

Aiken City Council Minutes

EXECUTIVE SESSION

June 10, 2019

Present: Mayor Osbon, Councilmembers Dewar, Diggs, Girardeau, Price and Woltz.

Absent: Councilwoman Gregory

Others Present: Stuart Bedenbaugh, Kim Abney, Lex Kirkland, and Fred Williams.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Osbon called the meeting to order at 5 P.M. He stated Council needs to go into executive session pursuant to Section 30-4-70(a)(2) to receive legal advice where the legal advice relates to a pending, threatened, or potential claim or other matters covered by the attorney-client privilege, settlement of legal claims, or the position of the public agency in other adversary situations involving the assertion against the agency of a claim. Specifically, City Council will receive a briefing on the status of a lawsuit filed against the City by a former employee.

Councilman Dewar moved, seconded by Councilman Girardeau, that Council go into executive session for the reason stated by Mayor Osbon. The motion was unanimously approved.

Council sent into Executive Session at 5:05 p.m.

After discussion, Councilwoman Price moved, seconded by Councilman Dewar, that Council come out of Executive Session. The motion was unanimously approved.

Council came out of Executive Session at 6:05 p.m.

WORK SESSION

June 10, 2019

Present: Mayor Osbon, Councilmembers Dewar, Diggs, Girardeau, Gregory, Price, and Woltz. Councilmember Gregory participated via telephone in the work session.

Others Present: Stuart Bedenbaugh, Sara Ridout, Kim Abney, Kym Wheat, Mike Przybylowicz, Tim O'Briant, Jessica Campbell, Tim Coakley, Angela Hales, Ryan Bland, Charles Barranco, Lucy Knowles, Martin Buckley, and Colin Demarest of the Aiken Standard.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Osbon called the work session of June 10, 2019, to order at 6:10 P.M.

LOWER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Update

Dr. William Molnar

City Manager Stuart Bedenbaugh stated this was a work session for information purposes only. Councilwoman Gregory who is out of town participated by phone. He stated Dr. William Molnar, of the Lower Savannah Council of Governments, is present to give his annual report of the work the LSCOG has done over the last year. Historically, the City has funded LSCOG annually, primarily for their services in providing the Best Friend Express and this current fiscal year, in addition, they were funded some money for a transportation study.

Dr. Molnar stated LSCOG appreciates what the City of Aiken does for them in providing the transit money and the other projects and programs that the city helps support in the City of Aiken. He stated the mission is to help those folks in different organizations within the six county region. They are a regional government located in Aiken, but work throughout the six counties. The purpose is to support economic development and quality of life in the region. On a regional basis, they bring projects and programs to the region. They have 39 board members in Aiken County, and Lessie Price from the City. There are a number of different programs: Community Development Block Grant, planning, and economic development. They finished a project a couple of years ago with the new building at Aiken Tech and are in conversation with them about some other things they would like to see in the next couple of years. Some more programs are the Housing Consortium, which the City of Aiken is part of, Aging, Disability and Transportation Resource Center, which also works with the Area Agency on Aging, Tourism, Workforce Development, and Regional Transit Management Agency.

Dr. Molnar stated they have four areas they work off of, the largest being workforce development and funding, human services which is the aging program, planning and economic development, and administration. He stated that this past year they were budgeted for a little under \$10 million. They were very fortunate in that when other organizations do not use State and Federal money, they have been the recipient of that money. Their budget this past year was actually almost \$13 million.

Dr. Molnar gave an overview of how the money is spent in the City of Aiken. He stated he hoped they were helpful in the Permanent Improvement Project which is in the Department of Aging. He said they were happy to be able to assist the city with that project. He said Mary Beth Fields, of LSCOG, had a big hand in making sure all of that happened in working with the City. They were happy to see the Lessie Price Senior and Youth Center get off the ground. He stated they do a number of aging programs with one being senior assessments. They go out to seniors' homes and find out what they need, such as a delivered meal, transportation to doctors' office, dialysis, homemaker services, etc. They want to keep seniors in their homes as long as possible if they want to be there. LSCOG provided meals and transportation for seniors in need as well as homemaker services in order to keep them in their homes.

Another popular service is the Family Caregiver. LSCOG has given 367 Family Caregiver grants for respite services. This year they have allocated over \$400,000 in grants under this program. LSCOG also gives counseling on the Medicare Part D plan as well as giving legal services for seniors needing help. The Medication Assistance Program is funded through a partnership with United Way. This helps people with prescription drug savings for drugs that people cannot afford.

Dr. Molnar discussed the Transit Program. He explained the Best Friend Express, the Dial-A-Ride System and the Urban 5310 Transit Program. These systems provide transportation for people in Aiken who need transportation for medical appointments, dialysis and essential shopping for food and household needs. LSCOG was able to use the extra funding the City provided as a match to unleash some money for transportation. They were able to extend their services and provide transportation for people getting to and from work.

Dr. Molnar stated in Planning, they are finishing up the road improvements at I-20 and Bettis Academy Road. He said he also went to Washington, DC to discuss funding for the Whiskey Road Corridor project. As far as the Community & Economic Development portion, LSCOG has done a needs assessment plan for the County, and they are in New Ellenton working on projects as well. The City of Aiken is a member of the HOME Consortium and Kevin Price and Brian Sanders are members of the Lower Savannah Regional Housing Consortium.

Dr. Molnar continued discussing the activities of the LSCOG. He stated they are the only COG that does tourism in its office. He stated that is economic development. They want to make sure people keep coming and spending their money here. In the area of Workforce Development, they do a number of different things. They have a rapid response, which is when a business is going out of business, they make sure the people

there know about unemployment and all other services they have to offer. They also tell them about training and how they can help them to retrain and find them jobs. He said they have 23 rising senior youth applications for the Summer Youth Jump Start Program. He said this is a great program. These are kids that we are able to pay them minimum wage for the entire summer. He stated they work with the youth to help train them soft skills such as how to dress, show up on time, how to behave, etc. Councilwoman Price stated not only is LCOG giving them the soft skills, but the youth are also looking at careers that they think they may want to enter and those they do not want to enter. She stated these are kids that normally would not be in the system to find jobs in the summer. Some are at risk, and they cannot make a phone call and ask for help to find a job. They are depending on LSCOG and the school system to give them an opportunity to develop the soft skills, and they earn a salary. It keeps them out of trouble and off the streets. Dr. Molnar stated they also conduct youth forums for youth that do not know what they are going to do next and do not have a plan. He said they work with Aiken Tech and get to check out all of the job areas. Councilwoman Price stated that LSCOG received a national award for this program. Dr. Molnar stated they also work with businesses to help pay for the first 12 weeks of an employee's work with that business. It is called On the Job Training. This program allows the LSCOG to take the risk of hiring new employees for businesses. They have a good success rate of around 70%.

Dr. Molnar provided a list of upcoming events for LSCOG. He again thanked City Council for their help. They could not do it without the support.

Councilwoman Gail Diggs stated how much she appreciates all the LSCOG does. She asked if they have plans to run a bus for medical transportation from New Ellenton to Aiken. She said a lot of patients from New Ellenton need transportation to the Rural Health Services for appointments. Dr. Molnar stated he does not. He stated with the Urban 5310 money, they should be able to take care of that. Councilwoman Diggs asked about the demolition portion of the LSCOG duties. She asked what their plans are for the lots that are left vacant after demolition in New Ellenton. Dr. Molnar stated they will be owned by the City, and the city will try to sell them. Councilwoman Diggs asked about the qualifications for the Jump Start Program and how is it advertised. Dr. Molnar stated it is advertised through the school system and an applicant has to be one of five different things, but he did not remember what they are at this time. Councilwoman Diggs stated Goodwill has a program where they are allowing seniors, 55 and over, to work at businesses and they pay part of their salary. She asked if the LSCOG On-The-Job Training is for anybody or if it was limited to a certain population. Dr. Molnar stated it was for anybody. They match those people who come through their office on Richland Avenue with the businesses.

Councilwoman Price asked if the Needs Assessment Plan for 2019 deadline had expired. Dr. Molnar stated he would ask and find out. He stated that they are currently involved in a Long Range Transportation Plan and those surveys are out. The surveys will help LSCOG figure out where they need to go in a region as far as transportation.

Mayor Osbon thanked Dr. Molnar and stated the City is lucky to have the partnership with LSCOG.

REDEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated Councilwoman Gregory wanted to discuss the issue of the redevelopment corporation. Councilwoman Gregory stated she spoke with some other councilmembers, and she feels they are on the same page. She hopes this initiative is passed on first reading because she feels it is absolutely necessary that the City move forward with developing the Commission. She hopes that after first reading is passed, that Council will table the item and really discuss the structure and the draft more thoroughly with a plan that is geared more towards Aiken where we are setting up Tim O'Briant to succeed. She feels everyone has some good ideas, and she wants the opportunity to hear them. She would also like to have AECOM come in and talk about their expertise in that department to all of Council in addition to other people that Mr. O'Briant perceives would have an impact on the commission.