

Aiken City Council MinutesWORK SESSION

October 10, 2016

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

Others Present: John Klimm, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Gary Smith, Sara Ridout, Tim Coakley, Sarah Herring, Michelle Jones, George Grinton, and Dan Brown from the Aiken Standard.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Osbon called the work session to order at 5:05 P.M. Mayor Osbon stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss items and proposed changes in the services of the Public Services Division.

PUBLIC SERVICES DIVISIONLandscaping DebrisRecyclingCart Replacement FeeService to Adjacent Areas Outside the City

Mr. Klimm stated staff wanted to have a work session with Council to deal with issues regarding solid waste and trash issues. He said the second phase for a work session would be to talk about trucks and equipment and the feasibility of a transfer station, which are subjects of an ongoing operational audit. He said staff is looking for guidance from Council.

Landscaping Debris

Tim Coakley, Public Services Manager, stated the first issue he wanted to discuss with Council is landscaping debris. Staff wants to get a feeling from Council as to whether they would be interested in limiting landscapers from putting debris out by the street. If landscapers were not allowed to put debris by the street, it is estimated there could be about a 30% reduction in the amount of yard debris hauled by Public Services. The landscapers tend to make more debris than a homeowner. Also, landscapers have been caught doing a job in the County and putting the debris on their trailer, and then bringing it to a job in the City and dumping debris from both jobs in the city for the city to pick up. The work done in the County should be hauled to the landfill where they would pay a tipping fee. This is cheating the County out of funds as the City does not pay for use of the landfill as that is part of the tax base. The landscapers are supposed to pay for their debris. He noted that landscapers haul the debris away for all the customers in the County, and should haul the debris away for work done in the City. He asked for Council's feelings to limit or stop landscapers from putting debris out for the City to pick up. He said if Council agrees to stop allowing landscapers to put debris by the street for the City to pick up, he would notify Public Safety and the Code Enforcement people so they could watch for violations. He said the City would notify the 300 businesses in the landscaping business of the new regulations being considered by Council. The matter would be on the website, in the newspaper, and there would be some personal contacts with the top 20 to 30 revenue earners. There could be a warning ticket period for a number of days and then enforcement of any new regulations could start.

Mr. Coakley pointed out that currently city residents pay \$17 monthly for garbage, recycling and yard debris pickup. Yard debris pickup costs about half of the monthly fee and is more expensive than garbage and recycling pickup.

Council then discussed the matter and the concerns. They discussed enforcement of new regulations for landscapers, central locations used by neighborhoods for placing their landscaping materials, publicity and notification of new regulations, the cost for hauling away landscaping debris, containing costs while providing services, bagging all yard debris put at the curb, putting violation fees on tax bills and/or water bills, and limiting the size of debris placed at the curb. There was concern about yard debris at the curb washing down the street and clogging the storm drains. It was pointed out that the city could probably accomplish what they would like to do just by requiring landscapers to haul away the debris from the jobs they do as this is a lot of the amount of yard debris collected by the City.

The general consensus of Council was to have the item regarding requiring landscapers to haul away the debris from the jobs they do in the city on the agenda for October 24, 2016. Staff is to notify the landscaping businesses regarding the proposed regulations before the October 24, Council meeting.

Recycling

Mr. Coakley pointed out that Public Services had lost six inmates who worked in the Recycling Division. In order to make adjustments for that we can pick up recycling every other week rather than weekly or raise fees for services. It was noted that in checking the recycling bins that many of them were only half full and also many people do not put the recycling bin out each week for pick up so actually many people are already doing pickup every other week.

Mr. Coakley pointed out that if the City went to picking up recycling every other week, the City would go from two trucks to one truck for pick up. We would save a truck, a driver, and the worker on the back. Also, the supervisor of the Recycling Division is retiring, and the position would not be filled. Ms. Herring then discussed how she had divided the city into routes for every other week recycling pick up and a calendar to give to the residents as to when the recycling would be picked up. It was noted that the City wants to promote recycling and wants the residents to increase their recycling materials. It was also noted that a listing of acceptable recycling materials is sent to the residents every year. At one time a sticker was placed on the recycling bin listing what is acceptable recycling material. If a resident needs more than one recycling bin, a second cart could be provided. It was pointed out that recycling pick up would be the same day as the garbage and yard debris pickup, except that recycling would be every other week. Ms. Herring stated if Council approves every other week recycling pick up the matter would be discussed in an Aiken This Week program, an article in the newspaper, and a map on the website showing the route schedule for pick up.

The general consensus of Council was for staff to place on the Council agenda for Council consideration, an item to go to every other week for recycling pick up.

Cart Push Back Fee

\$5.00

Mr. Coakley then discussed Section 32-2-(1) of the City Code pointing out that this had been on the books since 2004, and the City had never enforced it. He asked if Council wanted to start enforcing this section of the Code regarding removing garbage bins from the street. He noted this would be a small revenue source for the City.

“Carts may be placed for pickup the night before pickup day and must be removed within 24 hours after pickup. If roll carts are out prior to, or not put back within 24 hours of pickup, city crews will return the roll cart to the house for a fee of \$5.00 per incident. This fee will be billed on the monthly water bill.”

It was pointed out that there are chronic abusers who leave their bins out all week, and the city has received complaints from neighbors about this. This is especially prevalent at apartment complexes which is unsightly. Mr. Coakley asked if Council wanted to enforce this section of the Code.

Council discussed this issue and felt the wording in the Code should be “chronic abusers.” It was pointed out that at apartments the person who pays the water bill would be charged the \$5 fee for leaving a garbage cart at the street. The discussion was if possibly the fee could be charged to the owner of the property as the owner has a lease agreement with the tenants. It was pointed out that the fee is added to the water bill, and the water bill is paid by the tenant. It was suggested that a Code Enforcement Officer write a ticket and take the matter to Court. Staff was asked to study this and come back to Council.

Cart Replacement Fee

Mr. Coakley stated that roll carts for garbage were purchased in 2004. Money to purchase the carts came from the sale of the garbage trucks which were used for the pick up of commercial garbage. The City no longer picks up garbage from commercial areas. That was a one time source of money to purchase roll carts. The present carts are 10 years old, and we are starting to see failures. He said we need some way to get money to be able to replace the roll carts. In the future, he needs to place a certain amount in the budget for the replacement of roll carts. One way to fund the replacement of the roll carts is to have a Cart Replacement fee which could be a separate line item on the water bill with the amount of the fee to be determined by City Council such as \$.50 per month on each water bill. At \$.50 per month that would be about \$72,000 a year which would be enough to buy about 1,500 carts a year. The Cart Replacement Fee would be placed in a separate account for replacement of carts only.

Council discussed the proposal of a Cart Replacement Fee. It was suggested that \$.50 be taken out of the current \$17 fee for services. Mr. Coakley stated that is being done now, but that is not enough to pay for the carts and fund the other services. Council suggested that possibly the savings from not having to pick up the debris from landscapers could be moved to a special fee for Cart Replacement. Council expressed the feeling of being reluctant to increase the garbage fee or anything right now. Mr. Coakley was asked to look at the situation to see if the City goes to every other week recycling and requires landscapers to take away the debris from their jobs, if the savings could be used to fund the replacement of roll carts.

It was pointed out that a 30% reduction in yard debris does not mean a 30% reduction in the cost. You still have the trucks and other expenses. The 30% less tonnage does not mean 30% savings in dollars.

Council then discussed the depreciation set aside for the purchase of garbage trucks. It was pointed out that garbage trucks are depreciated in 8 years with funds being set aside for the purchase of new trucks. It was noted that two trucks are on order now to pick up yard debris.

Council discussed the size of roll carts offered. It was pointed out that the only carts available now are the big carts. Mr. Coakley stated if sufficient funding was available he would want to offer big carts and small carts as a customer service. He pointed out that he can save money by standardizing the size of carts and only having one size cart. Having two size carts doubles the cost of inventory. The difference in cost between the big and small carts is not much.

Outside City

Garbage Pick Up

Yard Debris

Recycle

Mr. Coakley stated he wanted to discuss with Council the possibility of servicing some residents outside the city with garbage, yard debris, and recycling pick ups. He pointed out that not all of the residents are in donut holes. He noted that presently the City goes

down several streets where one side of the street is in the city and the other side is outside the city. He pointed out that the City already goes down the street and picks up garbage, yard debris and recycling on one side of the street. He is suggesting that the City pick up the other side of the street as it should not cost the City any more to service those residents. The City is already on that street. The residents already receive city water and could be billed on their water bill. In many instances these people want the City's service. The private sector only provides garbage pick up for \$18 monthly. These residents would like to have the City's garbage, yard debris and recycle pick up. It was noted that the City would charge these residents more for the city service.

Councilman Dewar stated he would rather wait to address this issue after Council discusses the annexation matter because city services is another incentive to annex to the city.

Staff noted that the City is already picking up yard waste for some non-residents in Gem Lakes as they put their yard waste in front of their neighbor's house and recycling in their neighbor's bin which is inside the city and they then get city service.

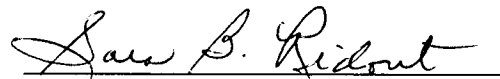
Mr. Coakley stated the City has 12,000 customers with four trucks which run four days per week. The City is picking up 750 cans per truck per day. In a 10-hour day, the City only works about 8 hours for collection, as they have to travel to the landfill, which is some distance away. In figuring the time, the City is picking up 1.6 cans per minute. If the city were to work an extra 10 minutes per day at 1.6 cans per minute, times four trucks times four days we could add 256 customers. Multiplying that times the \$17 fee and 12 months that would be an extra \$52,000 per year. He said we would have to be careful as to the number of residents we add as he did not want to add another truck. He said we could target the areas that we would offer the service to.

Council discussed the matter and asked if that would put the city in competition with private haulers. They discussed whether the City could offer all the public services or just one of the services such as recycling. It was noted that the South Meadows Property Owners Association has stated they were willing to encourage their whole neighborhood to get the recycling service if the City could provide the service. It was noted that the price for the service would have to be priced high enough so it would not discourage annexation of the property.

It was the general consensus of Council that they would like to wait to discuss this suggestion until after the discussion on the annexation of the donut holes.

ADJOURNMENT

The work session adjourned at 6:10 p.m.


Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk