

Aiken City Council Minutes

SPECIAL MEETING

June 6, 2016

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

Absent: Councilman Homoki

Others Present: John Klimm, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Sara Ridout, Kim Abney, Tim Coakley, Alicia Davis, Nola Grant, Phil Berley, Jeff Metz, Jessica Campbell, Karl Odenthal, Dan Brown and Maayan Schechter from the Aiken Standard, and about 5 citizens.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Osbon called the special meeting to order at 5:05 P.M. Mayor Osbon led in prayer. The pledge of allegiance to the flag was led by Lt. Karl Odenthal.

GUIDELINES

Mayor Osbon reviewed the guidelines for speaking at the Council meeting. All the meetings are public meetings in which many opinions are expressed and the business of the city must be conducted. He said discipline, honorable and professional decorum is paramount. Courteous and respectful communication is expected. In public hearings all questions and statements from the public shall be directed to the Chair. He welcomed comments from the audience on the agenda items listed for public hearing. He asked that comments be limited to five minutes and that persons speak only one time per topic. He asked that those who would like to speak raise their hand and be recognized and come to the podium and give their name and address.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Mayor Osbon asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda.

Mayor Pro Tem Ebner stated he had not heard of any additions or deletions from the agenda so he would move for approval of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilman Dewar. The motion was unanimously approved. Councilman Ebner noted that City Attorney Gary Smith was not present, but he understood City Council could still meet.

TAX MILLAGE RATE - ORDINANCE

Budget
2016-17

Mayor Osbon stated an ordinance had been prepared for first reading to set the tax millage rate for fiscal year 2016-17.

Mayor Osbon read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE LEVY OF TAXES FOR ORDINARY CITY PURPOSES IN THE CITY OF AIKEN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2016, SET THE MILLAGE AT SIXTY-TWO (62) MILLS AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE EXPENDITURES THEREOF.

Councilman Dewar moved, seconded by Councilwoman Diggs, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to set the tax millage rate for fiscal year 2016-17 at 62 mills.

Mr. Klimm, City Manager, stated there are two items before Council at this meeting. It is the intent to ask Council to take into consideration for first reading approval of the two items recognizing that we have already called for a series of work sessions which will allow members of our City Council and the general public to learn from every one of the department heads exactly what is proposed department by department. He said he was proposing work sessions on Friday, June 10, June 13, 14, and 15 if necessary at 4:00 P.M. Thereafter we will be requesting that Council have second reading of the budget on June 20, 2016. Because there are some items that are of significant consequence to the residents and taxpayers, we have been asked to postpone action on the three tax items at least an additional week from June 13 to June 20 and maybe even thereafter so everyone who has an opinion has an opportunity to express that opinion to Council and that Council be provided all the necessary information to be able to make an informed decision. As has been in the past few years, he was asking Council to approve the two items on first reading sending them to second reading on June 20, 2016, but recognizing that we have at least four work sessions planned and, if need be, more to get Council to the point where they feel comfortable to take a final vote on either June 20 or 27.

Mr. Klimm stated every year, City Council adopts a budget for the following fiscal year. By a separate ordinance, Council sets a millage rate to ensure proper revenue to meet anticipated budget expenditures.

As you know, Aiken County is in the process of a property reassessment this year, and we will not have the results of the reassessment until the Fall. However, to provide revenue for our budget we need to proceed with setting a millage rate now. Based upon the information we have at this time, we are prepared to proceed with continuing our millage rate at 62 mills. However, after we receive the reassessment figures, we will need to adjust our millage rate. The amount that we can adjust our millage rate is governed by state law. At this time the value of a mill is \$167,010 which is 37.7% of the General Fund.

The recommendation to Council at this time is that we keep the millage rate at its present rate of 62 mills. We are not asking for a millage rate increase at this time.

For City Council consideration is first reading of an ordinance to set the FY 2016-17 millage rate at 62 mills.

Mayor Osbon asked if there were any comments from the audience or Council.

Councilman Dewar stated he wanted to compliment the City Manager for step one in a transition into a new budget process. He said it is a monumental step to go from a document that we have been using for at least 40 years to a document that we copied from another municipality in South Carolina and we did so because it is a good budget. It has a lot of narrative and a lot of good information. It has numbers and the intent is to show people where we get our money and what we do with it. He said he wanted to congratulate the City Manager, Finance Director and staff for getting started on the right track. He said we do need to make a case for any increases that we may talk about and Council has not done that yet.

Mayor Osbon stated he appreciates the job that Mr. Klimm, Kim Abney, Finance Director, and staff have done on this project. It is a different budget from what has been presented in the past in that there is a narrative, graphs, pictures, etc. which make a clear picture of the budget. It was pointed out that the proposed budget is on the website.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilman Dewar, seconded by Councilwoman Diggs, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to set the tax millage rate for fiscal year 2016-17 at 62 mills. The motion was approved unanimously.

BUDGET – ORDINANCE

FY 2016-17

Mayor Osbon stated an ordinance had been prepared for first reading to adopt a budget for Fiscal Year 2016-17.

Mayor Osbon read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING A BUDGET PROPOSED BY THE CITY MANAGER, CONTAINING ESTIMATES OF PROPOSED REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES BY THE CITY OF AIKEN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2016, AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2017, AND DECLARING THAT IT SHALL CONSTITUTE THE BUDGT OF THE CITY OF AIKEN.

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to adopt a budget for fiscal year 2016-17.

Mr. Klimm stated as noted the entirety of the budget is on the website and citizens and taxpayers are encouraged to look at the budget. He said he welcomed any citizen to make comments or ask questions or make suggestions to him or the entirety of the management team from now until the final adoption of the budget. He said he would encourage Council if they have questions to let staff know so we can be responsive to their needs. He said staff is also committing to Council to meet as much as need be to work through the budget so by the time Council is asked to take a final vote Council has been provided the necessary information to allow Council to make an informed decision.

Mr. Klimm stated he would not review his budget message. It is online. He said he would request that Council approve the budget on first reading with the understanding that we have at least four additional work sessions planned plus second reading on June 20, 2016, or any time thereafter until ultimately a final budget is passed.

Mayor Osbon asked for comments from the audience and Council.

Councilman Dewar pointed out that a work session is a public session, and the public is invited to attend and participate. He said Council is hearing from the public, and input from the public is important.

Councilman Ebner stated he would like to compliment the City Manager and the staff for the format of the budget. He felt citizens as well visitors can look on the website and get a lot of information about the city which is important to keep our city current with other cities. He pointed out that he, the City Manager and Assistant City Manager had had a discussion about an Enterprise or Proprietary fund, and he felt we need to get the definition of the Enterprise or Proprietary Fund. He felt we need to get the official ruling. He said Mr. Gary Smith, City Attorney, had said before that there is a law for the Enterprise or Proprietary Fund. It also has to be self-funding. He felt Council needs to look at that and be sure we get all that in good shape for the next meeting. He felt everything was good except for the Airport, and it is not self-funding. Another thing is the ordinance* talks about the General Fund will fund all the other funds. He felt that needs to be looked at. He pointed out that just about all the funds require some money from the General Fund to the funds, such as the Water and Sewer Fund, Theater, Solid Waste, Victim Services, etc. Usually the budget money that comes into that fund does not cover it. Other money has to go into it. He felt clarification needs to be made on that.

Councilwoman Diggs stated she liked the way the management team and Mr. Klimm highlighted the major accomplishments over the past year. She pointed out that a lot had been accomplished this year.

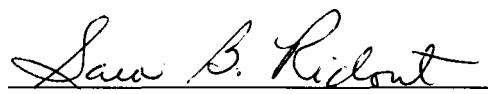
Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion by Councilwoman Diggs, seconded by Councilman Ebner, that Council approve on first reading an ordinance to adopt a budget for fiscal year 2016-17. The motion was approved by a majority vote with Mayor Osbon and Councilmembers Dewar, Diggs, Ebner and Price voting in favor of the motion. Councilman Merry opposed the motion. Councilman Homoki was not present.

Mayor Osbon stated Council was going to move to Room 204 for the Work Session on the Eustis Park Center plans and the Northside Park plans.

Councilman Dewar stated he had heard from a lot of people who are making an effort to keep up with what is happening in the city. He said he would like to suggest a couple of items for the website which might make it easier for the citizens. Frequently Council has a work session and a regular meeting, and Council approves the minutes at the same time. He said he would like to see the minutes for the work session and the regular meeting listed separately on the website. He said he felt extraordinary efforts had been made since Mr. Klimm has arrived to be more open with the public. He pointed out the program "Aiken This Week" had been started, and he would like to see those programs indexed on the website. He said that would help a person in selecting which program they wish to watch. He said these are important efforts on the part of the city staff to reach out to the public to let them know what is being done.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned to the work session at 5:21 P.M.


Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk