

Minutes

Joint Council Meeting of the City of Cayce, Town of Springdale, City of West Columbia and Two Council Members from Lexington County Council

January 10, 2007 at Noon

Cayce Council Members Present:

Avery B. Wilkerson, Jr., Mayor
Kenneth Jumper
Rick Myers
Robert E. Malpass
James E. Jenkins

Springdale Council Members Present:

Pat G. Smith, Mayor
Kevin Reeley
Nancy S. Peters
Juston L. Ricard

West Columbia Council Members Present

Bobby E. Horton, Mayor
Jack L. Harmon, Mayor Pro-Tem
Eric L. Fowler
L. Dale Harley
Boyd J. Jones
Marsha Moore
Tommy G. Parler
B. J. Unthank

Lexington County Council Members Present

Bill Banning
M. Todd Cullum
Debra B. "Debbie" Summers

Others Present:

City of Cayce

John C. Sharpe, City Manager

Town of Springdale

Ben Baxley, Administrator

City of West Columbia

Jennifer T. Cunningham, City Administrator
Myron F. Corley, Deputy City Administrator
Mardi McKinnon, CMC, City Clerk

Members of the Press and Public

Agenda Item I – Call to Order

Mayor Horton called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. and noted a quorum of the three councils was present. *The State, Free Times, Lexington County Chronicle, The Cayce-West Columbia News* and WIS-TV News were notified of the meeting by fax on January 5 and January 8, 2007.

Agenda Item II – Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Horton gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item III – Importance of DART System to Our Residents

Mayor Horton opened the meeting with a brief statement of the issues to be discussed. He said the three councils and members from Lexington County Council were meeting to discuss the reduction of bus and DART (Dial-A-Ride Transportation) service in Cayce, West Columbia and Springdale. He said Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority (RTA) sent the mayors of all three councils letters informing them of the service reduction and the cost per municipality to resume service. He said a federal requirement does not allow DART service to be funded at a greater level than bus service because visually impaired citizens use the bus. He said according to the RTA there are presently in West Columbia 292 certified users of the DART service residing within zip codes of 29169, 29170, 29171 and 29172.

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Agenda Item III – Importance of DART System to Our Residents (continued)

Mayor Horton said RTA had determined the cost of resuming bus service into West Columbia from October 1, 2006 to September 30, 2007 to be \$178,861.00 after all available state and federal subsidy funds were applied to the total cost. He said this cost would decline slightly the next year, but would almost double the following year when the settlement funds from South Carolina Electric & Gas Company (SCE&G) would be end.

Agenda Item IV – Importance of RTA System to Our Residents of the West Metro Area and Midlands

Mayor Horton said the municipalities needed to know how many of their citizens actually use the bus and DART services to determine the most cost-effective way for people to have access to transportation.

Mayor Horton recognized Ms. Brittany Doten, Marketing Manager with Veolia Transportation, who explained the criteria for rider certification and how service areas are determined. She said the DART service area is provided for a one and one half-mile area on either side of the regular bus route.

Mayor Horton recognized Mayor Pat Smith of Springdale who stated that he is a board member of the RTA, which recently conducted a ridership study on the bus routes. He said that HIPPA (American Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) regulations prevented RTA from asking riders specific questions about where they live and work. Mayor Horton responded that RTA might need to ascertain where people live by where they get on and off the bus stops.

Agenda Item V – Impact on West Metro Area without Bus or DART Service

Mayor Horton asked council members to consider if it would be less expensive to contract out a service like DART to meet the needs of the disabled in the community. Mayor Smith said that the three municipalities needed to determine the demand of the service to understand the cost to provide the service. He said if the RTA could identify the number of passengers by the time of day on particular bus stops then the demand could be determined.

Agenda Item VI – Funding Sources

Mayor Horton opened discussion on how to fund the cost of the service. He suggested an increase in the cost of the electrical franchise fees as an alternative to passing the cost in the form of vehicle fees onto citizens who own vehicles, but do not use buses. Mayor Horton said the municipalities needed to find a better level service than the reduced level that was currently being offered to citizens. He said knowing the level of ridership in each city would help to determine how to pay for it. He said that franchise fees are one way to handle the cost without impacting only people with cars through vehicle fees.

Mayor Horton recognized Mayor Avery Wilkerson of Cayce who asked if RTA could provide the number of the 142 individuals certified for DART service in Cayce who actually used the service in a 30-day period. Lexington County Council Member Todd Cullum asked that of the people who may be eligible for DART service how many actually board the vehicle. Mayor Wilkerson responded that he would like to know who is using the DART service within the city limits of the municipalities.

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Mayor Horton said RTA has asked West Columbia to contribute \$178,861 to fund the bus service. He asked Mayor Wilkerson how much RTA asked Cayce to contribute. Mayor Wilkerson responded that RTA asked Cayce for \$119,388. Mayor Smith stated that RTA asked Springdale for \$74,562.

Mayor Horton recognized West Columbia Council Member Dale Harley who asked why 60 passenger buses are used when only four to five people ride a bus. Ms. Doten responded that the cost to run a bus is the same whether it is a large or small vehicle. She said 70 percent of the cost is the driver's salary.

Mayor Horton recognized Cayce Council Member Robert Malpass who stated that if the bus system were a private business that no one would agree to fund the system without any information. He said that cities could not afford that kind of cost.

Mayor Horton recognized Mr. Tommy Windsor who stated that he is the Lexington County appointee to the RTA board. He said that larger cities have the population density to support a bus system. He said that a 15-passenger van has more wear and tear than a larger bus and is not wheel chair accessible. He said that the cities also needed to take liability into account. He said when the RTA took over the bus system from SCE&G new buses were bought, and staff and routes were cut to become an efficiently run agency. He said that RTA even considered reducing the size of its facilities to save money. He suggested looking at making bus stops more attractive to increase ridership, but said the priority was to get people from point A to point B. He said public transit is not a burden, but a service provided to the community. He said as a taxpayer he pays for services such as fire, police and EMS but does not use them. He said he pays taxes to fund public services as an investment in the community.

Mayor Horton said there is a need for bus transportation for some citizens, but the question is how to fund it and what is the least expensive way to do it. Council Member Harley said that the cities needed to pinpoint what is needed and how to provide it as three cities together.

Mayor Horton asked the council members when they would want to hold another meeting to look at the information RTA has been asked to provide. The next meeting was set for January 31, 2007 at noon in the West Columbia City Hall.

Agenda Item VII – Adjourn

Mayor Horton asked if there was any further business and received no response. He entertained a motion to adjourn. West Columbia Council Member Fowler so moved and West Columbia Council Member Moore seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The three councils adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marta Valentino McKinnon, CMC
City Clerk
City of West Columbia