

Aiken City Council Minutes

March 25, 2002

WORKSESSION

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

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Bill Huggins, Sara Ridout, Don Edmunds, John Paveglio, Harry Shealy, and 25 citizens.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

AIKEN CENTER FOR THE ARTSCenter for the ArtsLaurens Street

Mr. LeDuc stated he would like to update Council on the building improvements planned for the Aiken Center for the Arts on Laurens Street.

Mr. LeDuc stated last year City Council met with the Center for the Arts Board of Directors concerning building improvements that they were planning over the next couple of years. The first phase primarily involves building two new accesses to the second floor, along with the installation of a new sprinkler system. This work is currently underway and they hope to soon begin Phases 2 and 3 which include a new elevator, improvements to the second floor area and façade changes on both the front and back of the building. The city approved a \$250,000 grant to help with these improvements, and they are receiving funds through the Accommodations Tax at a rate of \$40,000 a quarter. Their final payment will be received in January, 2003. Don Edmunds and Board member John Paveglio will provide Council with an update on their progress and plans for the future.

Mr. John Paveglio, of the Board of Directors for the Arts Center, stated he was present to give Council an update on how the \$250,000 which the city gave to the Arts Center was being spent. He said when they requested the funds in 2000 they said they would increase their exhibits to encourage people to come downtown. He said the building had not been closed during construction, but activities had gone on. He said 9 exhibits had been completed and each exhibit had averaged 1,500 people per exhibit. He said the Arts Center had continued to expand their programs and had increased the number of classes offered and had doubled the number of people served. He said last summer the Arts Center had partnered with United Way, the Aiken Housing Authority and the Boys and Girls Club to bring arts to over 100 underprivileged children. He said their fund raising had been very successful and their last Taste of Wine and Art netted \$23,000. Their Antiques in the Heart of Aiken was very successful and netted over \$40,000. He said the construction project had been broken down into three phases. He said this was done to break down the work into a measurable scope on cost so they could be sure they had the funding before starting work. He said the scope was broken down in such a way that upon completion of any one of the phases there is a benefit to the Center even if the other phases are not completed. He said Phase I is basically to get the building up to code by providing sprinklers for the entire building, installing underground fire lines in the alley, providing fire alarm system for the entire building, installing front/rear fire escape stairs, installing new fire door down stairs, completing new offices on the second floor, installing a new gallery on the first floor where present offices are, and installing a kitchen. The budget for that phase is \$349,000. Phase 2 will complete the meeting room, classrooms, and storage rooms on the second floor, install an elevator and install folding partitions. The estimate for phase 2 is \$334,000. Phase 3 will complete the upper gallery and lower rear entryway and do the front and rear elevations. The estimate for phase 3 is \$287,000 for a total project estimate of \$970,000.

Mr. Paveglio stated to date the kitchen has been completed, the upstairs has been completely gutted and the sprinkler system is being installed. To date the Center has

received \$80,000 from the city and the expenses have been \$40,000. However, in the next couple of months the expenses and revenues will cross over. He said a line of credit had been established with Regions Bank. He said they would not start a phase unless they have the required funding. He said with the Accommodations money and their cash reserves they have enough money to do phase 1. He said they feel they have enough controls in place to ensure the success of the project. He said they have a design build contract with a cap of \$349,000 with H. G. Reynolds who uses Cheatham, Fletcher, Scott & Sears as the architects. Hank Moorman, a local architect who is on the Center's Board, is in constant contact with the contractor as well as the architect. Don Edmunds, Executive Director, is at the facility to watch over the progress on a daily basis. The plans have been presented to the Board for approval. Any change orders to increase the costs above the cap will have to be approved by the Board prior to implementation. The schedule is to complete phase 1 by September, 2002. At that time they will decide on whether or not to begin phase 2. He said the most cost-effective schedule is to complete all phases without starting and stopping. He said the Board had put together a strategy for a capital campaign.

In discussion of the Arts Center it was pointed out that Council wanted the Arts Center to have some input into the hiring of the Tourism and Accommodations Coordinator through the Chamber of Commerce so there would be coordination of the various activities in Aiken. The Arts Center was asked to update Council about once a quarter on the progress of the project.

#### HITCHCOCK WOODS

##### Storm Drainage

Mr. LeDuc stated the Hitchcock Woods Board would like to meet with City Council concerning stormwater drainage through Hitchcock Woods. In particular they would like to schedule a time when City Councilmembers can meet for two to three hours during the evening or on the weekend to view the various stormwater outfalls within the Woods. The city has been working with the Board for several years concerning possible improvements and has completed different studies looking at alternative solutions to these problems. They would like the city to complete a new overall study of the drainage in the Woods to determine what improvements need to be taken over the next several years and to create a phased schedule for these improvements. Except for one of the stormwater outfalls, they would need to obtain joint agreements with the County and State Highway Department concerning any proposed work, since in many cases over 50% of the stormwater comes from non-city sources. In nearly every case at least 20% of the water comes from the streets and rights of way maintained by the State Highway Department and the remainder from areas in Aiken County. Dr. Harry Shealy, President of the Board, and other members are present to discuss their proposal and to schedule a field trip with City Council.

Dr. Harry Shealy presented a document to Council called "The Need for Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan for Hitchcock Woods." He pointed out the picture on the front was taken by Woolpert, who had done a report on drainage in the Woods. He said this area is referred to as the Grand Canyon. He said the Hitchcock Woods Foundation had been working on stormwater management for about 15 years. He said the Foundation would like to have a comprehensive stormwater management for the eight outfalls in the Woods. He said about 5,200 acres drain through the eight outfalls in Hitchcock Woods. About 70% of the land is in the city and about 30% is in the county. He said the Foundation had asked Larry Morris to do a comprehensive stormwater management plan. He said one goal is to use the opportunity to promote a solid partnership between the City of Aiken and Hitchcock Foundation by working together in a friendly and effective manner to stabilize the stormwater outfall problems in Hitchcock Woods. He said the goal is to bring the property back to a desirable, natural state. The second goal is to make all parties aware that the effort is a long term phased program. Also, while work is accomplished there would be a need to conduct cleaning and maintenance of projects that have already been completed. The dedicated effort by all concerned will continue to keep the Woods an excellent recreational and educational resource for Aiken and its citizens.

Dr. Shealy stated the Foundation wanted to ask City Council to give them two to three hours for a field trip in the Woods to show them some of the areas where there is damage from drainage. He said it would take about 6 months to get the stormwater management report from Woolpert. The proposal is to look at the priority of the projects based on finances. Dr. Shealy stated Peter Gray and General Robert Shelburn are also present.

After discussion Council set the date of Wednesday, April 3, 2002, at 1 P.M. to take a field trip of the Woods.

#### AIKEN COUNTY HISTORIC SOCIETY

##### Historic Marker

##### History of Aiken

Mayor Cavanaugh stated he had received a letter from Allen Riddick of the Aiken County Historic Society suggesting that a historic marker be placed somewhere in the downtown area giving the history of Aiken. He said he would like for this to be discussed at the next work session.

#### BUDGET WORK SESSION

Mr. LeDuc stated he would like for Council to meet for a budget work session. Council set the date of April 29, 2002, at 4 P.M. for the budget work session.

#### CAMELLIA DOWNS

Councilwoman Vaughters stated she was concerned there was not an architect involved in the design for housing in the Camellia Downs project. She stated she was concerned that with the big trees, the curving streets and the unique features of the property that the city will have to be careful that the housing fits on the property.

Mr. LeDuc stated the city had sent out a request for proposals to at least 6 builders who have indicated they want to build in the former Camellia Trailer Park. He said these builders have working design drawings that they have used in the past. They will submit 4 or 5 sets of plans for review by the city. The staff will review the plans for size and certain architectural features. He said if an architect is involved the cost for each house would increase several thousand dollars.

Councilwoman Clyburn stated the city had stated when they met with the neighbors that the city would meet with them later to let them see the housing designs, and she would like for the city to honor that commitment.

#### ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. LeDuc gave a brief review of the roadway improvements being made on the southside of Aiken to help with traffic problems. He said the connector road had been completed between Target and the Aiken Mall. A driveway has been constructed at the back end of Wendy's so customers don't have to exit onto Whiskey or Pine Log Road. Permission has been obtained from WalMart, the former Bojangles and Arby's to connect the roadway that leads to Centennial and the South Aiken High School, making a four leg intersection. This will make a driveway through to the WalMart parking lot. Presently the only way to get in and out of Arby's and Bojangles is by Whiskey Road so this will help customers of these two businesses. He said the city also has permission from WalMart to go ahead with the back entrance that will connect Dougherty Road to the back area of WalMart. He said this will connect Neilson and Dougherty Road. He said these connections would make it possible to come from Silver Bluff to these businesses and not have to get on Whiskey Road. There will also be a connection from Dougherty Road to the Publix shopping area. He said the city had applied for a grant to start the enhancements along Whiskey Road from Pine Log Road to Arby's.