

Aiken City Council MinutesOctober 25, 2004WORK SESSION

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

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Gary Smith, Larry Morris, Ed Evans, Glenn Parker, Richard Pearce, Sara Ridout, Philip Lord of the Aiken Standard, Josh Gelinis of the Augusta Chronicle, and about 10 citizens.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 6:19 P.M. He stated Council had two items that they would like to discuss in the work session.

ROLL CART PILOT PROGRAM

Garbage
Pilot Program

Mr. LeDuc stated that one of the goals City Council approved at Horizons was to develop a pilot roll cart program. The roll carts were distributed in June, and staff recently surveyed all the citizens within those areas. A total of 1,655 survey cards were sent to the neighborhoods where the roll cart program was initiated, including homes that decided not to participate in the program. We received 958 survey responses, or about a 60% response rate. Eighty-six percent (86%) of those responding participate in the program while 14% do not. Of those responding, 81, or less than 9% do not want roll cart service and prefer backyard collection. Over 80% of those responding would like to continue with a 90 gallon roll cart, with the rest wanting either a 45 or 60 gallon cart. The cost differential between a 45, 60 and 90 gallon roll cart is insignificant, and different size carts can be offered to those within the program.

Based on the results of the survey, staff is recommending that City Council implement a city-wide curbside roll cart program with an alternate backyard roll cart program. Due to the fact that several residents would like to continue with backyard service, we would suggest that Council consider a dual rate system for those wanting to keep the backyard service. Our current rate is \$12.50 per month, which does not fully cover the cost of our solid waste service. For those wanting to continue with backyard service, we recommend an additional fee of \$5 per month. If Council decides in the future to raise the \$12.50 base rate, then the backyard service cost would increase by an amount so the backyard services would be \$5 per month over curb rate. With all the changes within our solid waste services, we will be recalculating our cost to provide these services, and will review these rates with Council at our next Horizons. If Council agrees with our proposal, we would amend our ordinance to: (1) establish roll cart service throughout the city over the next few years, (2) set up a dual rate system to charge an additional fee for those wanting to maintain backyard service, and (3) set up a service fee to return roll carts or recycling bins back to the house if left on the street for over 24 hours. Any new resident who signs up for water service would receive curbside roll cart service. Currently under the pilot program, there are provisions for anyone who is handicapped and physically unable to roll the cart to the street whereby the city employees roll the cart from the back yard and back. Under the provisions, the handicapped people would not be charged an additional fee for the backyard pickup.

Those residents who are currently utilizing roll carts have found them to be a convenient way to eliminate household items that previously had been placed at the curb for trash pick up. We feel this is an excellent way to help implement the new trash regulations throughout the city. With Council's approval, we would hope that the roll cart system could be implemented throughout the city over the next few years. Mr. LeDuc stated he was open to Council's suggestions.

Council discussed the recommendations at length.

Mr. Larry Morris, Public Works Director, stated that under the proposed system all residents would have a roll cart, even those with backyard service. If the residents preferred backyard service, they would pay an additional \$5 for the city employees to go to the backyard and get the roll cart. Mr. Morris stated for the handicapped people there would probably be an emblem that would be placed at the curb in some location where city employees can recognize it.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated he liked the alternate proposal for garbage pickup, with curbside and backyard choice. He said he questioned why a resident would have to have a roll cart and also why charge \$5 extra for the backyard pickup.

Mr. Morris stated two 45 gallon roll carts can fit in the same space as two 32 gallon regular garbage cans. He said they actually did a test of picking up roll carts from the street and then put them back as though they were in a backyard. He said the \$5 extra cost for backyard service was determined from that test, counting the extra time for backyard and the employees' salaries. He said using roll carts even in the backyard would save time for the employees, as presently they have to dump the cans and roll the garbage to the truck. He pointed out he felt the roll carts would help save on injuries for the sanitation workers, such as back injuries, cuts from glass, etc.

Mr. Morris stated at Council's recommendation the staff is reworking the door hanger for curbside trash pickup. He said the trash pickup is working well presently. He said staff is leaving door hangers and talking to the residents where there is a problem. He said most people are working with the city on the trash pickup.

Councilwoman Vaughters stated she felt the city would be saving money because we are not picking up the mixed piles of trash. The citizens feel, however, that the service has been cut back. She felt they would have a problem with a rate increase for backyard garbage pickup when the city will be cutting back on service with curbside pickup. She felt the city should be saving money. She asked how much the city will be saving and why there is a necessity for the increase for service. She stated she did not have a problem with using a roll cart. She said she just had a problem with the roll cart being on the street.

Mr. Morris stated he did not have a figure on how much the city may be saving. He said he did know that the sanitation crews are now getting off roughly on time and not having as much overtime. He said the crews had been working about 70 hours a week and are now working about 45 to 50 hours a week. He said this is a savings in overtime. He said with the previous service the city was looking at adding personnel and trucks to be able to provide the service. Cutting back on picking up mixed trash will help delay the request for additional equipment and crews at this time. As the city grows, however, equipment and crews will have to be added.

Councilman Cuning stated in the discussion at Horizons it was pointed out that if the city keeps the same level of service, the fees would have to increase and would not be \$12.50 per month, but would have to be something like \$15 to \$16. He pointed out also that the cost of gas had increased tremendously. He stated one of his concerns about the new system was the fee for taking the cart to the backyard if it is left out for 24 hours. He said he felt 36 or 48 hours would be more reasonable.

Mayor Cavanaugh pointed out the reason for changing service was the cost for providing the service. He pointed out it had been stated that the city does not receive enough from the monthly fee for garbage to pay for the service. This was the reason for considering changes to the service. He stated the city has to take in enough money to cover the service.

Mr. LeDuc stated the city has the costs for providing the services. He said the city had been tracking the cost for years. He said the city has the figures for the cost for recycling, backyard pickup, solid waste, etc. He said the staff can also get the cost from other cities in the state. He said the figures given to Council earlier this year which was \$16 was approximately the cost for providing full backyard service. He said the staff will provide these figures to Council. He did point out that the current figure of \$12.50 will not pay

for the full service even for curbside service. He said this is a figure the staff will use during the transitional period until the staff figures out the cost for curbside service. He said there needs to be a transition period for the new trash service, roll carts, etc. before setting the new rate. He said the staff knows that \$12.50 is not enough to pay for the service.

Councilman Smith stated he felt it would be difficult for the employees to have a dual service. He asked how the employees would know which is curbside or backyard service.

Mr. Morris pointed out that after a period of time the employees learn the routes and figure this out.

After much discussion Council asked that the matter be placed on the next agenda for Council's consideration. They asked that the staff provide cost figures for Council's information.

DEVELOPERS AGREEMENT

Park Avenue SW 224

Sklizovic, Heidi

Sklizovic, Davor

Sklizovic, Luka

Demolition

Incentive

Mr. LeDuc stated that Heidi, Davor and Luka Sklizovic want to discuss with City Council several issues concerning their property at 224 Park Avenue SW. This building has remained vacant for over 15 years and is in total disrepair. According to historical information the building was constructed in approximately 1900. In the early 1900's the building was occupied by a restaurant and Stoney's Tailoring Shop. Edward Stoney was a young black freed man who moved to Aiken in the mid 1800's, active in county government, and a relative of the Jackson Funeral Home family. According to our Building Official the rear and side walls cannot be safely saved, but with major work the front wall could possibly be reused. The owner would like to request three things of the city. First, that the city haul away any debris from the demolition of the building. Second, they would like the City to abate the additional taxes on this building for a period of time. Thirdly, they are requesting that the City's water impact fee not be applied to the new construction.

Over the last couple of years the City has had a history of working with developers in hauling away demolition material, including the former theater, the building between City Billiards and Johnson Frame Shop and the former gas station at the corner of Park and Hayne.

In the late 1990's the City did abate taxes for up to three years for new construction in the downtown area under the Aiken 2000 program. In 2000 City Council discontinued this program. We have occasionally given tax relief for new industrial or other corporate clients who have brought a number of jobs into the city and most recently abated the taxes at the Woodside Golf Course. These have generally been for a five year period.

Concerning the impact fees for redevelopment, we only charge a fee when there is an increase in water usage. In this particular case, unless the new site needs more water than the existing 5/8 x 3/4 inch water meter delivers, they would not have any additional impact fee for the new construction.

If Council would like to offer them any incentives in exchange for conditions on the new construction, we can create a developer's agreement between the City and the owners of the property at 224 Park Avenue SW and have these ready for Council's approval at the next meeting.

Dr. Davor Sklizovic stated he was getting ready to renovate the building at 224 Park Avenue SW. He said the reason for asking for assistance is that the cost will be

significantly higher if they try to preserve the building. He said they really could not preserve the whole building. He said the building had been gutted and they know it is not salvageable. He said they could only preserve the front wall. He said, however, to preserve the front wall will greatly increase the cost for engineering, demolition and construction. Saving the front wall will cause a significant problem for the people demolishing the rest of the building. Engineers will need to be brought in early in the process to shore the wall. The estimate for demolition and saving the front wall will increase the engineering fees up to \$30,000. He said everything will have to work around the wall. He said the cost of saving the wall was the reason he was asking the city for assistance. He said if the front wall is not to be saved, the plan is to replicate the wall. He said one issue that was not mentioned in the letter of request was the issue of parking. He said they were planning to put a fresh food market in the building. He said they would need at least ten parking spaces marked for 15 to 30 minute parking in front of the building. The reason for the parking spaces is that it would be difficult for people to carry groceries down the street. He stated parking availability would determine what would be in the building.

Council discussed the requests at length. It was pointed out that as far as taxes, the first year the building is built the taxes would still be the same as the taxes for the present building. Taxes are based on what is there as of January 1. Councilman Cunning stated tax abatement would be difficult for Council to do as many others would want to make the same request. Mayor Cavanaugh stated he would support hauling the demolition material away. Council also stated they would be willing to look at the request for parking. They stated they were concerned about the number of parking spaces requested to be marked for timed parking, but would look at the request.

Dr. Sklizovic stated parking availability would determine what could be in the building. He stated help from the city hauling debris from the building would be a big help, but without help with the taxes he did not feel he could save the wall. He said he would not even ask the City to help with hauling the debris if he did not have to save the wall. He said he wanted to save the wall but the cost made it prohibitive. He said in order to save the wall he needed some help from the city as the cost would be tremendous otherwise he would need to duplicate the front wall and tear the rest of the building down.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated that there had been talk for many years to have a grocery store or fresh food market downtown. He said he felt this would be a wonderful service to those who come downtown. He said he appreciated his efforts. He said Council wanted to work with him to try to make that happen.

Ms. Missie Boisvert, from Palmetto Package Shop, stated she was concerned about the request for parking spaces. She said she would love to have more parking spaces for people who frequent her store. She said she was excited about the possibilities for the building at 224 Park Avenue. She said she was worried about construction though, as that would impact her business.

Mr. Sam Erb, of The Bowery, stated in some big cities, such as Chicago, there are grocery stores right downtown, so it does work for grocery stores to be downtown. He said he does not have any parking spaces for his business and has been in business for 24 years, and his business has grown. Mr. Erb stated he has delivery trucks every day, but he asks them to deliver by a certain time. He pointed out a grocery store would have a lot of delivery trucks that would require time to unload, and the store would have a lot of boxes and trash to be disposed of. He said there were a lot of issues such as trash along with parking to be considered. He said the issues could be taken care of with proper planning.

Council asked that staff meet with Dr. Sklizovic to see if they could work out some of the issues and make any suggestions as to how the city might be able to work with Dr. Sklizovic to help in some of the problems. Councilmembers stated they would support hauling the debris from the building, would be willing to look at the parking issues, but were very concerned about offering any tax abatement. Mr. LeDuc stated staff will talk to some other cities to see what they do in similar situations. Staff will come back to Council with suggestions and a proposed developers agreement.