

Aiken City Council Minutes

October 28, 2002

WORKSESSION

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

Absent: Councilwoman Price

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Bill Huggins, Gary Smith, Larry Morris, Richard Pearce, Sara Ridout, Karen Daily of the Aiken Standard, Josh Gelinas of the Augusta Chronicle, and 33 citizens.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 6:35 P.M.

HORSEPLAY

Horses

Aiken Center for the Arts

Accommodations Tax Funds

Mr. LeDuc stated for several months, a committee has been meeting to develop a community event called Horseplay. He said Bill Reynolds was present to make a presentation to Council. Also present was Anne Campbell, Chairperson of the Steering Committee, and a contingent of others supporting the proposed event.

Mr. Reynolds stated he wanted to present a very exciting program to Council called Horseplay. He said the committee had made 23 presentations asking for sponsorship of a horse and no one had said no and one person had said he would sponsor two. He said it is felt the event will have a major positive economic impact on the community and will present a very positive image of Aiken as a place to live and work. He pointed out horses are a very important part of Aiken's history. He stated the proposed event would be sponsored by the United Way and the Aiken Center for the Arts allowing, on a temporary basis, the display of horses throughout our community. This is patterned after highly successful events in Lexington (Horse Mania), Ocala (Horse Fever), and Chicago (Cows on Parade). He said they hope to raise over \$150,000, which would be used by children and seniors for various art programs at the Center for the Arts. Based on the results from other events similar to this, they expect over 15,000 visitors to come to Aiken and spend \$1 million over the six month period that the horses would be displayed. Starting in October of 2003, each of these life sized painted fiberglass horses sponsored by local organizations and individuals would be displayed for the public to view and appreciate. Several other social events and galas would also take place which would be associated with Horseplay. Many of these would be for the entire community, while some would be fundraisers for the event itself. He said at the end of the program there would be a big horse auction and the horses would be sold at the auction. He said they hope to have 30 horses subscribed by the January 15, 2003, sponsor sign up party at the Center for the Arts. Mr. Reynolds stated the committee is asking City Council to play a leadership role and to sponsor a horse and to allow the horses to be displayed in several locations on City property for that six month period. They would also like to advertise this event throughout a three state area through ads in newspapers and to develop a brochure which individuals would be able to receive or pick up once they come to Aiken for the event. This advertising should attract 9,000 overnight visitors, and they are requesting \$30,000 from the city's Accommodations Tax funds from next year's budget. Mr. Reynolds stated he was before Council to get a level of interest and a level of commitment before going forward with the program.

Council discussed the proposed event, where it is proposed that the horses be placed, who would choose the design for the horses, and where funding could come from for the event as requested.

Mr. LeDuc stated this item is listed on the Council agenda for Council's approval of the event and for \$3,500 to cover the sponsorship of a horse. If Council approves the \$30,000 request, it could be placed in next year's budget for funding out of the city's Accommodations Taxes. The details as to where the horses would be located would be reviewed by city staff and the Park Commission at a later date.

Mr. LeDuc explained there are two funds for Accommodations Taxes. He stated the state collects 1% Accommodations Taxes from the hotels and motels. The city receives about \$50,000 to about \$70,000 from the state funds for tourism related events. The other fund is 3% Accommodations Taxes collected by the city. This amounts to about \$250,000 per year. This year \$110,000 of that money was allocated towards city expenses for tournaments, Christmas in Hopelands, Triple Crown Race, and landscaping in parkways. Of that fund, \$40,000 was allocated to the Chamber for hiring an individual for promotion of tourism. Also, \$90,000 was allocated to the Aiken Center for the Arts, with \$20,500 being used to help pay off the loan for the Playhouse on Newberry Street. Council has also stated that they wanted the majority of this money used to pay off the loan to the Playhouse. Mr. LeDuc stated half of the \$3,500 requested for sponsorship of the horse would be due in January, and this could be taken from the Contingent Fund amounting to \$1,750 with the remainder out of next year's budget.

Councilwoman Vaughters expressed concern about spending \$33,500 for the event. She was also concerned about others asking for funds for events. It was pointed out these funds would come out of Accommodations Tax funds, and these funds are to be used to create tourism.

Councilwoman Clyburn asked if Council could use some of the Contingency Fund from the State Accommodations Tax Funds to grant more funds to the organizations which did not receive their requested amount.

Mr. LeDuc stated Council could use the funds as they wished as long as they met the tourism guidelines for the state funds.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Board of Zoning Appeals Terms

Mr. LeDuc stated in a recent review of the Boards and Commissions appointments and the state law concerning these boards, we discovered that the Board of Zoning Appeals members' terms need to be adjusted. According to state law, they need to have a minimum three year term, not a two year term as presently appointed. Therefore, Council will need to redraw the terms for the BZA. The code states that three members terms shall expire in even years and four members in odd years. In reviewing the current list, all terms expire in 2002 except for Arthur Andersen, whose term expires in 2003. Therefore, we have prepared a drawing for three members whose terms will expire in 2005 and four terms that will expire in 2006.

Council drew the following terms for their appointments to the Board of Zoning Appeals:

Appointee's Term Would Expire

Mayor Cavanaugh	2005
Councilwoman Clyburn	2006
Councilman Cuning	2005
Councilwoman Price	2005
Councilman Smith	2006
Councilman Sprawls	2006
Councilwoman Vaughters	2006

AIKEN CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Update

Mr. LeDuc stated in the 2001-2002 budget, Council awarded the Center for the Arts a grant of \$250,000 to upgrade their building. This included a sprinkler system for fire suppression throughout the building and additional fire escapes to the second floor. This allows them to use this space which had been closed due to building code concerns. In January we will fund the final portion of this grant to the Center for the Arts.

Don Edmonds, Director for the Center, gave City Council an update on the construction and their future plans for the Center. He stated in November, 2000, the Center for the Arts asked for \$250,000 for renovations to the Arts Center to meet the current building codes. He said the plans had been completed, the contract let and the construction finished. He said the project was divided into three phases, so when each was completed the area of the building would be serviceable and complete. He said the project included adequate egress for the second floor and a sprinkler system for the entire building. The downstairs was completed, storage space included and construction and relocation of the offices upstairs. He said the windows on Laurens Street were reopened. He said the project came in under budget. He said Phases II and III call for the renovation of the remaining upstairs into classroom and studio space. He said the Center is at the beginning stages of a capital campaign to raise the money needed to complete the next phase. He said the Wheless Group out of Greenville had been hired to provide oversight and training for the board of directors and steering committee. He said Bobbi Wheless would be conducting community focus groups to get the perception of the Arts Center from the citizens to find out what they want the Arts Center to become, including what type of programming, exhibits, etc.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Appointments

Mr. LeDuc asked if any Councilmembers would like to have any appointments to the Boards and Commissions on the next agenda as a number of appointments need to be made in the next few weeks.

Councilman Sprawls stated he would like to place the reappointment of Don Barnes to the General Aviation Commission and Edward Brohl to the Community Development on the next agenda.

Councilwoman Vaughters asked for last year's attendance information on present members who are being suggested for reappointment.

POSTING HEARINGS

Mr. LeDuc stated he would also like direction from Council as to when agenda items should be posted for first and second reading. He said if Council wants to continue posting the agenda items, he felt Council needed to take formal action to amend the ordinance to set the requirements so the staff would be consistent.

Council asked that this matter be considered at a work session.