

Aiken City Council Minutes

May 13, 2002

WORKSESSION

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

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Bill Huggins, Gary Smith, Larry Morris, Anita Lilly, Richard Pearce, Glenn Parker, Sandra Korbelik, Sara Ridout, Susan Mimmie, Karen Daily of the Aiken Standard, Josh Gelinis of the Augusta Chronicle, and 6 citizens.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 6:55 P.M.

WATER TANKCell TowerLeaseTown Creek Water PlantTowerSilver Bluff RoadTown Creek RoadWater PlantSBA Properties, Inc.City of AikenSeven Oaks Drive

Mr. LeDuc stated several months ago City Council discussed the possibility of leasing property for a cell tower at the corner of Town Creek and Silver Bluff Road. At that meeting Council had asked for further information concerning this new cell tower. Council had asked: (1) that the automatic renewals be reduced from 10 additional terms of 5 years to 4 terms; (2) that an automatic increase be placed in the lease for every 5 year renewal period. This increase will be 15% each term starting at the end of the initial term of 5 years. Council also asked the staff to review the proposed \$700/month lease payment and how this compared with lease agreements with other cities. The comparison with other cities shows most cities receive \$1,000/month or more for a lease payment. Another interesting condition is that some cities are building their own towers and leasing the space. Others are requiring the tower provider to allow the city to co-locate on the tower at no cost. Another is requiring secondary occupants of the tower to pay both the city and the tower company. Before the staff moves forward on this project, they need to know first if Council even wants to allow a tower at this location and if so, under what conditions. A proposed lease, the BZA Order, and the landscaping and site plans have been given to Council for review. Larry Morris and Richard Pearce are present to answer any questions concerning the proposed agreement.

Council discussed the matter at length and felt the fee should be more than \$700 per month, possibly in the range of \$1,000 to \$2,500 per month with a built in COLA. If the tower is allowed Council also discussed reserving the right for the city to have an antenna on the pole for the city's radio system for Public Safety and for Public Works. They also discussed charging a higher rental fee when a new user is allowed on the pole. It was also pointed out that in a few years this technology may have changed and the pole may not be needed, so it was felt the lease should not be so long.

Mr. LeDuc stated he would place the matter on the work session for June 10, 2002. He said the city would post the site to let the neighborhood know of the request and notify the persons who were present at the BZA meeting.

SEWER RATE

Rate Sanitary Sewer Averaging

Mr. LeDuc stated in January City Council approved keeping the sewer averaging as it was calculated last year to run through the remainder of this year. This was to allow the citizens during this drought period to continue watering, knowing it would not affect their upcoming year's sewer bill. We recently received a request from a citizen who had a leaking toilet last year which caused his sewer rate to go up significantly. He has asked that the city consider his request to lower his bill based on this year's usual 3 month sewer averaging. If Council were to consider this, staff would suggest that a minimum 500 cubic foot difference be set between the two years before considering reaveraging a sewer bill. Therefore only individuals who have a major difference due to some compelling reason would have their sewer averaging rate changed. Otherwise, conceivably many individuals who may save a little due to the fact there's a slight difference in their water usage could come forward to ask for this request, which is a time consuming, hand calculated change. If Council would like to change their former resolution, this could be added to the agenda as a resolution approving hand calculated sewer changes based on whatever criteria Council would like to adopt. This will allow us to make this effective as of May 1, 2002.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated he was concerned about this matter and wished Council had not changed the policy for this year but had continued to use the same averaging policy in the past.

Council discussed the matter at length. It was pointed out the staff had received only about 6 calls regarding the new averaging policy for this year because the individuals had had some problem with their water usage. Council also discussed that if they do allow reaveraging for a sewer bill that it be based on a minimum cubic foot difference of 400 cubic feet per month. Council asked that the matter be placed on the agenda for consideration by Council at the June 10, 2002, Council meeting.

BUDGET

FY 2002-2003

Mr. LeDuc stated City Council discussed on April 29, 2002, a proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2002-2003. At that meeting Council asked the staff to review lowering the proposed 6% water and sewer rate increase by adding a water impact fee for new development only. The staff is proposing a \$400 equivalent residential unit impact fee for all new water connections. This would raise an estimated \$150,000 and, along with the revised tap and connection fees, the total increase would be \$172,000. By implementing these new fees the city can reduce the water rate increase from 6% to 4%. The estimated \$150,000 in water impact fees would raise about \$750,000 in the next 5 years compared to the projected needs of over \$5 million over that same period. To reduce the increase further from 4% to 3%, the impact fees would need to be raised another \$225 to \$625. The proposed budget reflects the impact fee at \$400 and a 4% rate increase. The water and sewer rate and tap fee increases, along with the \$400 impact fee, are reflected in the first reading of the budget. However, the impact fees cannot be officially approved until a study justifying these rates is completed. Once Council decides on whether or not to implement the water impact fee we would then get a firm to complete the necessary study.

As Council requested, Larry Morris discussed the implementation of the upcoming stormwater regulations with the county to determine if there were any possibilities of partnering with them. They stated that we might be able to work together on an education program, but were unsure as to how we could share in the monitoring and enforcement portions at this time. Mr. LeDuc recommended Council not include the storm water fee increase in the proposed budget, but instead bring it back to Council in January, 2003, once we have more information from DHEC and EPA on the implementation requirements and their related costs. The proposed Stormwater budget has been changed, deleting the proposed \$0.35/month rate increase.

Council discussed the proposed rates at length. It was pointed out by Councilman Smith that a \$400 impact fee is probably the minimum and a higher fee could be justified. It was pointed out that the impact fee would be used for new lines and new wells to meet increasing demands for water. It was pointed out if an impact fee is implemented it will be on all new water taps and this may affect growth if the fees are too high, so it could have an adverse effect. It was also pointed out that the impact fees would need to be the same for everyone and could not be just charged to one area such as the southside. Councilwoman Vaughters stated she did not want to encourage providing water and sewer to areas not in the city. She stated she wanted the areas to come into the city if they want city services. She did not want the citizens of the city to pay higher rates in order to provide services for people who do not want to pay city taxes.

Mr. LeDuc stated from the discussion he understood that Council wanted to go forward with a water impact fee. He stated the city would also proceed with the consultant's study to justify the impact fee. He said he would have some suggestions on incentives for encouraging development, particularly on the north side, at the next meeting.

REGULAR MEETING

May 13, 2002

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

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Bill Huggins, Gary Smith, Larry Morris, Anita Lilly, Richard Pearce, Glenn Parker, Sara Ridout, Susan Mimmie, Karen Daily of the Aiken Standard, Josh Gelinis of the Augusta Chronicle, and 8 citizens.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 8:00 P.M. Councilwoman Price led in prayer, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Cavanaugh stated Council needed to approve the agenda. Councilwoman Clyburn moved, seconded by Councilman Cuning that the agenda be approved as presented.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of April 22, 2002 and the work session of April 29, 2002, were considered for approval. Councilman Sprawls moved that the minutes be approved as written. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Clyburn and unanimously approved.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Appointments

Ballentine, Sidney

Building Code of Appeals

Hunter, John

Brooks, Deborah

Housing Authority

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

Mr. LeDuc stated Council has nine pending appointments to boards and committees of the city and two appointments are presented for Council's consideration.

Mayor Cavanaugh has recommended reappointment of Sidney Ballentine to the Building Code of Appeals Committee. If reappointed the term would expire May 12, 2004.