

Aiken City Council MinutesSpecial Meeting

December 23, 1996

Present: Mayor Cavanaugh, Councilmembers Anaclerio, Clyburn, Papouchado, Perry, Price, and Radford.

Others Present: Steve Thompson, Frances Thomas, Gary Smith, Phil Berley, Stanley Quarles, Sara Ridout, Carl Langley, of the Aiken Standard, and 3 citizens.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the special meeting to order at 8 A.M. and stated the special meeting was called to consider two items of business.

MORGAN STREET - ORDINANCE 122396Donation of Property631 Morgan Street NWMcKenzie, JimSouthern Investments Group, Inc.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated this was the time advertised for the second reading and public hearing on an ordinance to accept donation of property on Morgan Street.

Mr. Thompson read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE ACCEPTING THE DONATION OF A TRACT OF LAND CONTAINING 0.233 ACRES, MORE OR LESS, FROM SOUTHERN INVESTMENTS GROUP, INC. WITH TAX MAP PARCEL NUMBER 30-025-03-009.

Mr. Thompson stated the city had received a request from Mr. Jim McKenzie, of Southern Investments Group, Inc., that the City of Aiken accept donation of the house and land at 631 Morgan Street. He said according to the county's tax records the total value of the house and property is \$11,525. He said there are no outstanding taxes on the property or liens on the property. The owners would like to close on the donation during the calendar year. The staff is recommending acceptance to City Council.

The public hearing was held and no one spoke.

Councilwoman Clyburn moved, seconded by Councilwoman Papouchado and unanimously approved, that Council pass the ordinance on second and final reading to accept the donation of the property at 631 Morgan Street from Southern Investments Group, Inc. to become effective immediately.

AIKEN MILE TRACK - ORDINANCEBanks Mill RoadMcGhee, BruceSale of PropertyMile Track

Mayor Cavanaugh stated Council needed to consider first reading of an ordinance approving the sale of the Aiken Mile Track.

Mr. Thompson read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE ALLOWING THE SALE OF THE AIKEN MILE TRACK TO BRUCE MCGHEE FOR \$650,000.00.

Mr. Thompson stated City Council had discussed the sale of the Aiken Mile Track at length. The conditions of the sale include several stipulations. The contract requires that the majority of the property be maintained as a horse training facility. The buyer would be buying the buildings, fixtures, satellite dish and receivers and all the paddocks on the property. The property would be subdivided and Parcel B which is approximately 3 acres at the corner of Monetta and Banks Mill Road would not be included under the stipulation against development.

Councilwoman Clyburn asked if the conditions addressed the possibility of a restaurant on the property.

Gary Smith, City Attorney, stated the contract did address the issue of a restaurant. He said one of the conditions of the sale is that the purchaser get the appropriate approval for all local, state, and federal approvals to construct 250 new stalls, a track restaurant, a single family two-story residence with a gross living area of at least 2,000 square feet with swimming pool, tennis court and basketball court. The buyer is to proceed with the efforts to secure the approvals as soon as possible after the contract is approved.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated he felt the sale of the track would be a win-win situation for the city and the buyer. He said the city purchased the track in 1988 and has been operating the track very well for a number of years. He said the city has the opportunity at this time to sell the track to Bruce McGhee of Maine. He said Mr. McGhee was a horseman, and he felt Mr. McGhee would make considerable improvements to the track. He pointed out the city had already improved the track tremendously since the purchase of the track. He pointed out when the city purchased the track very few trainers and horses used the track, and the city has enhanced the track to the point where many horses and trainers use the track each year. He said he felt Mr. McGhee has the capability to further improve the track.

Councilman Anaclerio stated he agreed with the sale of the property as it has been a costly expense for the city. He said he felt the city had done a very good job of running the track. He said, however, he had a problem with the value placed on the property. He felt the appraised value and the amount offered by Mr. McGhee for the property is about a 30% difference. He stated the city does not have to sell the property at this time, and he would like the city to consider another buyer.

Councilman Radford stated he did not feel the city should sell the track to Mr. McGhee for \$650,000. He felt the city might be able to find another use or another buyer for the track.

Councilwoman Price stated she supported the comments made regarding the value of the property and felt the city should get more than \$650,000 for the property. She pointed out the city paid \$950,000 for the track.

Councilman Perry moved, seconded by Councilwoman Price, that the ordinance be passed on first reading to sell the Aiken Mile Track to Bruce McGhee for \$650,000 and that the second reading and public hearing be set for the next regular meeting of Council which will be held January 13, 1997. The motion was approved by a vote of 6 in favor and 1 opposed, with Councilman Anaclerio opposing the motion.

Mr. Smith stated the proposed ordinance and contract had been revised after Council's discussions earlier and the copy presented to Council includes changes which Council had requested.

Councilman Anaclerio stated he wanted to be sure the city would not be paying for ripping the track before the track is turned over to Mr. McGhee. He said he wanted to be sure the contract included the statement that Mr. McGhee would pay for ripping the track which would cost about \$7,500.

Mayor Cavanaugh pointed out the offer to buy the track was the city's first and only offer to buy the track. He pointed out Mr. McGhee also has an offer to buy another track at another location if the city does not want to sell the Mile Track. He stated Mr. McGhee plans to put a lot of money into the track with improvements and that he and his family plan to work the track. He stated Mr. McGhee did not want to do anything to make the track less productive or effective. Mayor Cavanaugh stated the city may not get another opportunity to sell the track, and in the meantime the city is losing about \$150,000 a year on the track.

Councilman Radford pointed out Aiken is one of a few and the only one in South Carolina to own and operate a horse training track which he felt made the City of Aiken unique.

Councilman Anaclerio pointed out previously the city had not advertised the track as being for sale, but now that it has been identified as being for sale others may be interested in buying the track.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 A.M.



Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk