

SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2006 AT 5:00 P.M. AT CITY HALL. MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Alton McCollum. COUNCILPERSONS: Buddy Sandifer, Frances Johnson, David Walker, Betty Mack and Nancy Foster. CLERK: Bruce Watson VISITORS: Brian Heape, Phyllis Overstreet, Jerry Durgan, Danny and Betty Singleton, Craig Walker, Pam Barnwell, Bill Robinson and a host of other citizens and merchants.

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

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

Mayor McCollum informed Council that they were here tonight to answer questions concerning the 301 Widening Project. He introduced Mr. Brian Heape, SCDOT Resident Engineer, who was there to help with the details.

Mr. Heape informed Council that the Main Street through downtown would include four-ten foot lanes with five foot sidewalks on each side. He said asphalt would be put in the Highway 78 cuts this week preparing for the holidays. Mr. Heape informed Council that the main outfall ditches on the south end of town were near completion and that the project would be closed down between Christmas and New Years. Mr. Heape told Council that after the first of the year the awnings would be removed from the front of the buildings and stored for the owners so they could erect them at the rear of their stores. Mr. Heape explained that around March or the first of April that Main Street would be closed for six to eight months for construction.

Mayor McCollum questioned Mr. Heape and said Council was assured that Main Street would be four lanes with only two operating lanes because the other two lanes would be striped off.

Mr. Heape said there would be further discussion concerning the number of operating lanes with DOT officials.

Councilperson Johnson asked why the parking had already been removed on the west side of Main Street?

Mr. Heape explained that the contractor removed the parking in order to take the awnings down after the first of the year.

Mayor McCollum asked if the parking could be returned until after Christmas?

Mr. Heape explained it could not since it was the contractor's call. He informed Council that he was working to get signage telling customers to use the rear entrances of the buildings.

Councilperson Foster asked how wide the sidewalks would be?

Mr. Heape explained the sidewalks would be five feet and that they met DOT specifications.

Mayor McCollum asked why the parking still needed to be barricaded?

Mr. Heape explained that the area was still considered a work zone and that the contractor made the call.

Councilperson Foster asked if there would be any compensation to the owners for their awnings?

Mr. Heape explained that no compensation would be given since the awnings were in DOT right of way. He said the buildings would be made water tight once the awnings were removed.

Mayor McCollum asked if the awnings and signs could be replaced?

Mr. Heape said the Columbia Office was looking to see if encroachment permits could be given for some of the awnings and signs.

Councilperson Johnson asked if the balconies on the buildings had to be removed?

Mr. Heape explained that they were not marked for removal due to their height.

Councilman Sandifer informed Mr. Heape that the Fire Department was concerned about being notified as to when the area would be open and closed for traffic due to emergency response.

Mr. Heape explained that the contractor had been asked to contact the 911 dispatcher concerning the opening and closing of the Main Street area. He said City Hall would also be notified.

Councilperson Johnson asked if he would work with the contractor to have the barrels removed on the west side of Main Street until after holidays.

Mr. Heape said he would ask.

Councilman Sandifer asked to be excused due to an event that he was involved with at his church.

Mayor McCollum excused him.

Mrs. Betty Singleton asked at whose expense the awnings would be removed and voiced concern with the safety of the five foot sidewalks.

Mr. Heape said the contractor would remove the awnings but the owners would have to put them back up.

Mayor McCollum explained that Council had decided to install wrought iron fencing along the sidewalks for safety purposes.

Mr. Danny Singleton said he missed the original planning meetings and said he was concerned with the tight working quarters of the project. He said he felt the widening would be ugly.

Mrs. Phyllis Overstreet voiced concerns with drivers not obeying the double yellow lines.

Mr. Heape said he was working on signage concerning the changing of the lanes and said the timing of the signal light would be adjusted.

A merchant asked why all the expense in a road when the buildings were falling down? She mainly was concerned with the present condition of the Old City Hall Building.

Mayor McCollum explained that Council was looking twenty to thirty years down the road to make an attractive downtown. He asked everyone to bear with them. He said the Old City Hall Building was presently under unsafe building abatement procedures.

An individual asked when the project would be finished?

Mr. Heape said around 2007.

Mr. Pam Barnwell asked if there were any plans for parking on the west side of Main Street?

Mayor McCollum explained that plans called for parking along Short Street and Highway 78 and mentioned that the new parking lot would also be utilized.

An individual asked if they would be compensated for lost revenues?

Mr. Heape explained that the merchants would have to grin and bear it. He said the contractor would be working with them to be sure access was maintained to the buildings if they didn't have a back door.

Mr. Craig Walker said he was vague on the compensation issue and asked if there was any relief?

Mr. Heape explained that there would be none at all.

Councilperson Johnson informed the group that Council had held public hearings ten years ago with very little participation. She said SCDOT had control of the project but

that the Sanitation Department would do everything possible to help the merchants with the back of their buildings to provide access to the rear of the buildings.

Mayor McCollum thanked Mr. Heape for coming and assured the audience that SCDOT would be accommodating throughout the project. He urged them to contact Mr. Heape if they had further concerns.

Mr. Danny Singleton asked what happened to the original plan to remove the store fronts?

Mayor McCollum and Clerk Watson explained the process that was taken in which the President's Historical Committee blocked any federal funding for the project if any of the buildings were touched.

Councilperson Johnson voiced that the local historical society opposed the original plan.

Clerk Watson explained the 301 Widening Project in detail and how Congressman Clyburn was involved as well as Council's decision to get the project funded.

Mr. Bill Robinson was concerned with needing more parking and complained that his drive behind the cleaners was continuing to be blocked by citizens' vehicles. He said the police would do nothing to help him.

Mayor McCollum asked Mr. Robinson to see him personally concerning the problem.

Mayor McCollum thanked everyone for coming.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk

Mayor