



CITY OF COLUMBIA
WORK SESSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2016
CITY HALL – 1737 MAIN STREET
2nd FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

The Columbia City Council conducted a Work Session on Tuesday, January 5, 2016 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 2:16 p.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Leona K. Plough, The Honorable Moe Baddourah, The Honorable Howard Duvall and The Honorable Edward McDowell, Jr. Also present were Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Moore, City Clerk. This meeting was advertised in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION/ACTION

1. Update on the Coordination of Homeless Services, Inclement Weather Center Opening and Flood Recovery Efforts – Mr. J. Mac Bennett, President and CEO of the United Way of the Midlands

Mr. J. Mac Bennett, President and CEO of the United Way of the Midlands explained that this partnership with the City of Columbia began one year ago and they brought in the Midlands Area Consortium on Homelessness (MACH) to help coordinate a better response to homeless needs. He reported that in the last year, 6,500 Richland County residents were provided some type of homeless service or housing assistance. Over 1,000 people are in shelters or living on the streets on a given night. The United Way is working to increase housing options by providing rapid rehousing grants and a program for youth in transition without adult supervision. He described the Zero: 2016 campaign as a privately led national effort focused on ending homeless among veterans and the chronic homeless. He reported that 478 people have been placed in permanent housing since the program began in 2013. The United Way has provided crisis intervention training for the Columbia Police Department to help them understand the best practices for de-escalating issues with individuals, especially the mentally ill. A point in time count of the homeless population will be conducted on January 27, 2016. He reported that the Inclement Weather Center operates when temperatures drop below 40 degrees. There are 240 beds; it has been open for 25 days; and 467 different clients have been served totaling 2,300 bed nights. He reported that the United Way saved the City of Columbia \$54,000 this past year. He reported that the center was open during the flood event and evacuation services were also provided. He noted that 25,000 FEMA registrations have been made and 25% of those individuals don't have the resources to repair their homes. He said the United Way is focusing on efforts in partnership with other organizations to help those individuals. The Central Carolina Community Foundation is also making grants to assist organizations with helping those individuals as well. He reported that 3,000 volunteers provided 32,000 hours of service to our community during the flood. In closing, he said we have a great partnership with the City, we've made a lot of progress, and we are starting to see progress among the service providers.

2. [Funding for the Vista Yellow Shirts Program](#) – The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine

Councilor Devine explained that this is a continuation of our discussion regarding the necessity of funding for the Vista Yellow Shirts. The Congaree Vista Guild was asked to determine how they would use \$75,000. She said the request is for \$80,000. She proposed that Council look at next year's funding. She asked Richard Burts if they can figure out how to manage if funding is guaranteed by July 1, 2016.

Mr. Richard Burts, President of the Congaree Vista Guild said Block by Block is willing to carry the balance until the next fiscal year if Council is willing to commit to the funding. He explained that the Vista Guild made staffing changes and \$80,000 is needed through June 30, 2016.

Mr. Allen Franklin, Director of Operations for the City Center Partnership agreed that the City Center Partnership would carry the balance if they can get an agreement from Council on the funding by July 1, 2016.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Devine and seconded by Mr. Duvall, Council voted unanimously to allocate \$80,000 from the 2016/2017 hospitality tax funding to the City Center Partnership to pay for Yellow Shirts in the Vista.

3. [Funding Request from the Columbia Housing Authority for Demolition](#) – The Honorable Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin

Mr. Gilbert Walker, Executive Director of the Columbia Housing Authority explained that the Columbia Housing Authority applied to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for permission to demolish Gonzales Gardens and it was approved two weeks ago without funding. He noted that the City was supportive of Celia Saxon and Rosewood Hills. The last two remaining public housing projects are Gonzales Gardens and Allen Benedict Court. He asked for the City's help with demolishing Gonzales Gardens. He noted that the Housing Authority has asked Richland County and private agencies for assistance and they will approach private banks and funding institutions to rebuild the site. He said the banks have already been paid back for the Rosewood Hills project. He said it is critical for the City to be a part of this. He noted that the Columbia Housing Authority is the largest affordable housing agency in South Carolina. He asked Council to consider the request for funding within seven (7) months. He noted that they have funding in their budget to relocate the families and provide them with Section 8 vouchers. He also noted that the Columbia Housing Authority has made a request to Richland County for waiver of the dumping fees estimated at up to \$600,000. He said that he contacted the superintendent and will do everything they can to keep students in District One. He noted that some people returned their Section 8 vouchers in order to remain in the City. He said the relocation process can be done in six to nine months. He offered to provide a progress report to Council.

Ms. Nancy Stoudenmire, Director of Human Resources & Planning noted that the plan can be found online at <http://chachoice.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/East-Central-Columbia-Transformation-Plan-Draft-LowRes.pdf>.

Upon a motion made by Mr. McDowell and seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to endorse the East Central Columbia Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan, recently accepted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, to include plans to respectfully relocate residents, demolish and completely redevelop the Gonzales Gardens site and to consider funding for the demolition during the fiscal year 2016/2017 budget cycle.

4. Women's Empowerment Program – Ms. Tina Herbert, Executive Director of the Office of Business Opportunity

Ms. Cynthia Hardy, Alpha Media and OnPoint Media announced that the Women's Empowerment Event was held on Saturday, October 3, 2015 and over 3,000 women from across South Carolina participated. She said Alpha Media includes six stations and we worked together to host the Women's Empowerment Event. The event included several workshops and seminars with a focus on breast cancer survivors and domestic violence. She thanked the Office of Business Opportunities for its sponsorship. She announced that a mentor matchup event will be held in March 2016. She presented a video highlighting the success of the event.

5. Commercial Revolving Loan Fund Update – Ms. Tina Herbert, Executive Director of the Office of Business Opportunity

Mr. Paul Featheringill, Loan Officer for the Office of Business Opportunities presented the Commercial Revolving Loan Fund Fiscal Year 2014/2015 report. He reported that seven (7) applications received EDA funding in the total amount of \$1,033,500. He announced that the Office of Business Opportunities signed a contract for loan servicing with AmeriNational Community Services for the enforcement and collection of loan payments. The Office of Business Opportunities funded two merchants through the Main Street Capital Program for a total of \$35,000. The loan approval rate for the Commercial Revolving Loan Fund Committee is 50%. He noted that one job was created and retained per \$25,603 loaned. He presented an overview of portfolio performance as of June 30, 2015. He noted that there was 46% minority and 42% women participation. He outlined the total amount of dollars that are available to lend. The Office of Business Opportunities is working on a disaster recovery loan program for businesses impacted by flooding along with working to disburse the remaining EDA funds.

6. Upcoming Tree Cycle – Mr. Robert Anderson, Director of Public Works

Mr. Robert Anderson, Director of Public Works Trees explained that trees are trimmed by South Carolina Electric and Gas for safety and improved reliability. He said trees along distribution lines are trimmed every five years based on the American National Standards Institute. He noted that the City's Forestry and Beautification Division is onsite to ensure that the trees are properly cut. The City's Public Relations Department will issue weekly press releases identifying the neighborhoods that will be impacted by upcoming trimming activities. A public meeting will be held at the Lourie Center located at 1650 Park Circle on Thursday, January 14, 2016 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon a motion made by Mayor Benjamin and seconded by Mr. Duvall, Council voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 5:25 p.m. for the discussion of **Items 7 through 9** as outlined.

7. Discussion of employment of an employee – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 - *Legal Department*

8. Receipt of legal advice on matters covered by attorney-client privilege – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 - *Chester Street Property*
 - *3119 Harrison Road*
 - *SS7231-12 Sanitary Sewer Easement Mechanical Clearing Project*

9. Discussion of matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 - *Inclusion of Property in a Multi-County Industrial/Business Park*

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore
City Clerk