

Aiken City Council Minutes

October 21, 2003

WORK SESSION

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

Absent: Mayor Cavanaugh

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Gary Smith, Bill Huggins, Larry Morris, Ed Evans, Pete Frommer, Glenn Parker, Richard Pearce, Sara Ridout, Philip Lord of the Aiken Standard, and 2 citizens.

Mr. LeDuc called the meeting to order at 7:30 A.M. He stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss with Council the funding already received on the one cent sales tax and proposed projects if the one cent sales tax is continued by the citizens in a referendum.

SALES TAX

Projects

Referendum

Mr. LeDuc reviewed for Council how the current \$12,457,740 sales tax revenue was determined. He stated the revenue was underestimated for the seven year period, and the city should receive the projected amount probably by the end of 2005. He stated that in November 2000 the voters approved a one cent sales tax assuming revenue would be coming in at an anticipated rate over a seven year period. More revenue than anticipated has been generated, and the projects will be fully funded by the end of 2005. Since the referendum has to be held in a major election year, the County will need to determine whether or not to place a referendum on the ballot in November, 2004 for approval by the voters listing new projects to be supported by the one cent sales tax. City staff has reviewed some of the possible projects that could be funded under this tax.

Mr. LeDuc reviewed an analysis of future sales tax revenues. He said using the same formula as last time the City of Aiken could receive as much as \$28 million from the one cent sales tax.

Mr. LeDuc then discussed the projects proposed by city staff which included roadway/transportation projects such as continuation of the street paving program and streetscape program, widening Dougherty Road intersections, Silver Bluff Road widening from Indian Trail to Richardsons Lake, Connector Road – Whiskey to Silver Bluff, Connector – Whiskey to Powderhouse, Hitchcock Parkway widening, Whiskey Road improvements, bike paths, Dougherty Road connector to Mall, and Dougherty Road connector to Walmart. Other projects for Public Safety included – new pumper, ladder truck, building expansion, firing range, and training grounds. Parks and Recreation projects were executive golf course (former landfill), Eustis Park Neighborhood Center/Senior Center, Environmental Meeting Center (former Playhouse), complete tennis complex, mobile stage, mobile bleachers, Citizens Park maintenance center, Citizens Park walking trail, parking lot and restrooms, Woodward house renovation, Hopelands band stage shell. Other projects include Public Works building expansion, greenway program, Hitchcock Woods drainage, storm/sanitary sewer rehabilitation, streetscape Bee Lane (Alley to Richland), undergrounding of electric line, and northside renewal.

Mr. LeDuc asked Council if they had any comments regarding the proposed roadway projects.

Councilman Cuning stated he would like to see some money used to acquire green space that will stay passive and be green space. He suggested that some areas could be designated as green space on the connector road from Silver Bluff to Whiskey.

Councilman Smith stated he would like to see the traffic signals synchronized along Whiskey Road from Pine Log south.

Councilwoman Vaughters suggested that it would be nice to have a connector behind the old K-Mart from the Hitchcock Plaza to the back of WalMart.

Council then generally discussed development on the southside and proposed developments which would affect traffic on the southside. It was pointed out developments are going to occur off Whiskey along Powderhouse. It was felt that it would be nice to have a connector from Whiskey to Powderhouse to take traffic off Whiskey Road.

Councilwoman Clyburn pointed out the large number of problems with southside traffic and connector roads. She suggested that maybe the city should make some effort to spread out the growth. She stated the city continues to concentrate all the growth on the southside, and it is becoming saturated with traffic. She pointed out she felt the city could benefit from developing towards the interstate. She said she felt the city continues to develop in an area where traffic is already bottlenecked. The city continues to budget more money to building more roads which encourages more development. She felt the city should spearhead some type of development incentives for developments along US 1 north and SC 19 north so the growth can be spread out. She felt the city was making it convenient to pack all the growth in one area of the city. She felt the city needed to look at what benefits the city would gain by encouraging development in another direction so there would be a more balanced growth in the city.

Council discussed the development on the southside, pointing out the development was because of the Savannah River Plant. The employment was on the southside. It was pointed out that developers on the southside presented plans for development and asked for the infrastructure. It was pointed out if a developer acquired property and proposed a development on the northside, the infrastructure could be extended but the city could not extend infrastructure to areas not knowing that the property would be developed.

Mr. LeDuc pointed out that Councilwoman Clyburn had suggested about a year ago that she wanted to see a redevelopment plan for the northside. He pointed out that city is presently involved in a plan for redevelopment of areas on the northside including Toole Hill. He said he felt the staff could work with developing plans for northside growth over the next few months and that possibly some incentives could be offered for developments on the northside. He pointed out presently some development is proposed near Phelon on the bypass. Another proposed development is near the Bi-Lo on the northside. He said the staff would look at incentives and developments on the northside and present something to Council at the Horizons meeting on ways to get some additional balanced growth on the northside versus the southside.

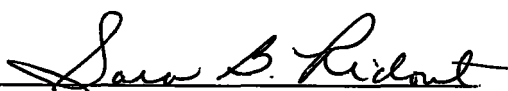
Council then discussed the proposed projects for the various departments. Council questioned the need for more tennis courts. Council felt that the storm/sanitary sewer rehabilitation should be a very high priority. It was pointed out that to revitalize the northside rehabilitation of the storm/sanitary sewer lines would be necessary, and possibly more should be allocated for the project. It was also pointed out that the Hitchcock Woods drainage should be a high priority.

Some projects suggested by Council were historic museum at Richland and York, Railroad Depot, and Aiken County Museum.

Mr. LeDuc stated Aiken County was meeting to talk about the process for extending the one cent sales tax. Once County Council has made a decision to move forward, the City will take the proposed list and bring it back to Council at Horizons. The city will hold a public hearing at some point on the proposed projects to get public input.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:00 A.M.



Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk