

Aiken City Council Minutes

June 23, 2003

WORK SESSION

Present: Mayor Cavanaugh, Councilmembers Clyburn, Cuning, Price, Smith, Sprawls and Vaughters.

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Gary Smith, Bill Huggins, Richard Pearce, Sara Ridout, Rob Novit of the Aiken Standard, Josh Gelinis of the Augusta Chronicle, and about 5 citizens.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M. He stated Council had two items that they would like to discuss in the work session.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTRehabilitationHousing Rehabilitation Program

Mr. LeDuc stated since the 1980s, the City of Aiken has helped citizens with the rehabilitation of their homes through Community Development Block Grant funds. Upon sale or death of the homeowner, the funds that were spent for this rehabilitation are paid back to the City of Aiken. Often families are not able to fully pay back this funding, and it becomes a legal problem for both the City and the citizens. In the last five years, the federal government has added two major regulations which have dramatically increased the cost for the rehabilitation. These include asbestos removal and the removal or covering of lead-based paint in the house. This has increased the cost of rehabilitation from around \$10,000 to over \$35,000 per home. The Community Development Committee for the City of Aiken has reviewed these escalating costs versus the opportunity to put new homes in many of these neighborhoods. After evaluating this trend over the last several years, they now feel that the money would be better spent on projects other than rehabilitation. Currently, only 2-3 homes are being rehabilitated a year, and we have a waiting list of approximately 15 years or more on the remaining homes. Applications are currently being taken knowing that we will probably never get funding to rehabilitate them. The Community Development Committee is recommending that, starting with next fiscal year, the City of Aiken terminate the housing rehabilitation program. If Council agrees with this, we would begin notifying those on the waiting list that funds will no longer be available, and that they will need to find other sources for rehabilitating their house. Mr. LeDuc stated he would like to have an official vote from Council on the matter, but he wanted to discuss the matter with Council before putting it on the agenda.

Council discussed the matter at length. It was pointed out if Council does not use Community Development Block Grant funds for rehabilitation of the houses, they would not have to be concerned with the asbestos removal or the lead-based paint, but could just make improvements to the houses such as repairing the roof, fixing a porch, etc. It was suggested that the City use some of its funds for rehabilitation and not use Community Development Funds for rehabilitation.

Councilwoman Clyburn suggested that the City use some Community Development Funds to provide training or jobs for individuals who could then be able to work on rehabilitating houses.

Mr. LeDuc stated the City had been working with the Housing Authority and the Lower Savannah Council of Governments looking into possible grant opportunities to help with building new homes and rehabilitation. The city could then hire individuals from the community under an apprentice program to work with a contractor on the homes to learn the trade.

Councilwoman Price suggested using a contractor to do the rehabilitation for the City and not using CDBG funds.

It was suggested that Council use the \$40,000 which was allocated for rehabilitation this year to build new homes and use City money for rehabilitation. Mr. LeDuc pointed out to do this Council would have to reallocate the CDBG money and resubmit the budget to HUD.

Councilwoman Price pointed out some rehabilitations in the past had done a lot of good by fixing certain things like a shower, a roof, or a kitchen. She said these had made the individual's quality of life better. She said the program had done a lot of good and she did not want to see rehabilitation totally disappear.

Mr. LeDuc stated from the discussion he understands that Council would like to keep some kind of rehabilitation program without using CDBG money, because of regulations, but possibly using City funds. He said he would take the matter back to the Community Development Committee and see if there is some way to keep a rehabilitation program going, possibly with volunteers doing the work and the city furnishing materials, maybe working with the United Way or the neighborhood associations to do small things that need to be done, such as repairing a roof, a porch, etc.

CITY COUNCIL

Pamphlet

Mr. LeDuc stated for the last several months staff has been working on a pamphlet which would be available to citizens that attend Council meetings. We have noticed that several citizens are unfamiliar with some of the terminology used during the meeting and what guidelines they should follow when they want to participate at City Council meetings. Therefore, the staff has developed a brochure which would help our citizens understand the proceedings at City Council meetings.

If Council would like, staff will proceed to make copies to have available at future Council meetings. He said one area that he would like Council to possibly review and discuss is Item 3 and 4, under the guidelines which state that comments should be limited to 5 minutes. This has been discussed on several occasions and is incorporated in many other South Carolina City ordinances. We can either keep the statement in its present form, increase the number of minutes, or eliminate it altogether.

Council reviewed the pamphlet and made suggestions for changes to the pamphlet. Council also discussed the possibility of limiting the time for citizens to speak on an issue. Since it was time for the Council meeting, Council decided to talk about the matter further at the next meeting. Staff was asked to make the changes suggested and bring the pamphlet back to Council for review.

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REGULAR MEETING

June 23, 2003

Present: Mayor Cavanaugh, Councilmembers Clyburn, Cuning, Price, Smith, Sprawls and Vaughters.

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Gary Smith, Bill Huggins, Ed Evans, Larry Morris, Anita Lilly, Richard Pearce, Pete Frommer, Glenn Parker, Sara Ridout, Rob Novit of the Aiken Standard, Josh Gelinas of the Augusta Chronicle and about 20 citizens.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 7:50 P.M. Mr. LeDuc led in prayer, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Cavanaugh stated Council needed to approve the agenda. He said a resolution in support of the Modern Pit Facility at the Savannah River Site needed to be added to the