

REGULAR MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2007 AT 5:30 P.M. AT CITY HALL. MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Alton McCollum. COUNCILPERSONS: Buddy Sandifer, Ella Bamberg, Janeth Walker, Teresa Hannibal, and Nancy Foster. VISITORS: Fire Chief Timmie Taylor, Phyllis Overstreet, Jerry Durgan, Chief Gorge Morris, Mrs. Virgie Bamberg, and Mr. Vernan Able.

Mayor McCollum called the meeting to order and Councilman Sandifer gave the invocation.

Clerk Watson took the roll with everyone being present except Councilman Fralick.

Councilperson Foster made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Councilperson Bamberg made the second. All approved. The motion carried.

Councilman Sandifer made the motion to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2007 meeting as received. Councilperson Hannibal made the second. All approved. The motion carried.

Councilman Sandifer made the motion to approve the Budget & Finance Reports as presented. Councilperson Foster made the second. All approved. The motion carried.

Under Commission Reports.

Commissioner Sandifer reported that everything was running as smooth as silk in the Police Department.

Commissioner Bamberg reported that business license collections were doing great. She informed Council that \$121,000.00 had been received for business licenses as compared to the \$60,000.00 collected for the same period last year.

Commissioner Walker informed Council that she had attended SCMIT and SCMIRF meetings on November 29th in Columbia. She said there was much discussion concerning workers compensation reform legislation especially Senate Bill 332. She told Council issues such as appeals with the circuit court, expanded fraud provisions, penalties and investigations, medical information, injuries on the job, disabilities, and the end of the Second Injury Fund were discussed. Commissioner Walker told Council other important issues dealt with the OSHA issued rule regarding personal protection equipment and federal rules on civil procedures which were amended on December 1, 2006.

Commissioner Walker informed Council that SC had the second lowest rates for insurance premiums but that costs increases were due to medical usage increases, wage increases and attorney involvement costs. She told Council the premium rates should be down in two years due to the new workers compensation legislation.

Commissioner Walker informed Council that the City would be saving \$16,219.00 this year in workers compensation premiums due to the City's experience ratio dropping below 1. She commended the City and all its employees for making this dream a reality.

Commissioner Walker made Council aware that the MASC would be offering Fire Service Grants in the amount not to exceed \$1,250.00 per member this year. She said the grants would total \$30,000.00 and were reimbursed on a fifty-fifty basis.

Commissioner Walker informed Council that the MASC was also offering \$100,000.00 in Law Enforcement Tech Grants for protective vests this year. Commissioner Walker told Council that effective July 24, 2008 the minimum wage would increase to \$6.55 and effective July 24, 2009 it would increase to \$7.25.

Commissioner Hannibal informed Council that things were going well in the Fire Department. She informed Council that \$30,000.00 in grant funding was available for the purchasing of fire hoses, bunker gear and pagers this year with no matching funds required.

Councilman Sandifer made the motion to apply for the \$30,000.00 grant this year. Councilperson Bamberg made the second. All approved. The motion carried.

Commissioner Foster informed Council that the Buildings Commission has decided to make some adjustments to the Civic Center's Policies and Procedures. She told Council her commission was notified that there were Christmas decorations lacking on Highway 78 and Highway 301 south and the Foster Park this year. She explained that the BPW usually handled the Christmas decorations and said Mayor McCollum was presently trying to reach Manager Ellis in order to get some more decorations placed.

Mayor McCollum explained that he would be seeing Mr. Ellis tomorrow.

Commissioner Foster informed Council that LSCOG officials were saying the \$350,000.00 Neighborhood Rehabilitation Grant was in jeopardy due to three of the participants dropping out of the program. She said someone had been using scare tactics and going to the participants saying their taxes would be increasing due to the renovation of their homes. Commissioner Foster voiced that the grant was great and that the participants really needed the help.

Commissioner Foster informed Council that Mr. Craig Walker had called the SC Department of Commerce to see if Mrs. Frances Johnson could legally serve on the Housing Committee for the grant and he also told the Commerce Department that monies were being misappropriated. Commissioner Foster reminded Council that Mrs. Johnson was appointed by the Mayor and Council and said all of the monies were handled by the City of Bamberg. Commissioner Foster said others have also called to see if Mrs. Johnson could legally serve on the committee.

Under Old Business.

Councilperson Foster informed Council that the Buildings Commission had met and at this time was recommending that the National Guard be allowed to use the office on the right in the Civic Center. Councilperson Foster said they would evaluate the utilities to see how much they increased due to their presence.

Councilman Sandifer made the motion to give the National Guard office space in the Civic Center at no charge. Councilperson Bamberg made the second. All approved. The motion carried.

During the discussion of the Civic Center, Mayor McCollum informed Council that they may want to consider renovating the Civic Center one phase at a time. He said he felt the roof should be the first priority.

Councilperson Foster informed Council that the Buildings Commission was recommending that Architect West Summers be asked to present possible phases and costs to Council so they could decide how to proceed.

Councilperson Hannibal asked if any grant monies had been found for the renovation?

Councilperson Foster explained that they were looking at Rural Development Grants for possible funding.

Councilman Sandifer, saying the Buildings Commission had looked at it from a real standpoint, stated the City needed to pay as they went. He said they should do what they could afford and pay for one phase and then move forward with another phase of renovation.

Councilperson Hannibal asked if they had received any answers from the BPW concerning the renovation of the Civic Center?

Mayor McCollum informed Council that they had received no answers from the BPW.

Councilman Sandifer made the motion to have Architect West Summers present Council with proposed phases of renovation and their costs for the Civic Center. Councilperson Foster made the second. All approved. The motion carried.

Councilperson Walker made the motion to approve the \$400.00 donation for the Shalom Zone Mission Cottage. Councilperson Bamberg made the second. All approved. The motion carried.

After Councilperson Walker explained plans for the kiddie park on Cricket and Brook Drives, she made the motion to approve on first reading Ordinance 07-6 accepting deeded property from K & S Properties of the Lowcountry for the park. Councilperson Foster made the second. All approved. The motion carried.

Clerk Watson and Chief Morris explained to Council the problems they were having with developed and undeveloped lots in town. They informed Council that there were no ordinances to deal with the complaints concerning lots which they considered undeveloped.

Mr. Vernan Abel, addressing Council, informed them that once houses were torn down in his neighborhood the lots were allowed to grow up which he felt was wrong. He asked Council how long they were willing to go to let the City be taken over by undeveloped properties. He voiced that it was important to address the lots in order to bring people to Bamberg. He said the taxpayers could not just sit by and let the lots grow up.

Mr. Abel also made Council aware that there were no crosswalks on Binnicker Bridge Road as you head toward the school. He asked Council if they thought the kids were important enough for them to do something about the problem.

Councilperson Walker said she felt the SCDOT needed to be made aware of the crosswalk problem.

Councilperson Hannibal asked if School Resource Officers could be utilized?

Mr. Able also mentioned that sidewalks needed to be constructed along Binnicker Bridge Road from Thankful Baptist Church to the street leading to the school.

Mayor McCollum assured Mr. Abel that he would contact Bobby Crider of the SCDOT concerning the crosswalk and sidewalks.

Councilperson Hannibal assured Mr. Abel that the Sanitation Department would help maintain the work already done on the sidewalks along Binnicker Bridge Road.

Mr. Abel told Council he appreciated what Councilperson Hannibal was doing for her constituents.

Councilman Sandifer asked that Clerk Watson contact other cities to see what they have as far as ordinances dealing with unkept lots.

Chief Morris informed Council that they needed to be prepared to cut lots on a continuous basis if they dealt with undeveloped lots.

Councilperson Hannibal said she was concerned with debris like bamboo growing on the lots.

Councilperson Walker voiced that Mr. Kinard had such a situation in her district with a lot next to him with growth which was warping his fence. She said they had beautified downtown and that they must become concerned with the Main Highway area. She said the lots were unsightly and that they affected the economic development within the area.

Councilperson Walker asked that a committee be appointed to look into the problem.

Councilman Sandifer said he felt the Sanitation Commission should study the problem.

Mayor McCollum voiced that he could not see how you could force someone to clear an undeveloped lot.

Clerk Watson was asked to see what other cities were doing.

During questions from the press and audience, Mrs. Bamberg informed Council that she was concerned with the traffic lights at Highway 78 and 301 changing too fast.

Councilperson Walker thanked the City workers for picking up the bags of trash on Calhoun Street following the litter pickup she and her husband had performed this morning.

Mrs. Phyllis Overstreet informed Council that arrows needed to be placed on Highway 78 to let people know the two lanes were merging into one lane.

Chief Timmie Taylor informed Council that arrows giving direction on Highway 301 near Hardees were too close to the intersection to do any good.

Mayor McCollum said he had already contacted the Highway Department concerning the problems.

Councilperson Bamberg said the yellow lines at Hardees needed to be worked on also.

Councilperson Walker mentioned that a street sign was lying on the ground at the intersection of Highway 78 and Highway 301.

Mrs. Bamberg told Council an ordinance was needed to address the lot issue. She asked if there was only one crosswalk in the downtown area?

Mayor McCollum informed her that the SCDOT would only agree to three crosswalks in the downtown area.

Councilperson Foster asked Chief Morris to address the speeding trucks coming through the downtown area.

Mrs. Bamberg told Council they were doing a wonderful job with the town.

With no further business, Councilman Sandifer made the motion to adjourn. Councilperson Hannibal made the second. All approved. The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk

Mayor