local Accommodations Tax Funds

Mayor Osbon stated Council had received a request for an expenditure of Local Accommodations Tax money for the Aiken Trials.

Mr. Klimm stated the Aiken Trials have been held as the first leg of our spring Triple Crown since 1942. Last year City Council approved an expenditure of up to \$10,000 in an effort to attract horses from outside the area. This effort allowed two full races to be run as a result. Through Councilmember Merry, the Aiken Training Track has approached us for funds this year not to exceed \$7,500 for the 2017 Aiken Trials for similar efforts. While funds were spent from the Economic Reinvestment fund for last year's Aiken Trials, we have reviewed available funds this year and there is sufficient funding from the Local Accommodations Tax funds. The proposal as originally presented by Ms. Haslup detailed what the proposed use would be. However, on a separate matter, we have recently received a legal opinion from the City Attorney on a matter dealing with the Aiken Together campaign on allowable uses. He said he had had an opportunity to meet with Ms. Haslup and discussed the issue of the new ruling and that they might want to refocus the use of this money in the areas which are suggested in the legislation which would be marketing and promoting the event. The Aiken Trials has expressed a willingness to do that. Mr. Klimm apologized that in mid-stream the rules have changed, and thanked them for their patience and understanding and for working with the city on this matter.

For Council approval is a request to spend up to \$7,500 from Local Accommodations Tax funds for the 2017 Aiken Trials.

Ms. Haslup pointed out that with her is Brad Stafford, President of the Aiken Training Track. Ms. Haslup pointed out that they had a very successful series of races last year at the Aiken Trials. She noted that they had 13 outside horses enter the races last year. Everyone had a very good experience. She said they would like to have successful races at the Trials this year. She pointed out they have the same amount of horses this year at the Training Tracks as last year, with about 130 registered. She pointed out there is the need again this year to encourage additional outside participation which provides a better experience for the spectators and is more competitive. In past years they have gone to exhibition races which were not competitive. Ms. Haslup stated they do need some help to keep up the momentum of last year.

Council then asked questions and discussed the request. It was pointed out that the money the city contributed last year made a big difference for the Trials, not only for that one day, but for the Track and will pay dividends for long term and plant the seeds. By bringing in some quality horses and people, in the long run it is felt that will pay off for the good of the Track and the whole equine community in Aiken. It was pointed out the owners do not pay an entry fee for the horses in the Trials, but it is expensive to haul horses.

Mayor Osbon asked if there were any comments from the audience or Council.

Councilman Ebner asked which Accommodations Fund is proposed to fund the request of \$7,500. It was noted that if approved the funds would come from the Local Accommodations Tax fund.

Councilman Merry moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council approve the request to fund up to \$7,500 from the Local Accommodations Tax fund for the 2017 Aiken Trials. The motion was unanimously approved.

INFORMATION

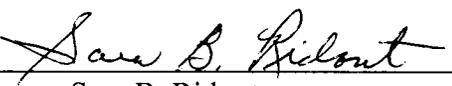
Councilwoman Price noted that Ms. Betty Myers had just celebrated a birthday. She also noted that Maayan Schecter, from the Aiken Standard, will be leaving Aiken for a job in Greenville, South Carolina. Councilwoman Price also asked that there be an item on the next agenda for a presentation by Chanausa Lawton regarding the homeless population in Aiken and those seeking housing.

Councilman Merry commended Nathan Campbell and Tim Coakley who were objects of a very nice letter received from Stephen Geddes regarding an issue he had in his neighborhood. He noted there are a lot of dedicated public servants with the City of Aiken.

Councilman Dewar noted that he had attended the ARTS Subcommittee meeting, and he would like to bring two items to Council's attention. He reported that he thought that most of the utilities had been relocated on the Silver Bluff Road widening project and that it should be finished in early 2018. The other item is Hitchcock Parkway Corridor Improvements. This will come back to the public for a public meeting, but presently the right of way is scheduled October, 2017, construction obligation October, 2018, and letting the contract December, 2018. There will be another public meeting on this project.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Councilwoman Diggs moved that the meeting adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Price and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 7:55 P.M.


Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk