

Aiken City Council Minutes

WORK SESSION

January 13, 2014

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

Others Present: Richard Pearce, Gary Smith, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Tim Coakley, Charles Barranco, Alicia Davis, Sara Ridout, Maayan Schechter of the Aiken Standard, and about 20 citizens.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Cavanaugh called the work session to order at 6 P.M.

Mr. Pearce stated there are two items for the work session. He said he would like to reserve some time to talk about the proposed Municipal Award application for the Municipal Association of South Carolina, which will be related to our Safe Communities project that we have been working on for over a year.

Mr. Pearce stated at the December 9, 2013, meeting after finishing the items of regular business, we had a fairly involved conversation about Public Safety and some concerns that Council has about current and future staffing, the turnover rate, and efforts to retain experienced staff. In response to Council's concerns there are several members from Public Safety present. He said Chief Barranco would speak, followed by Eric Skidmore from SLED, Captain Phil Kestin, and Captain Ron Shelley.

Chief Barranco thanked Council for their interest in Public Safety and stated they wanted to provide some answers to the questions that have come up about Public Safety. He pointed out the Command Staff was present at the meeting. He said Command Staff is very concerned about the staff at Public Safety. They are interested in the concerns that Council has about the turnover, and the concerns about all of Public Safety, but they are very interested in moving Public Safety forward. He said on several occasions he had had officers come in his office very concerned about their path forward as a Public Safety Officer, whether dealing with some of the most difficult times in their Public Safety career—the line of duty death—or other issues that have evolved out of that. He said we are still feeling the effects of the line of duty deaths, though we are two years out from that. However, we are using the resources we have available that have been identified to help staff deal with it and decide if they are able to move forward. He said in saying that he felt he brings a unique perspective to talk to Council. He said he left Aiken Public Safety for different reasons. He said he saw an opportunity to grow and rebuild a department. He said he was honored to be back at Public Safety. He said he went through his first line of duty death when he was at the Sheriff's Department with the death of Jason Shepherd, who was accidentally run over on U.S. 1 directing traffic. It was not a malicious event; it was just an accident. He said he saw the effects that had on the Aiken County Sheriff's Department and the effects it is still feeling as a result of that accident.

Chief Barranco said questions have been brought up about why officers have left Aiken Public Safety. He said we know 10 officers left due to retirement. Some officers left to go to other agencies. In discussion with those officers, a common thread was salary. He pointed out Human Resources is currently conducting a salary survey to present to Council at some time in the future. He said he hoped not to lean on or not to underestimate, but share with Council the effects that some of the line of duty deaths have had on the department. Traveling to Washington, DC afterwards during Police Week, the national experts that they spoke with said for a minimum of three to five years the department will continue to face these issues. He pointed out Aiken Public Safety is two years out from the line of duty deaths and in the middle of the anniversary as we speak. He said the Department is still feeling the effects, but he said he had never been as

proud to serve with a group of men and women that continue to serve our citizens in a very dedicated manner. Not only do they serve the citizens of the community, but they are committed and dedicated to taking care of their fellow brothers and sisters. He said he would like to invite Dr. Eric Skidmore, of South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) to talk about the line of duty deaths.

Dr. Eric Skidmore reviewed for Council the program that he runs for the State Police in South Carolina. He said his training and background are as a Presbyterian minister, and he is a chaplain with the State Police. He said he runs a program called the South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program, which provides a variety of services to state and local law enforcement. One of those services is responding in times of tragedy and crises. SC LEAP is a partnership between SLED, Department of Public Safety, DNR and Probation. He said there is a law which governs what they do. He pointed out that is listed on the brochure which had been handed out. It says that not only shall they exist and serve the four agencies he had mentioned, but that they shall serve any local law enforcement agency upon request. He said in the time that he had been serving with SC LEAP as a program manager, there have been more than 40 line of duty deaths in South Carolina since 1997—17 years. He said his office had been involved in more than 30 of those deaths very, very directly. He said they have some experience in dealing with line of duty death in the Public Safety arena, particularly as it affects officers, family members, and non-sworn personnel and agencies. He said there were a couple of things that he was not prepared to address and not able to address. He said he was not a mental health professional, a psychologist, a social worker, or a psychiatrist. He said he is a doctor, but his doctorate is in the field of ministry, and he is trained as a chaplain. He said he also was not prepared to talk about people's names specifically that they have assisted as that is private and confidential.

Dr. Skidmore stated when they are invited to an agency like the Aiken Public Safety Department in a time of crisis, there is a variety of services that they offer to the agency. The real mission and purpose is to serve and care for the officers in the agency, the non-sworn personnel, communications, and family members. He said his agency was involved in Jason Shepherd's death. He said he was contacted by Major Grant who is a resident of Aiken County. He said he works with Major Grant at SLED. On the night Scotty Richardson was killed, he was contacted first by the Chief of SLED, who had been contacted by the Aiken Sheriff to tell him of the tragedy of Scotty's mortal wounding. He said he was able to come that night and was present at the hospital at the time of Scotty's death. When Sandy Rogers was mortally wounded, Chief Barranco called him and he came to Aiken and initiated the processes that are used when an officer is mortally wounded. He stated in both of these cases the officers died.

Dr. Skidmore stated there are a variety of services that his agency provides from on-scene support to one-on-one support. He said they follow a method of care which is followed by first responders all around the country. It is also used in a variety of other vocations around the country. It is a process of peer support. Police officers, fire fighters, EMT's, or soldiers may be anxious about talking to the traditional mental health providers. He said they have a cadre of trained peer support professionals and personnel that help. He said they provide an opportunity for officers to come to a crisis management briefing which they had with both of the line of duty deaths in Aiken. There is an opportunity for the officers to come in for a day of debriefing where they sit down with peer support team members. He said they had been involved with the Florence County Sheriff's Office. He said in the fourth quarter of the year they had a deputy killed. The Sheriff asked the peer support team to come in and assist his department, which is what they do. He said they provide services to the spouses of the officers, follow up services through the post critical incident seminar.

Dr. Skidmore stated he was in Greenville this past week training the Greenville Police Department. He said Council may wonder if his department did the things with Aiken that they do around the state. He pointed out the handout titled "Keys to Managing Line of Duty Death" and said it was from his power point training that he uses when he trains the peer support team personnel. He pointed out the things they cover: Crisis Management briefing 24-48 hours after death, 7 phase CISM 3-7 days after funeral, one-on-one peer support, family support services, active participation in funeral services,

follow up, referral and Post Critical Incident Seminar. He said the Aiken Department of Public Safety under the leadership of Chief Barranco, did all of the things that he teaches. He said when he was teaching in Greenville last week, he used Aiken as an excellent example of how to care for your people after a critical incident after a line of duty death. He pointed out that the two brochures handed out list the kind of services they offer in relationship to critical incidents.

Dr. Skidmore stated one may ask how people react after the murder of a co-worker. He said if this group were a part of a shift that worked with the Sheriff's Department and one of your co-workers was killed in the line of duty, as someone who works with line of duty death on a regular basis, he said he would expect a variety of reactions. Some would have very little reaction, but that would not be many. He said he would say to them they are a normal group of people, but they have been through an abnormal event, and their reactions to the tragedy are normal, as odd as they may seem. He said they may have a hard time sleeping; they may isolate themselves; they may be mean to the people who love them most; they may think about leaving; they may think that is not the vocation for them; they may think about going to another department. He said all those reactions fall into the range of normal reactions to abnormal events. He said he sees this over and over again. He said his peer support team was involved with Virginia State police following a mass murder in Blacksburg, Virginia which is the location of Virginia Tech. He said in talking with the Chief she said it was a normal thing for people to look to go to Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, the State Police, or think about moving on somewhere else. He said there is a small percentage of people who would say they do not want to be around a reminder of the tragedy that has happened in their department. He said his real concern is the long range, long term care of the officers after a critical incident, particularly after a line of duty death, because as Chief Barranco said, the impact of that can be very long lasting. He said he was very proud of the way Aiken DPS responded to their personnel.

Captain Phil Kestin then presented a report to Council in response to questions by Councilman Dewar on the number of officers who have left the department. He pointed out the breakdown of the terminations over the calendar years of 2012 and 2013 in the categories of retirement, terminated, voluntary, expired. He pointed out that in 2012 and 2013 there were 10 officers who retired. Nine of the ten who retired were involved in the Retire/Rehire Program, which is similar to the retirement system for teachers, TERI. He said there was a very finite time in the history of the South Carolina Police Officers Retirement that allowed police officers to do this. That program has expired. He said an officer like him who does not have the years for retirement until three years, could not take advantage of the program. He said over that time period officers were able to take advantage of the program and retire from the Police Officers Retirement System, start drawing their retirement, separate from the agency for 14 days, and then come back and continue to work. Now the State has put a cap on what the officer can earn, which is a \$10,000 earning wage cap if someone wanted to do that from this point forward until the officer reaches age 57. He pointed out that the 10 officers who retired over 2012-2013 were able to take advantage of something that had a very limited timeframe. He pointed out there are another 10 officers currently enrolled in that system in the department. He said the City of Aiken placed a cap on how many years an officer could participate in the program. The cap was a 5 year cap. He said that 5 year cap will come in fiscal year 16-17. He said we know that in fiscal year 16-17 by that time we will have another 10 officers, if the system stays in place that is in place now, who will have to retire by that time. He said he wanted to make sure Council was aware of that.

Captain Kestin stated over 2012-13 there were two officers who were involuntarily terminated. There were 15 voluntary terminations, which included 2 new recruit officers who were not able to complete recruit training, 1 officer left and returned 6 weeks later, 2 got out of law enforcement altogether, 2 medically retired, and 8 went to other agencies. He pointed out Sandy Rogers' line of duty death occurred in 2012, with Scotty Richardson's death occurring at the end of 2011.

Captain Kestin pointed out when you hire officers you can expect a certain number not to make it through the training or not pass the training cycle. Two of the new recruit officers hired were not able to make it through the training, and they voluntarily left.

They were not progressing like they should, and they made the decision to terminate voluntarily. One officer left for personal reasons and came back 6 weeks later. We were able to hire him back and give him some training. He lost a lot of seniority, but he felt it was beneficial to come back to Aiken Public Safety. Two officers got out of law enforcement, with one going to be with family in Kentucky and the other going to law school. Two medically retired. Eight went to other agencies. He pointed out that Chief Barranco said a common thread in the discussions when they were leaving was salary and area of responsibility. He pointed out if you go to work with SLED you go into a specialty of interest. The jobs we have to offer are not always the jobs the persons want to do, and they want to go where they can find something more interesting to them or their career development.

Captain Kestin stated that was a quick review of what the terminations had been. The terminations have been 28 people in two years out of 89 sworn officers which is 31.5% of the sworn officers who have left. Even with the turnover, 51% of the sworn officers at ADPS have 10 or more years of experience.

Captain Kestin stated the next sheet in the handout shows the new officers who have been hired and their progress in their training. He pointed out there are 26 on the list out of 28 new officers, as two officers did not make the training. He pointed out if there are not checks all the way across the page, they have not completed all their training yet. He said the department utilizes those officers in the area they are currently training. Once they come back from the Police Academy, and they are certified as a Police Officer waiting for their Fire Academy date, they will go on the road and do their police field training and be used on the street as a certified Police Officer. They are limited from fire duty until they obtain that training. The same applies if the Fire Academy has been completed, but not Police Academy. If they get their fire training first, we utilize them in a fire role until they can get to the Police Academy.

Councilman Homoki stated it is anticipated for the rehire program to go away in 2017. He said there is about three years of warning. He asked if there are people in the pipe line to take care of the sudden end of the program.

Captain Kestin stated there is an informal proposal to ask for officers in anticipation of the retirement of 10 other officers. He said the city typically has not allowed them to fill a position before it was vacant. He said that is something that needs to be discussed.

Mr. Pearce stated staff will be reviewing that as part of the budget process.

Councilman Ebner asked if the 10 in the LERI system have to retire. Captain Kestin stated they do have to retire based on the cap that was set by the city when the program was implemented. He said it was determined that officers could retire and be rehired, but the city put a 5 year cap requiring officers who entered the retiree/rehire program to only be able to work for 5 years. He said he understood that was because they did not want officers, particularly at the higher levels of the department, to retire and then be rehired and continue to work and draw two salaries without any upward mobility for some younger officers who were interested in advancement. He pointed out the last time officers could enter that program was December 31, 2012, so five years would be fiscal year 2016-17 when they would have to retire.

Councilman Ebner stated the officers could come back to work, but they could not draw the double salary. Captain Kestin stated they could come back to work below age 57 but could only make \$10,000 a year or they could work somewhere else. Captain Kestin stated they would get their retirement salary, but they could only get \$10,000 of additional salary.

Councilwoman Diggs asked if the department conducts employee satisfaction surveys in general. She stated at her organization the CEO wants to know who is satisfied, who is not and why. Chief Barranco stated currently the department does not conduct satisfaction surveys.

Councilwoman Diggs asked if there are exit interviews when a person leaves the city. She asked if Chief Barranco could give a general idea of some of the comments made in the exit interviews as to why they were leaving. She said salary is probably one of the reasons. She asked how North Augusta Public Safety salaries compare with Aiken's salaries. She pointed out three officers left Aiken and went to North Augusta.

Chief Barranco stated typically when a resignation letter comes in he meets with that person and asks if there are any issues that have arisen. He said sometimes officers will say they really don't want to leave, but they cannot pass up the significant increase in pay elsewhere.

Mr. Pearce stated he thought North Augusta's salaries start about \$43,000. The S.C. Highway Patrol starts at about \$31,150. The Sheriff's Department is at \$32,500. Aiken starts its officers at \$35,800. They get a 5% increase in six months which is done for all city employees. They are eligible for another 5% increase after they finish the Fire Academy and Police Academy. That means in the first year they have the potential to increase their salary by 10%. That would put them at \$39,380 in the first year. He said that is what we are looking at as part of the salary survey for Public Safety Officers. He said we would be discussing that in the budget process.

Councilwoman Diggs asked if evaluations were conducted and how often. Chief Barranco stated during their training evaluations are conducted quarterly, but once they come off probation an evaluation is done yearly.

Mr. Pearce stated the city does a six month and annual evaluation. As part of our evaluation we do goal setting. He said that is an opportunity for an employee to discuss any needs with their supervisor. Councilwoman Diggs asked if they get to do a self evaluation. Mr. Pearce stated they do not, but in the evaluation form there is an opportunity for the employee to express what they may need whether it is training, equipment, etc. to help them do their job better.

Councilwoman Diggs asked if the department would be receptive to a self evaluation and employee satisfaction survey to see if everybody is happy. If they are not happy, she said her CEO will let the surveys be anonymous. She pointed out people don't want to sign their name, have consequences from signing their name, and lose their job because they told the truth. Mr. Pearce stated staff could look into that as that might be something we could do city-wide.

Captain Ron Shelley stated he had been with Public Safety for 37 years. He said this is not the first time that Public Safety has seen high turnover. He said this is the third time. He said the first high turnover wave came in the mid 1980's when Wackenhut showed up on our doorstep and took from everybody. The second time was around 2000, and we lost many officers in a five year period. The only difference in then and now is that the officers who left now were in a more compressed timeframe, which really put the training at a critical level. He said turnover is not new, but has been seen in the past. He said we are having officers coming out of training now, and we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. He pointed out that Chief Barranco stated we are moving forward. He said the ADPS will get out of the bind shortly. It will just take some time. He said this is not new, they have seen this before.

Councilman Ebner stated Captain Shelley is the vehicle person in the department, and he would like to ask some questions on vehicles. He pointed out earlier there was an issue about radios, which was solved two years ago. At the time we talked about the age of the vehicles, and we put 9 or 10 in the budget two years ago. He wanted to know if we have radios in all the vehicles that need to have them. He said the other matter is to be sure we are replacing the right vehicles and that the hand-me-downs go to the right people. He said he looks at the Patrol group as being the key group. They should have the prime equipment because that is the face of the community, not that others are not, but the patrol group is the ones on the front line.

Mr. Pearce stated as part of the ebb and flow, we have had vehicles budgeted, but then we did not schedule a vehicle to be replaced and it had a major problem. He said we have found that we have been able to carry over a vehicle for a year and replace the one with the problem and still spend the same money. He said the department is given discretion to make sure the vehicles that are truly worn out are the ones being replaced.

Councilman Ebner stated in June, 2013, there were two vehicles that were not purchased by Public Safety and the year before there were three that were not purchased. He said he was curious as to why we did not get those five vehicles.

Chief Barranco stated the reason was that staff was down and the vehicles were not being used as projected, so we were able to hold off a year to purchase those vehicles. Working with the budget they were able to wait a year to purchase those vehicles.

Councilman Ebner stated he had dealt with security at plant sites, but not with the city. He said the front line is the person the citizens see driving around, that they know writes the tickets, and shows up at accidents, etc. He said everybody is important, but the patrol vehicles are the men and women that people see. They always dress sharply, but need to be in a sharp vehicle too, not a Crown Victoria with 200,000 miles like the Sheriff's Department. He said he wanted Captain Shelley to know that he has a supporter.

Councilman Homoki stated a concerned citizen had sent him an email while he was out of town regarding a barn fire. He said it had been in the newspaper, but it did not give any details. He said apparently the responding individuals did not want to go into the barn to rescue the horses, because they were scared of horses. The concerned citizen actually had to go in and rescue the horses. He pointed out Aiken makes its name from horses. He felt it is a shame to have a barn fire and have some horses injured or worse. He asked if there was a barn fire is there a way to call in a specialist who would know how to go in a barn and get the horses out.

Chief Barranco stated that Captain Brian Brazier who works in the Fire Division was one of the first officers on the scene of the barn fire. He asked Captain Brazier to address the question.

Captain Brazier stated he responded to the barn fire. When he got there other officers were already on the scene. He said he and another driver actually entered the barn and brought two of the horses out. He said he did not know about the conversation regarding individuals not going into the barn to rescue the horses. He said there is a rescue team and technical rescue team members who are trained to deal with horses and the firefighters are trained to deal with animals in such situations.

Mr. Pearce stated as he recalled a citizen donated some pet masks. Captain Brazier stated they carry pet oxygen masks on all the fire trucks. He said he was not there for the conversation. He said there was a citizen there who was assisting in getting horses out of the barn. He said he did not know how many he got out prior to his arrival. Captain Brazier stated he knew for a fact that he took the last horse out of the barn.

Councilman Homoki stated the individual stated he took out four horses. He said what he was asking basically is there someone who is qualified to get the horses out. He pointed out when you go in there and it is smoky how do you open up the stall. He said for the non-horse person he would not know how to open the stall to get the horse out.

Captain Brazier stated the stalls were not very hard to open. He said the person with him had on an air pack and they were able to go in and open the stall and get the last two horses out. He said fire personnel did help lead the horses out. He said he did want it to be known that they did not refuse to go in there. He said he did not hear the conversation, but he knew that he took the last horse out of the barn.

Councilman Homoki stated if there was a conversation he suggested Captain Brazier may want to check with city personnel to see what conversation the individual had with the "civilian."

Captain Brazier said it could have been just one person, but he was not there and did not know about the conversation. He said the city fire personnel did assist with getting the horses out of the barn.

Councilman Dewar stated he was appreciative to the City Manager, City Council, and Public Safety staff for being present at this meeting. He said it had taken a lot longer than he wanted it to take to get to this point because he had had concerns with the Public Safety turnover for a long time. He said he was glad to see that we are getting closer with the compensation study because that had been a long time coming. He said to keep Public Safety Officers obviously you have to pay them adequately and treat them well enough for them to want to stay. He said he was surprised to hear Chief Barranco say that he conducted exit interviews because he was under the impression that was not the case. He asked if Chief Barranco had had interviews with the 28 people who left. Chief Barranco stated he had talked to all but one of the 28 officers who had left.

Councilman Dewar stated he would recommend that we consider having the exit interview for all staff done by Human Resources. He asked that the recommendation be considered.

Mr. Pearce stated staff is doing exit interviews. Alicia Davis, Human Resources Director, does exit interviews. Councilman Ebner asked if Ms. Davis interviewed the officers who left. Mr. Pearce stated he was not sure about the Public Safety Officers, as he thought that was with Chief Barranco, but exit interviews are done by Human Resources with the regular staff.

Councilman Ebner stated typically exit interviews are done by an independent person within the organization, not the director of the department in which they work. The exit interviews would be done by HR. He asked if in the future the Public Safety Officers could be interviewed by HR.

Mr. Pearce stated staff could talk about that in the staff meeting on Tuesday. He said his understanding is that the Chief was interviewing those who were leaving. He said he knew the HR Director had been involved in Public Safety matters. He said if Council would like for the Public Safety exit interviews to be done by HR, staff could look at that.

Councilman Dewar stated with regard to retirements, it was his understanding that not all the retirees were LERI retirements. They were people that were involved in LERI that decided to leave before the five year period ended. Chief Barranco said that was because they found another job because they knew at some point their employment would be ended with the City of Aiken. The one person that was not participating in the retirement program was unable to participate because the date had already passed to participate.

Councilman Dewar stated he had a list of people who were in the LERI program which Mr. Pearce gave to him, and it showed four that had to leave in 2012 and four that had to leave in 2013. He said the list only had one in 2014. He said he had seen a later list of the people that signed up in December, 2012. He said he was surprised to hear there were 10 more in the program. He said he would like to get an updated list. Mr. Pearce stated staff could provide an updated LERI list.

Councilman Dewar asked if an officer could leave early and be financially penalized for leaving early. He asked who pays when an officer goes to the Police and Fire Academies. He asked if the City of Aiken pays for the officers to attend the academies. Chief Barranco stated a person has to be sponsored by an agency to be able to attend both the South Carolina Fire Academy and the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy. You have to be employed before you can attend the academies.

Councilman Dewar stated if the City of Aiken sends them do they sign an agreement that they promise to remain with the City for a certain period of time. Chief Barranco stated if they go to another law enforcement agency within a certain amount of time, we can ask for compensation from the agency that hires them. Councilman Dewar asked if we had done that. He pointed out that North Augusta must owe us a lot of money. Chief

Barranco responded that for the officers North Augusta hired the time period was beyond the time required to be with the City of Aiken. Chief Barranco stated the reimbursement requirement is just for the Police Academy not the Fire Academy.

Councilman Dewar asked what the shifts that are assigned to places like the credit union, Walmart, Pinecrest, etc. are called. Chief Barranco responded they are called extra duty employment. Councilman Dewar asked if they all receive time and a half pay for that work.

Chief Barranco stated they do receive time and a half. It is a contract between that organization and the city. Councilman Dewar asked if the pay was time and a half of their entire compensation package or time and a half of what they receive in their regular checks. Chief Barranco responded the pay is time and a half of their hourly salary. On holidays they receive double their hourly rate.

Councilman Dewar asked if officers are compelled to work those shifts if they don't want to. He said it seems that some of the younger people don't want overtime. He said when he was their age he would have wanted all the overtime he could get. He said he was not talking about overtime the city would pay, but overtime for the extra duty employment. Chief Barranco stated Captain Turno would respond to the question. He said the day shift supervisor is responsible for covering those extra duty employments. Captain Turno stated if an agency wants to hire an extra duty officer the city will give them that officer, except for Pinecrest. He stated Pinecrest originally started with the County paying that special. He said the city does not force the officers to work Pinecrest. He said, however, if the SRS Credit Union wants to hire an extra duty officer, they fill out a form, and the city mandates that someone on the shift fill those paid specials. It rarely happens that someone has to fill it. He pointed out there is a church in town that has the same contract to work a church. He said the city does require officers to work that paid special for the church.

Councilman Dewar stated the reason he brings that up is that it obviously has an effect on morale. He said we are talking about people that may have just finished three 12 hour shifts. They are looking for a day off but now have to work a paid special. He asked if there is a minimum timeframe they have to work. Captain Turno responded that for those hiring extra duty employment there is a minimum of three hours for employment.

Councilman Merry asked Captain Turno if he had stated the city forces duty officers to provide extra duty. Captain Turno stated no, that the officers are off duty. He said if a shift is on day shift, they would not be on nights, and they get off on Tuesday, but they have Wednesday and Thursday off, one of those officers must work that paid special on Wednesday or Thursday if someone else has not signed up. He said we do the same for ball games. He said with the sheer volume of paid specials we have to try to make it fair. He said it is difficult to tell a school that we will not work the football games anymore because we can't force the officers to work them.

Councilman Dewar asked how many officers are available and the number of shifts. Captain Turno responded there are four shifts with two shifts working and two off. The shifts are slotted for 12 officers each shift. Captain Turno stated we can use officers from the entire department, but the shift that is off on that day shift gets first priority because they want the extra duty. There are officers that really want to work the extra duty. He said standing outside a church may not be exciting though.

Councilman Homoki asked what happens at the Hopelands Gardens concerts. He said those directing traffic look like young volunteers. He said he did not think they were real officers. He asked who controls traffic on Whiskey at Hopelands. Captain Turno stated Public Safety Cadets work the traffic at Hopelands. Councilman Homoki asked if Cadets could be used to satisfy the requirement for ballgames. Captain Turno stated they could not, as they are asking for law enforcement personnel.

Councilman Merry asked if we are down a certain number of patrol officers, if there was ever a circumstance where we are forcing an off duty officer to do a special assignment

while at the same time we are short on patrol. He asked if we are ever short on patrol. Captain Turno responded no.

Mr. Pearce stated if you look at the list distributed, you will see that all of the officers have completed the Criminal Justice Academy. He pointed out 9 officers out of 26 need to go to the Police Academy.

Councilman Merry asked what was the normal number of officers on patrol on any given night. Captain Turno responded there is a minimum of 7 officers. Councilman Merry asked if we always have 7 officers on duty and are never short on that. He said he hears that we have vacancies and that we have turnover and are down in personnel. He asked if that means we can't fill all the slots. Chief Barranco stated one of the things we do is use our Community Services Division to backfill patrol, because the backbone of the department is patrol. He said we had a group of Community Services Officers that we were able to take off other assignments to put on patrol to get through these times. He said it would have been a lot worse if we had not had that division to backfill patrol as we got people trained and promoted. Captain Turno stated there may have been some times where there were 6 due to a death or injury or something that came up that night, and we could not pull someone to fill in. He said that is rare.

Councilman Merry asked how many officers we have in the patrol division and how many in the Community Services Division. Captain Turno stated we have 48 positions with 12 positions per shift. There are 17 Community Service positions. Councilman Dewar asked how many are in the Community Services Division now. Chief Barranco stated Community Services personnel is down because they are being used in patrol. He said he did not have the exact number at this time. Captain Turno stated Community Services is probably down at least 5 employees. Chief Barranco stated Community Services supplements the neighborhoods and downtown. They do work second shift.

Councilwoman Price asked for information regarding questions she had been asked. She pointed out there are 26 officers listed on the handout regarding their training, she asked the demographics of the 26 officers. Chief Barranco stated he could get that information for Council. Councilwoman Price asked for the demographics for the whole department. She asked how many Captains are in the department. Chief Barranco stated there are 6 Captains. Councilwoman Price stated the reason she had been asked those questions is because of the high percentage of incidents that take place in the minority community.

Councilwoman Price asked if the HR Director could describe the grievance procedure for the city. Ms. Alicia Davis, Human Resources Director, stated currently the city does not have a Grievance Committee. She said some cities do have a Grievance Committee, but Aiken does not at this time. She said if an employee has a problem or an issue, they can take the matter to their supervisor within a certain number of days. The employee needs to file a grievance with their supervisor within a certain number of days. If they don't feel comfortable going to the supervisor, they can go to the department director. In that situation the department director forwards the grievance to HR and she takes the grievance to the City Manager.

Councilwoman Price asked if a grievance is verbal or is the employee asked to put the grievance in writing. Ms. Davis stated the grievance should be in writing. Councilwoman Price asked what happens if there is an employee that cannot put the grievance in writing. Ms. Davis stated she always lets employees know that they can come to her, and she will help them write the grievance if they need help. She said if they don't feel comfortable going to their supervisor or department director she tries to help employees know that she is available to help employees with whatever situation they have. Councilwoman Price asked if she does that alone or if she has someone with her. Ms. Davis stated the majority of the time if the employee is coming to her in confidence, it is just her and the employee.

Councilwoman Diggs asked what type procedure Ms. Davis uses for resolution of a grievance. Ms. Davis responded the person will come to her, and how it is handled depends on the situation. She said if the situation is that the employee feels a person or

supervisor does not like them, she sits down and talks about the situation. Sometimes the employee realizes it's not about the person not liking them, but what the employee is doing. She said she has situations like that a lot. She said if the person feels comfortable, she will bring in their supervisor or department director and discuss the situation. She said the majority of the time they are able to solve the issue.

Councilwoman Price asked if the city has any pending legal cases at this time because of some issues. Ms. Davis responded there were no cases that she is aware of.

Councilman Homoki asked how a case gets transferred from HR to law enforcement or the City Solicitor. He asked who makes the determination as to whether the grievance involves potential harassment or something on the edge of criminality as opposed to just dissatisfaction of the employee. Ms. Davis responded if the matter is a law enforcement issue, she always involves Public Safety as she feels that is something she cannot handle. She said she tries not to get in the middle of those issues.

Councilwoman Diggs asked if the city keeps a log of grievances. Ms. Davis stated currently she does not keep a log of grievances. She said she sees a grievance as an employment relation issue that we take care of. Councilwoman Diggs stated she is a Grievance Coordinator for the Rural Health Services. She said when they have a patient that wants to complain about their services or they were not satisfied with the front desk personnel, or the way they talked to them, the way a doctor treated them, they always talk to her. She said she has to document this. She said she has a grievance log that she documents what they say. She said if they are not comfortable writing out their comments, they will tell her what to write down. She said the person complaining must sign the written document. After that she said she tries to get information from the other side of the person they are complaining about. Sometimes she brings the other person in to try to resolve the matter. Then she asks the person they are complaining against to leave the room, and talks with the complainant to see what can be done to resolve the matter. Many times they don't want to get anyone in trouble but want them to know that you have to treat people better and have better customer service. Occasionally the complainant wants to have the employee fired. Usually the complainant offers a satisfactory comment for resolution of the issue, and they work from there to try to get the matter resolved. She said she keeps a monthly log. Each month she presents the log to the CEO so they can see what they need to do to do what they are doing better.

Mr. Pearce pointed out the departments have a citizen comment form if someone has a problem with the service they are receiving. He said we do look at every one of those. Councilwoman Price asked if she had considered a grievance panel, such as herself and two independent external folks from the outside to listen to an employee that may have a concern and give the employee a choice as to whether they want a one-on-one with Ms. Davis or a meeting with an "entrusted" group from the community to listen to their concerns. She asked if we had considered that kind of option. Ms. Davis said she had not.

Mr. Pearce stated we have had a Grievance Committee in the past. He said we have been in consultation with our employment attorneys. He said we have an employment attorney coming down this week. He said we can have that conversation with the employment attorneys to see what they recommend at this time.

Councilman Ebner asked if he was hearing the employees don't have an open door policy to HR. Ms. Davis responded she does have an open door policy for employees. Councilman Ebner pointed out regardless of where an employee works in the city, they don't have to go to their supervisor if they have a problem, and they can come straight to HR. Ms. Davis stated that is correct. She said she sees many employees who just come directly to her. Councilman Ebner stated that did not come across very clear in the comments. Mr. Pearce stated he had had employees come directly to him as well. He said both the City Manager and HR Director have an open door.

Councilman Dewar asked the duty status of the 9 people who have not completed Police FTO. Chief Barranco stated 9 people have not completed that training, but they are

currently in that training. Councilman Dewar stated in regard to the comment that 51% of the sworn officers in the department have over 10 years experience, he would offer the comment that over 31% of them have two years experience, which should present a very special challenge to the senior staff. He said he was sure they recognize it. He said Captain Shelley was here for many years before some of these people were born. He said it is tough working with the younger people. Chief Barranco stated it is a concern to staff. He pointed out, however, some of the people hired recently have experience. They are not brand new to public safety. He said at least five of the officers hired recently either have experience with Aiken Public Safety or other law enforcement agencies. Also, there are some with fire experience. At least five of the 26 recent hires have law enforcement experience. Councilman Dewar stated he understands, but there are 30 officers with less than two years experience. He said if there are 30 and they are spread among four shifts, you are talking 7 per shift. He said what he wanted to mention is that it is a special challenge. He said the whole reason we are here tonight is that we need to work extra hard to keep these people. He said we are making a big investment in them with the training for law enforcement and fire academy. He said he would challenge Chief Barranco to make a special effort to keep them and work on the morale. He said he felt we were not doing our part with the compensation issue, but would find out for sure when we get the compensation study. He said there is a very complicated compensation system with the different benefits in the program.

Councilman Dewar stated part of our problem is that we have a Public Safety Program as opposed to a Police Department and a Fire Department. He said he was aware that there are only a few municipalities in the state that have Public Safety Departments. He said he was not here when the decision was made to make the department a Public Safety Department. He said he would leave with the thought as to whether or not we should consider going into a Police Department and a Fire Department. He said it would make recovery for people who decide to leave a lot easier and would address the concerns on the part of some of the young people who only want to be police officers and not firemen. He said he was sure the department had a lot of those. He said he would leave him with that thought. He thanked Public Safety personnel for being present at the work session to discuss the matters.

Councilman Merry asked what we would be getting in the salary survey. Mr. Pearce responded the salary survey will be part of the budget process. We would take a look at the salary survey recommendations, the salary ranges, and when we present the budget, we would have a plan for what needs to be done regarding salaries, not only for Public Safety, but city-wide.

Councilman Merry stated he wondered what the salary survey would tell us. He said presently we know what the salaries are. Mr. Pearce stated we would be looking at the salary ranges for other Public Safety Departments. He said we are doing a comprehensive review of Public Safety salaries. He said we have not received the report yet, but are working on getting that. As part of the budget discussions, that will be our opportunity to talk about salaries and why make adjustments. Mr. Pearce stated his main concern is that he does not want to raise all the salaries in one department and kill the morale in other departments because we have not considered salary adjustments for them. He pointed out we had that discussion when we talked about the salaries in this year's budget. He said that is why we looked, particularly at employees who might be at the poverty line or below. He said he was happy to report that everyone in the city earns at least \$10 per hour. He said we are above the minimum wage, but that does not mean it is acceptable. He said that is something we look at every year. He said every year we look at about one-fourth of our salaries. With the concerns from Council, we are looking at all of Public Safety, but we are also looking at other departments as well. He said we do that as part of the budget process.

Councilman Merry stated then the information that would be in the salary survey is not information to which we currently have access. He asked if it would be the salaries of other municipalities. Mr. Pearce stated the surveys are typically reported in ranges for the positions. They survey several different entities. Councilman Merry stated it was mentioned about a survey city-wide for all staff. He asked if that survey is being done for all staff or just for the Public Safety Department. Mr. Pearce stated we specifically

focused on Public Safety at Council's request. Typically we look at about one-fourth of the positions in the city every year. Every four years we will have looked at all positions. Councilman Dewar asked if the company was an independent company and not the Municipal Association. Mr. Pearce responded the survey is not being done by the Municipal Association.

Councilman Merry stated if we have turnover problems it seems that presents two challenges. He pointed out he sees the explanations for the turnover. He said in order to prevent turnover, we need to look at ways to help retain employees, and once we do lose employees we need ways to recruit new employees. He asked Chief Barranco what his ideas would be to better retain existing employees and recruit new ones. Chief Barranco stated he did not feel we were having issues recruiting employees, as we are receiving many applications. He said when he is in contact with other chiefs and sheriffs across the state and southeast United States, many are struggling to get applications. He said presently we are not struggling to get applications. He said to retain he would suggest that salaries is a common thread. He felt an adjustment in salaries would help move us forward to help with retention. Councilman Merry stated his impression from the article in the newspaper asking for new applicants was that we were not able to get applicants and we were having to go out publicly and ask for them. Chief Barranco stated that was not the case. Mr. Pearce pointed out that the city advertises all open positions. Councilman Merry stated what he saw was a full article in the newspaper.

Councilman Merry stated we had always felt that Aiken was competitive in the compensation arena because we offered ancillary benefits beyond just salary. He said with new recruits and younger officers he asked if we are getting the bang for our buck with that. He asked if benefits were of value to those people. Chief Barranco stated he felt that was a case by case basis. He said for some people benefits are a value, but to some people they are not. He said that was part of the discussions they had at their staff retreat recently to see what they can take to the City Manager to see what can be done to adjust benefits.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated there is one other item on the work session agenda, but it is time for the regular Council meeting. He said it was more of an information matter. He said it has to do with the Municipal Association Award discussion. He said he understood there were some people who were present who wanted to make some comments. He said we would take those comments after the information is presented on the Municipal Association Award.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated he appreciated everyone who has had something to say. He felt all had learned a lot. He said we all appreciate Public Safety, and feel they do a very good job, especially under the circumstances that Public Safety has had to work. He pointed out the Safe Communities program that has been brought into our city. He pointed out there had been three call-ins for offenders in the community. He said 45 offenders had been talked to by many of the high ranking folks, going all the way up to Washington, about the fact that we will not put up with any more problems from them. He felt that is paying dividends. He felt Coffee with the Cops is a good program and beneficial. He pointed out Public Safety is working with the First Tee, helping kids learn something about golf and helping them with their homework. He said he understands Public Safety will be helping kids with reading soon in the Bikes and Books program. He said he wanted to point out these programs that Public Safety is doing in addition to their patrol duties.

Municipal Association Award Safe Communities Program

Mr. Pearce stated staff wanted to let Council know that Cynthia Mitchell has been working with staff and command staff at Public Safety. Every year the Municipal Association of South Carolina solicits entries for their Municipal Achievement Award. He said staff feels it is time to submit the Safe Communities Program. He said Ms. Mitchell is present to review what will be submitted to the Municipal Association.

Ms. Mitchell stated she had been working on the application for Safe Communities and everything has to be answered in 100 words or less. She said the City of Aiken will submit the Aiken Safe Communities approach for the 2014 Municipal Association of South Carolina Award in the Public Safety category. She said it is felt that the submission meets the six judging criteria for innovation, efficient use of resources, role in the city's overall vision, effective use of partnerships, quantifiable results, and adaptability to other home towns. She said the Safe Communities approach does emphasize partnerships that have been created among law enforcement agencies, service providers and our grass roots community. There are 16 federal, state, and local enforcement agencies that have come together to form the joint law enforcement task force. We also have a wide range of service providers and grass roots individuals that come together and help us with the aftercare and life skills pieces that we work with our notified participants. Of the 45 reoccurring violent offenders who have been a part of the notification since January 2013 only two have reoffended violently. She said we do know that our Safe Communities approach is impacting our community. We are going to highlight in our application those aspects of what we do in Aiken that makes Safe Communities unique to Aiken. She said the program is a nationwide model, but there are some aspects that are unique to the City of Aiken and that is what we will be highlighting in the application. Mr. Pearce stated he understands that this is the first of its kind in South Carolina that has seen its way through. Ms. Mitchell said that is true. She pointed out that in Aiken we have some components that are unique to what we are doing with our Safe Communities approach. She said they were delighted to have the opportunity to share best practices and lessons learned that we have gone through in Aiken in creating Safe Communities and look forward to sharing that with our peers statewide.

Mayor Cavanaugh asked how many people can go to help with the presentation. Ms. Mitchell said they were looking at a delegation of about 6 or 7 people. She said they are presently working through how to present the program in a unique manner. She said she was just trying to get the application prepared at this time.

Mr. Pearce stated the judges will want to hear from a Public Safety representative, someone from the non-profit community, and the citizen volunteers. Mayor Cavanaugh asked if any young people could be worked into the program. Ms. Mitchell stated they are hoping to have one of the participants with them. Mayor Cavanaugh stated he had had some experience, and that seems to help.

Public Safety

Mr. Tom Farmer, of 1775 Highland Park Drive, stated he is a lifelong resident of Aiken. He said he wanted to echo what Dr. Skidmore said about the Public Safety Department. He said the department is recovering from an unspeakable loss of two officers within five weeks dying in the line of duty. He said he understands Councilman Dewar's concerns about turnover, but in his mind and all of our minds, that has to play a huge part in the turnover. He said he hears what everyone is saying about the salaries and hopefully that can be addressed. He said Mayor Cavanaugh had commented on some of the things that Public Safety was doing, such as the Coffee with a Cop, Aiken Safe Communities, and recently becoming an accredited agency. He said he felt Public Safety is way ahead of the curve and that they do a fantastic job. He felt we need to support them 110%.

Mr. Ed Giobbe stated he wanted to reiterate what some of the other speakers had already said. He said the first responsibility of City Council is to protect the lives and property of the citizens of Aiken. He said he was confident from what he had heard that we have a Public Safety Department that is undertaking that. He felt it is very important and that City Council is very cognizant of it, that Public Safety be given all the resources and all the proper staffing that is required to ensure that they can carry out their responsibilities to their fullest extent. It is an unfortunate circumstance and a fact of life in our modern society today that we have far too many people who lack respect for authority and certainly lack respect for law enforcement. He said a number of people have expressed the unfortunate circumstances about the death of several of our officers. He said it is unfortunate, but it is a problem that is not faced by Aiken only. He said he recently saw the Federal FBI crime statistics for a 12 month period. There were 48 officers killed in

the line of duty. It is unfortunate that 6 were killed in the northeast, 20 in southern states, and 2 were killed in the City of Aiken. He said that is rather shocking statistics. There would have been a third tragedy had he not been wearing a vest. It tells us something about the times that we live in. He said it is why it is so important that we give our full and complete support to Public Safety, Chief Barranco, and people in that department. He said we need to do everything we can possibly do to give them all the help we can. He felt it was also extremely important that we continue to have the kind of contact that has been carried out with children in the schools to make sure they understand that law enforcement is not just somebody riding by in a car, but that they understand what Public Safety is about, what they do, and that they are there to help. He felt the more we can do to make young people understand what law enforcement is about and respect law enforcement, that is something that can go a long way to improve the whole feeling of what it is to live in a community and have responsibility to all of us. He said he felt it was an unfortunate circumstance that most of us either have or know people who have had some contact with a crime or experience themselves. He said personally over the last few years he has had friends and even himself some experience with that. He felt that is a reflection of the times we live in. He felt it is important that we maintain contact with Public Safety and the public to get the kind of assurance that Aiken is a safe place to live and work. He said he would urge Council to undertake all the initiatives they had been talking about and give them all the help and support possible.

Mayor Cavanaugh pointed out it is also important that citizens report anything they see going on out in the community that may seem different or strange. He said that is a big help to Public Safety as well. He said if everyone would report things that they see that would be a big help.

Aiken City Council Minutes

REGULAR MEETING

January 13, 2014

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

Others Present: Richard Pearce, Gary Smith, Stuart Bedenbaugh, George Grinton, Kim Abney, Ed Evans, Tim Coakley, Charles Barranco, Glenn Parker, Alicia Davis, Sara Ridout, Maayan Schechter of the Aiken Standard, Andrew O'Byrne of the Aiken Leader, TV Channels 6 and 12, and about 75 citizens.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 7:26 P.M. Councilwoman Price led in prayer, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

GUIDELINES

Mayor Cavanaugh reviewed the guidelines for speaking at the Council meeting. He asked that those who would like to speak raise their hand and be recognized and limit their comments to five minutes. He pointed out that citizens could only speak on the items on the agenda.

MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting of December 9, 2013, were considered for approval. Councilman Ebner moved, seconded by Councilwoman Diggs, that Council approve the December 9, 2013, minutes as corrected. The motion was unanimously approved.

PRESENTATIONS

Historic Aiken Foundation Wooden Bridges

Mr. Owen Clary, President of Historic Aiken Foundation, said that historians tell us that the exacting history of an event cannot be written until after 50 years of the event. This brings us to ask the question of what will historians or history say about events in Aiken 50 years from now. He said will the wooden bridges be up or down—who knows. He said the Historic Aiken Foundation had taken a proactive position and will always be true to its mission of trying to promote, improve, and preserve buildings and structures of historical or architectural significance in Aiken. Recently several members of the Historic Aiken Foundation led a movement to try to preserve the historic wooden railroad bridges in our town. Other organizations and entities have also joined in this effort. He said they thank all groups and individuals who have voiced support to save the bridges. Therefore the Historic Aiken Foundation recognizes the specific positions and actions of City Council in this matter. It is gratifying to them that they have Council's support. He said to show the appreciation and thanks of the Historic Aiken Foundation to City Council, they would like to present each Councilmember with a large, wonderful photo of the three wooden bridges in town. He said this amazing photo was taken by a Californian in 2008, Mr. Carl Bagge. He said Mr. Bagge had given Historic Aiken Foundation permission to reproduce and use the photo in their efforts to draw attention to the wooden bridges. He then presented each of Council with a photo of the bridges. He said Council has Historic Aiken Foundation's sincere thanks. Mr. Clary pointed out the photo is very unique. It is a photo of the three wooden bridges. He thanked Council for their presentations and support.

Mayor Cavanaugh asked that Mr. Clary give Council's thanks to the Historic Aiken Foundation. He recognized the members of Historic Aiken Foundation who were present.

Tennis Team Recognitions USTA SC Recognitions Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department Proclamations

Mayor Cavanaugh stated the next presentation has to do with the USTA South Carolina recognition and the H. O. Weeks Tennis Team recognitions.

Mr. Glenn Parker, Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director, stated several years ago a decision was made to build clay tennis courts at the Weeks Center. Not many recreation departments were doing that at the time. Everyone was building hard courts. They would take the blower, clean them off and roll on. Council allowed us to build clay courts and allowed us to put the irrigation underground. That has led to some of the success of the teams at this meeting with the recognition of the tournament and the state champions present. The clay courts allow us to play literally from 8 a.m. to 7 or 8 p.m. We don't have to stop during the middle of the day to water the courts like a lot of clubs do. He said that had been a real godsend over the last few years. The fruition of some of that is coming forward at this time. He asked Al Marshall, an Aiken resident, who is the immediate past President of the USTA of South Carolina, to make a presentation.

Mr. Marshall stated as Mr. Parker had said the building of the new facilities really put Aiken on the tennis map as far as USTA South Carolina is concerned. He said USTA South Carolina has over 24,000 members in the state. Over 80% of the tennis teams play league tennis. He said being able to host a state championship is quite an accomplishment and requires a fair amount of facilities to support the people. Four years ago with the construction of the new facilities, the City of Aiken got its bid accepted for its first state championship. He said the players asked where is Aiken. They were used to going to Hilton Head, the Grand Strand, or Charleston. That year they found out where Aiken is and now they all want to come back. It is fantastic. They appreciate the downtown, the restaurants; they fill the hotels, etc. This past year in recognition at the annual meeting held in December, the City of Aiken received the award for the Adult

Senior Tournament of the Year. He asked that Mark Calvert, the supervisor of tennis for the city, please come forward. Mr. Marshall stated Aiken had done a great job with the process. What they talk about most among the leagues is not only the quality of the facilities and the town, but also the attitude and cooperation of everybody that makes it work. If the court gets wet it is taken care of. This is a fantastic organization. He presented a plaque to Mr. Calvert.

Mr. Mark Calvert, Tennis Supervisor, stated it is with great honor that he accepts the award on behalf of the City. He said he wanted to second some of what Mr. Marshall said. He said it is an honor for him to live in a city that had a vision to build the Tennis Center. We talked about building it for a while, and what we would like to do. He said this points out what we have been able to do. He said the award is truly a community award. He said we used every court and club in Aiken and some in North Augusta to play the tournament. He said we had over 2,000 players in Aiken. He said the city staff from top to bottom is to be commended. He said maintenance had really stepped up at the events. He said there were many, many volunteers. He said a lot of people in the audience came out to help him. He pointed out that rain is a big killer at the tournaments. He said when he first started bidding on the tournaments, he would always tell Mary Goings, the League Coordinator for the state of South Carolina, that if it rained he would get the courts dry. He said as a player and a coach he had played in many of the tournaments, and it would rain, but no one would try to get the courts dry once it stopped. He said it is very frustrating as a player and a coach. He said he kept telling Ms. Goings, when at a tournament and it rained, that if they were in Aiken they would get the courts dry. He said the first year Aiken had the tournament, there was a little rain. He said he had volunteers that came out with towels and the maintenance crew came from everywhere, and they got the courts dry. Mr. Calvert pointed out there is a lot of staff, volunteers, and sponsors for the tournament. Mr. Calvert stated he hoped Aiken maintains the vision to keep building tennis courts. He said we need more courts to keep hosting the tournaments and to win the awards. He said the first year Aiken hosted the tournament, it was amazing the number of people who came to him and said they were so disappointed they were coming to Aiken, but when they got here they loved it. They asked him to bid on the tournament again. He thanked Council again for their support.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated proclamations of recognition had been prepared for four teams. He read the proclamations and presented proclamations to the women's team from Odell Weeks that won the 2013 USTA Adult 55 & over 3.0 State Championship, the women's team from Odell Weeks that won the 2013 USTA Adult 65 & over 3.0 State Championship, the men's team from Odell Weeks that won the 2013 Adult 55 & over 4.0 State Championship, and the women's team from Odell Weeks that won the 2013 USTA 40 & over Combo 5.5 State Championship.

Councilwoman Price pointed out that Glenn Parker has a passion for recreation throughout the city, and thanked him for the fine job he is doing.

Sand River Woman's Club
30th Anniversary
Proclamation

Mayor Cavanaugh stated the next presentation was recognition of the Sand River Woman's Club on their 30th birthday. Mayor Cavanaugh asked that Gail Ebner come forward. Ms. Ebner asked that Jean Schwalbert, and Becky Robbins who were two founding members and been members the entire 30 years, to also come forward.

Mayor Cavanaugh read the proclamation commending the Sand River Woman's Club for their 30 years of service in the community. He presented the proclamation to Ms. Ebner.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Appointments

Al Snell

Park Commission

Lucy Knowles

Design Review Board

Mayor Cavanaugh stated Council needed to consider appointments to the various boards, commissions, and committees.

Mr. Pearce stated Council has 13 pending appointments to fill vacancies on different City boards, commissions, and committees. Two appointments are presented for Council's consideration at this meeting.

Councilmember Dewar has recommended the reappointment of Al Snell to the Park Commission. If reappointed, this term would expire December 1, 2015.

Councilmember Homoki has recommended the reappointment of Lucy Knowles to the Design Review Board. If reappointed, her term would expire December 31, 2015.

For City Council consideration is the reappointment of Al Snell to the Park Commission and Lucy Knowles to the Design Review Board.

Councilman Dewar moved, seconded by Councilwoman Diggs, that Council reappoint Al Snell to the Park Commission with the term to expire December 1, 2015, and reappoint Lucy Knowles to the Design Review Board with the term to expire December 31, 2015. The motion was unanimously approved.

Councilman Ebner stated he would like to recommend the reappointment of Jason Rabun to the Recreation Commission and Lynnda Bassham to the Senior Commission.

Councilman Merry stated he would like to recommend the reappointment of Josh Stewart to the Design Review Board. He also stated that Henry Krippner had asked that he replace him on the Board of Zoning Appeals. He said he would like to nominate Bud Coward to replace Henry Krippner on the BZA.

Councilwoman Diggs stated she would like to recommend the reappointment of Scott Murphy to the Senior Commission.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated he would like to recommend the reappointment of John McMichael to the Planning Commission and Brenda Mills to the Recreation Commission.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated the recommendations would be on the next agenda for Council's consideration.

LOAN – ORDINANCE 01132014

Crosland Park

Northside Revitalization

Water and Sewer Fund

Mayor Cavanaugh stated this was the time advertised for second reading and public hearing on an ordinance to modify the Crosland Park loan from the Water and Sewer Fund.

Mr. Pearce read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE TERMS OF A LOAN TO THE CITY OF AIKEN
NORTHSIDE REDEVELOPMENT FUND.

Mr. Pearce stated years ago City Council approved advancing \$1.5 million for the rehabilitation of about 20 homes in the Crosland Park neighborhood out of the Utilities Fund. That note falls due April, 2014. At the first reading of the ordinance Council talked about some flexibility needed for repayment of the loan. He said while we are selling houses, we are still in need of selling more houses in order to retire the loan or to collect money from the Capital Projects Sales Tax III to retire the loan so the repayment funds can be used in the Utility Fund. There are several utility project commitments that we have in the budget. Those funds could more appropriately be used in the Utility Fund.

Mr. Pearce stated he had spoken with Councilmember Ebner earlier today. Councilmember Ebner is recommending an amendment to the ordinance in the third paragraph—"using funds from the Capital Projects Sales Tax III, Northside Neighborhood Renewal, or other appropriate funds." Mr. Pearce stated with repayment of the loan the funds would be used for utility projects. He stated the ordinance was approved on first reading at the December 9, 2013, meeting. The ordinance will modify the terms of the loan from an April, 2014, due date to a December 31, 2014, due date.

Councilman Dewar stated when adding Northside Neighborhood Renewal would "or other appropriate funds" still be necessary. Mr. Pearce responded that did need to be included, as we could pay the loan with other funds as well.

Councilman Ebner asked where the comment should be added that funds from the repayment of the loan will be used for water and sewer utility projects.

Mr. Pearce stated the wording could be added in the third paragraph to read "using funds from the Capital Projects Sales Tax III, Northside Neighborhood Renewal, or other appropriate funds to be used for utility project commitments." He said the money repaid would go to utility projects in Fund 002, not General Fund or any other fund. It was pointed out that is the fund where the loan money originally came from—the Water System Replacement Account.

The public hearing was held.

Councilman Ebner moved, seconded by Councilwoman Price, that Council approve on second and final reading the ordinance to modify the loan terms of the loan for the rehabilitation of homes in Crosland Park with two amendments as discussed. The motion was unanimously approved.

PROCUREMENT - ORDINANCE

Purchasing Amendment

Mayor Cavanaugh stated an ordinance had been prepared for Council's consideration to approve changes to the Procurement Code.

Mr. Pearce read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY PROCUREMENT CODE.

Mr. Pearce stated Stuart Bedenbaugh, Assistant City Manager, under the City Code is the Purchasing Agent for the City of Aiken. He said Mr. Bedenbaugh is prepared to talk about his discussions with staff and recommendations to the Procurement Code that would help us in items we buy for the City of Aiken.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated we have embarked on this discussion with staff. He said it goes back several years when he would do a procurement presentation at the supervisors' meeting the issue of increasing the amounts would come up. He said this fall he had discussions with the department directors, staff and the City Manager about trying to assist our folks in getting their jobs done most efficiently in terms of purchasing. He said we last addressed this issue around 2000. Since then prices have changed. There was an issue regarding things such as repairs of equipment, and purchasing of goods that were used a good bit. We felt that after fourteen years it was time to address this issue. This is

when we came up with the idea to increase the dollar amount for oral bids from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Our department directors or supervisors would get a minimum of three oral bids using vendors from our vendors list. We would go for a minimum of three written bids from our vendors list in the \$5,000 to \$25,000 range and then adjust our sealed bid amount to \$25,000 and higher. He said that is the recommendation that was discussed at the department directors' retreat in December. He said that is the recommendation for Council's consideration.

Mayor Cavanaugh asked Mr. Beddenbaugh to repeat some of the issues. Mr. Beddenbaugh stated where we were finding issues, for example, was for vehicles and other equipment and engine repairs. He pointed out the current amounts were set back in 2000. He said like in Public Services with the garbage vehicles and the large diesel engines, some Public Safety vehicles and the cost of other goods, staff is finding that after fourteen years that the amounts need to be adjusted for efficiency since costs have risen.

Mayor Cavanaugh asked if there is a cost over a certain amount for which you would use this, or would this be for anything less than some of the bigger things. Mr. Beddenbaugh stated it is a range. Presently if the cost is \$1,500 to \$5,000, staff gets oral bids from vendors. The proposed ordinance would raise the amount to \$2,500. Anything less than \$2,500 staff could use a local business and get a small repair or purchase goods or services.

Councilman Dewar asked what kind of records are kept of the oral bids. He said there had been some concerns since he had been on Council that did not agree with the decision or agree with the process, etc. He pointed out the paragraph that talks about getting oral bids. He asked if a memo was made for the file saying who the oral bids came from and what they were.

Mr. Beddenbaugh stated in that case when oral bids are received, they have to be noted on the documentation. It is on the purchase order or the check request that is to be examined by the appropriate person. Anything costing \$2,500 or less is signed for by the department director and the supervisor requesting it. Then Finance will review it. Anything \$2,500 or greater is reviewed by the Purchasing Agent. He said he was responsible for signing and reviewing purchases \$2,500 or greater. He said he has called departments to inquire if something looks amiss. He said it is documented.

Councilman Dewar stated when he first saw the item in the packet he thought it was in response to an email that he had sent and asked that Council vote on the recommendation of Bill McGhee to adopt the North Augusta procurement process for professional services. He pointed out that is not in the proposed ordinance.

Mr. Pearce stated it is not in the ordinance, but is noted in Mr. Beddenbaugh's memo regarding the proposed changes. He pointed out that Mr. Beddenbaugh had looked at professional service acquisition by several different cities. He asked that he share that with Council.

Mr. Beddenbaugh stated we did take a look and compared our professional services section of the City Code with fourteen other cities, basically the cities ranging in population in South Carolina from 21,000 up to 66,000. He pointed out the larger cities have larger procurement departments where they focus solely on purchasing. He said he looked at the fifteen jurisdictions, including Aiken, and found that eight of the municipalities procure professional services with an RFP or an RFQ type method. Seven, including the City of Aiken, exempt the procurement of professional services from the procurement code. He said that does not necessarily mean that the City of Aiken does not issue RFPs. He said we spread the work around. He said that professional services are things that require certification or licensing. We have had 20 incidents where we had to go out and procure the services of an engineering firm or engineering service over the last three years for engineering projects where we have needed some outside expertise for projects. We used nine different engineering firms for these 20 projects. He said that is an example of how we spread the work around and used entities with good quality

expertise. He said that gives us flexibility. He pointed out when a RFP is issued it adds time to the process.

Councilman Ebner asked if there was a dollar limit on the procurement for professional services such as \$10,000 or \$25,000.

Mr. Bedenbaugh responded that if it is a budgeted item and Council has approved it in the budget, such as Council did for the evaluation of the first floor of the Municipal Building, we go with what is approved in the budget. He said if we have a budget to build the water plant, obviously we would not spend the entire amount of money on engineering services. We do watch the pennies very closely. He said the folks in the Engineering Department work very closely in negotiating the amounts and contracts with the various firms.

Mr. Pearce pointed out that for the larger projects we do go to a RFQ or RFP.

Councilman Ebner asked about the ongoing saga of Gem Lakes. He asked if that was procured by the current procedure we use. He said that has to be adding up.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated as he recalled that was something that Council wanted--an independent testing and evaluation. Since Council asked for the study staff obtained the services of W. R. Toole, that was done at Council's direction.

Councilman Homoki asked who is the keeper of the vendor list. He asked if there was anyone on the list that we don't want to contract with.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated the vendor's list is kept in the City Manager's Office. He said we do not turn anyone down who wants to be on the vendor list. He said we have a commodity code catalog, and we ask that vendors put down all commodity codes that apply to their service and their specialty.

Mr. Pearce pointed out that Mayor Pro Tem Homoki's question is do we have a list of people we do not do business with.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated we would keep a list if we have folks that we do not want to do business with. It was pointed out that list would be a public document.

Councilman Homoki stated it is not such a problem today with the modern computers, but he wondered who is in charge to make sure that if somebody has a \$2,500 bid that he gets computers that are compatible with our system.

Mr. Pearce stated they don't necessarily have to have computers that are compatible with our system. We do have a registration form which is through the website. That is accessible to all platforms.

Councilwoman Price stated she assumed that the city has a master vendors' list. She wondered how often that is updated and if we have a call for vendors to get on the list on an annual basis.

Mr. Pearce responded that it is updated on a continuing basis. He said we maintain that on the intranet. One can apply over the internet or come into the Administration Building and apply with a paper application. He said it is constantly monitored. He said we have an automatic system. He said to be eligible to do work with the city, one needs to have a city business license, general liability insurance policy, and worker's compensation policy. He said we keep up with that and, on the anniversary date of those policies, we notify the department directors as well as the City Manager, and we let the vendor know so they can update their information.

Councilwoman Price suggested that on an annual basis that we include information about the vendors list in the newsletter that is included with the water bills. Then, if anything comes up, we can say that every year on an annual basis in January we post that information.

Mr. Pearce pointed out that would go out to 18,000 accounts, but would only be people that receive city water. He pointed out on the website we have the vendor application information and a publication called "Doing Business with the City of Aiken." We are in the process of updating that. We could announce a link to that as well as have hard copies available.

Councilman Merry asked, for his information, whether for contracts exceeding \$5,000, but not exceeding \$25,000, we would go to the vendors list and solicit bids from at least three of the vendors on the list. Mr. Pearce stated that is correct, but that does not prevent going outside the list. However, anyone who does any work for the city would need to have a business license and the insurance policies.

Councilman Merry stated then theoretically staff would pick three names off the list and call them to give you a bid on the item.

Mr. Pearce stated you could, but you would not have to limit yourself to the list.

Councilman Merry stated the point is that if you have 20 qualified names on the list, would the same three get called for every one of the contracts.

Mr. Pearce stated we have done that analysis, and it is time to do it again. He said we would do that again before second reading. He said you might think that could be a potential pitfall, but in practice we actually find out that the business gets spread out amongst a lot of different vendors. He said we had a particular business that complained about another business getting more of the business, and really there was another business that got more business than the other businesses. Then the business that complained about the other business actually got more than the first one complaining. He said that is something staff can look at and something that Mr. Bedenbaugh as Purchasing Agent would monitor.

Councilwoman Price stated one thing is that we want to make sure we get as many businesses, especially local businesses, participating because of the One Cent Sales. She said we have \$50 million in projects that were passed by the voters, and we want to make sure we get participation by as many folks as possible, recognizing that each one brings their quality of specialty to the table, including women-owned and minority-owned businesses.

Mr. Pearce stated the city has done significant business with minority-owned businesses. He said that is an excellent point. Again, in a separate section, Council passed a local vendor preference. In looking at the bids we have to discount by the fact that if a business is in the city limits there is a 5% consideration, or if the business is in Aiken County there is a 3% consideration. He said that is all part of the process.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated we do look at all these things when we get bids. That is part of the formula to determine the lowest responsible bidder.

Councilman Dewar stated he was prepared to make a motion. He moved that Council approve the ordinance on first reading to make changes in the procurement code and add the provision that North Augusta has in their procurement code in Section 2-253 relating to bidding for professional services.

Mayor Cavanaugh asked if that is what staff is proposing. He asked that Mr. Pearce explain the differences.

Mr. Pearce stated currently the City of Aiken has kind of a hybrid system. We don't necessarily go to a RFP or RFQ for every single contract for professional services. He said we could have a contract for professional services that is less than \$5,000. He said he understands that North Augusta does a RFP or RFQ for all professional services. Mr. Bedenbaugh stated that is his understanding. Mr. Pearce stated staff could check on that before second reading.

Councilman Dewar stated a RFP or RFQ is required for professional services exceeding \$10,000 in North Augusta.

Mr. Pearce stated using a stated dollar amount for professional services exceeding a certain amount would help as far as small contracts.

Councilman Ebner asked that someone read the amendment to the motion so Council would be clear as to what they would be voting on.

Mr. Pearce stated he understands that what we would have to do for second reading is to add a separate section for professional services. In the event professional services would be contracted or purchased that exceed \$10,000 that would be done through a RFP or RFQ process. He said we would have that amended language in the second reading.

Councilman Ebner pointed out that Mr. Pearce or Mr. Bedenbaugh mentioned that when a project is part of the budget, staff goes out to get the engineering services needed, but staff would still need to be considering the people that are on the list.

Mr. Pearce stated that under the current language, for example, if we were doing the water plant we know those professional services would exceed \$10,000, and we would do a RFP or RFQ.

Councilman Ebner stated that is in the contract we have, and he felt that is very appropriate when we do that for projects. Almost always you know that you will need compaction or an engineer like Woolpert to do the startup and certification for DHEC. He felt those should be part of the bid for the Shiloh Water Plant and other type things as we would need those services, but we should be able to identify them also. We don't want this to bog down the project in hiring someone to certify a water plant, as this should be part of the contract.

Mr. Pearce stated we appreciate that, and the last thing Mr. Grinton wants is to be bogged down. He has a long, long list of projects.

Councilman Ebner stated what we need to be looking at is when we need to get a surveyor to survey some ground. Mr. Pearce pointed out he hoped a surveyor would not charge more than \$10,000 to do a survey. He felt that may be an exception.

Councilman Homoki asked if the city had to do a report for SBA or the Department of Labor on what the distribution is on the contracts or grants for the year.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated we do that for grants. It is part of the grant compliance.

Councilwoman Price seconded the motion to approve the ordinance on first reading with the amendment adding the requirement for a RFP or RFQ for professional services exceeding \$10,000. The motion was unanimously approved.

INFORMATION

State Ethics Commission

Mr. Pearce called Council's attention to the letter from the State Ethics Commission reminding Council of the requirement to file their 2014 Statement of Economic Interests report. He pointed out this has to be done on line. The deadline for the filing is March 30, 2014.

Incident Reports

Public Safety

Mr. Pearce pointed out that over the holidays a memo was sent to Council regarding Incident Reports involving juveniles. He said he and staff had already discussed the Freedom of Information Act and that when the requests are received, we will make sure the City Attorney and the City Manager know that these requests have come in. He said

he would be sending a copy of a memo to Council regarding the Freedom of Information Act requests.

Mr. Pearce stated the Incident Reports are something that we automatically post in a notebook that is in the lobby of Public Safety Headquarters. He said one report was not posted over the three day time period when he issued the directive that staff would put all reports in. He said that would not happen again. The reports go in the notebook. He pointed out that he had provided a copy of the Attorney General's opinion to Council.

DHEC Fine
\$2,000

Councilman Dewar stated that in the December 9, 2013, minutes it was mentioned that there had been a \$2,000 DHEC fine. He asked if it was possible to get more details on the fine and copies of the investigative report.

Mr. Pearce stated if Council would like copies of the report, it could be sent to Council. He said it was a matter of having someone on the job site who had received the training in proper trenching and excavation of dirt.

Councilman Dewar asked how DHEC found out about this and if we know who reported it to them. Mr. Pearce stated it was reported to them so they investigated. He said he did not have that information with him. He said we can look into it. He said the fact of the matter is that he met with the Safety Committee last week, and he made it very clear to them that safety is our number one consideration and number one budget item. He said Public Safety already has a system in place where they keep up with the certification of the officers. He said we are putting into effect a system to make sure we avoid these fine situations where we have the certifications of all our workers who are doing tasks that are covered by OSHA regulations and will make sure the certifications are up to date. We will also make sure when we are doing a project that the person who has been trained in that proper task is on the job. He said he would get copies of the paper work for Council.

Councilwoman Price asked if we knew if it was an employee or a citizen who reported the matter. Mr. Pearce stated he would have to look at the report.

Councilman Ebner stated there are three reports. One would be the internal investigation, the DHEC investigation, and our findings. Some reports may be combined, but there should be at least two reports. Mr. Pearce stated staff would get the documents as the documents are public information documents. He stated staff is taking steps for that not to happen again.

Councilman Ebner stated the rumor has that it was a trench in an open hole, which is where most construction accidents get into fatalities so we don't want to get into that. Mr. Pearce stated that is true with cave ins or a shift of dirt.

W-2 Form

Councilman Dewar asked when employees would get W-2 forms. Ms. Abney, Finance Director, stated the W-2s would be issued by January 31, 2014.

Public Safety

Councilman Dewar stated there was one item that he did not get to cover regarding Public Safety because time ran out. He said he was concerned about an incident that occurred. Mr. Pearce stated Chief Barranco is prepared to answer questions. He said he did not want to talk about particular retail establishments, as this is a public meeting and that would not do them any favors. Councilman Dewar stated that is why he chose not to mention it earlier. He said it may be given that we ended up with a fatality that was not of our making and that we were not responsible for. He pointed out that he was in the Public Safety Headquarters lobby last week looking at the incident reports. He pointed

out the book is very thick. He said the officers do a lot of work and create a lot of paperwork.

Mr. Pearce stated they do a lot of paperwork. He said the question came up about how can you make sure that a certain incident report went into the notebook. He said we plan to archive the incident reports so one does not have to go the window and request the notebook. The reports will be there.

Councilman Dewar stated his issue is there are some merchants, such as Costco, that you don't exit without someone checking the receipt. He wondered if some of the larger merchants should consider doing something like that. He said he did not know how much heat this has put on our officers. He said he could imagine being an officer in a parking lot. He asked how do you know that a customer coming out of the store is shoplifting or not. He said it has to be a scary job. He said he was concerned. He said he wanted to make sure we are getting good cooperation from the customers who hire our officers and that we set standards for them to at least meet us half way.

Chief Barranco stated they believe that Public Safety has a great working relationship with the larger retailers and the smaller retailers dealing with shoplifting calls, that have increased. Those reasons are varied with special attention being made to shoplifting because it is a cost to the business. To some extent they have extended or enlarged their loss prevention departments, which has increased costs.

Councilman Dewar asked Chief Barranco if they have a sense of repeat offenders in this business. He said he got the impression that some of the people are walking out with \$500 to \$1,000 worth of merchandise.

Chief Barranco stated they seem to work in small groups. He said they have identified several small groups and made arrests in several of those cases.

Mr. Pearce pointed out shoplifting is a national problem, particularly in a down economy. Billions of dollars a year are lost. He said as much as we focus on customers walking out the door, the number one cause of shoplifting loss in this country is employee theft.

Councilwoman Price pointed out Chief Barranco's comments on employee theft was that they respond to that less in terms of employees versus the public.

Councilman Dewar pointed out employees would be taken care of by the employer.

Inmates

City Employee

Councilwoman Diggs pointed out a newspaper article which commended inmates for helping take care of a City of Aiken Crew Leader, who had some health issues while she was on duty with the inmates. The inmates called for help to help her. She said the inmates acted very, very appropriately. She said she was glad the Crew Leader is doing well. She felt we should, if appropriate, recognize the inmates for doing the right thing. She said we need to let them know that we appreciate them doing the right thing. She pointed out the inmates could have run off, but they chose to do the right thing. She felt that was very commendable. She wondered if they could be sent a personal certificate of appreciation.

Mr. Pearce stated staff did recognize them. He said Tim Coakley sent a letter to their Warden, which helps the inmates. It is like a gold star in their file. It was a good followup by Mr. Coakley. He said Mr. Coakley composed a very thoughtful letter and named the inmates by name. He pointed out the letter goes in their file. He said we would follow up with the Warden to see if a certificate would be helpful.

William Perry
Refrigerator

Councilwoman Price pointed out that William Perry (Refrigerator Perry) has been entered into the Hall of Fame. She felt he should be invited to a Council meeting to personally acknowledge his accomplishments and achievements and present him with their best wishes.

Councilwoman Diggs pointed out he had sent letters to the senior players for the Border Bowl which took place in Augusta on Sunday, January 12, encouraging the team players to excel.

Mr. Pearce stated we will find out when he is available to come to a Council meeting.

Horizons 2014

Councilman Ebner asked when the Horizons meeting would be held and where. Mr. Pearce responded we wanted to try something different this year. He said there is a room above the basketball court at the USCAiken Convocation Center. He said he had noted in the agenda packet that he would like to meet at the Convocation Center this year. He said we are working very closely with USCA on a number of projects. In response to whether it would be free, Mr. Pearce stated the cost would be \$500.

Councilman Ebner pointed out that in the past USCA has required users to use their caterer. He wondered if staff could have their usual good breakfast. Mr. Pearce stated staff would discuss the usual good breakfast.

Councilman Ebner asked Chief Barranco what had been decided on as the number of patrol cars on patrol shifts. He said originally he had projected 8 once everything is up to staff. He asked if that is a good number. Chief Barranco stated 8 would be a good number. Councilman Ebner asked if we were there yet. Chief Barranco asked if he meant 8 cars or staff people. Councilman Ebner stated he wanted 8 cars driving around in the shiny new Dodges. Chief Barranco stated we are close. He said presently we have 12 to 13 people because we have people in field training.

Mr. Pearce stated don't hold him to that as we will look at it as part of the budget process if it is to be more than 10.

Councilman Ebner stated he was talking about how many people are driving around on the shifts. He said we had said 8 people. He asked if we are back up to 8 yet or at 6 or 7 per shift. He asked what we are averaging.

Chief Barranco stated we have a standard of 8 people on a shift. That is 7 cars, because one of our cars is a tactical unit. There are 7 patrols. There are 7 patrols on each shift. Councilman Ebner asked if A, B, C, and D each have 7 patrols. Chief Barranco stated 7 per shift is a minimum for each shift, and each shift now has 7 patrols.

Councilman Ebner stated he had not seen a report from Engineering on water leaks, etc. recently.

Mr. Pearce stated that would be in the packet at the end of the month. There will also be the quarterly financial report in the next agenda.

Councilman Ebner stated there are some things which he keeps a check on for his personal information, with one being the inflation rate, and the other Certificate of Occupancy. He pointed out the Certificates of Occupancy are down as much or more than construction permits on residential. He said currently it is 209 days for the average house in Aiken on the market. There is one other city at 220 or 230. Everybody else is below 140 days. He said they say our average turnover of houses is going up, which would reflect unemployment. He said with the things going on at the Savannah River

Site, the Chamber of Commerce has put together a Blue Ribbon Committee, which David Jameson sent to all of them. He said he felt we need to be looking at the economic indications that are very strong in our area that directly affect Aiken. He said it is not in the positive side in most cases. He said we don't have a problem this year or next year, but we definitely might have a five year problem. He said he did not know how to put all the data together and consolidate it to see how much employment went up, etc.

Mr. Pearce stated that is something we could look at when we discuss the revenue side of the budget this spring.

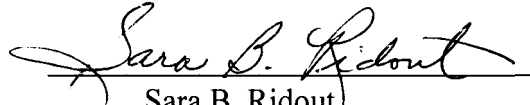
Councilman Ebner stated he felt we need to do that and to look at what the three to five year projection is. He said Will Williams has some numbers on that, and the Chamber has more information. Mr. Pearce pointed out there are other entities that can help us with the information.

Councilman Ebner stated he felt we need to look at that, and our own statistical data tells us a lot on that type thing. He felt that in two to four years we will be looking at some issues that we are going to be feeling pinching pretty hard. He felt this should be looked at as part of the budget.

Mr. Pearce stated staff will do that on the revenue side for sure.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:41 P.M.


Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk