

**MINUTES**

A Regular Meeting of Walterboro City Council was held at City Hall on Tuesday, September 9, 2014 at 6:15 P.M., with Mayor Bill Young presiding.

**PRESENT WERE:** Mayor Bill Young, Council Members: Jimmy Syfrett, Paul Siegel, Tom Lohr, Bobby Bonds, James Broderick and Judy Bridge. City Manager Jeff Molinari, City Clerk Betty Hudson and City Attorney George Cone were also present. There were approximately 32 persons present in the audience.

There being a quorum present, Mayor Young called the meeting to order and Council Member Syfrett gave the invocation. Council Member Lohr led the pledge of allegiance to our flag.

Mayor Young welcomed everyone to the meeting and welcomed Mr. Bill Taylor from the Municipal Association, who was also present at the meeting.

**PUBLIC INPUT ON AGENDA ITEMS:**

There were no public comments or questions on agenda items.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

1. Mr. Noel Ison was present to address Council regarding a proposal to reopen the local Ivanhoe theater.

Mr. Ison opened by thanking Council for the opportunity to speak about the potential re-opening of our theater. He said, we are not here tonight as members of a political party, but are here as your neighbor and fellow citizen. We are asking you to listen to our plan and consider the health and happiness of the people who live here. He stated the need for this theater was not a luxury, but a necessity. He further stated, we recognize that City Council is not responsible when businesses fail, but on the other hand, we know future plans are part of your responsibility.

He asked that Council consider the following items as a result of losing our theater.

- 1) The families and children of our city no longer have a source of entertainment.
- 2) We lost a unique opportunity for families to do something together.
- 3) We lost a safe and fun source of entertainment that grandparents, parents and children can share.
- 4) Our low income citizens lost because they cannot afford to buy gas to travel to Summerville and buy tickets to a movie.
- 5) Senior citizens lost one of their few sources of entertainment. This is a real burden on senior citizens because they cannot drive at night and many can no longer drive at all.
- 6) Our teenagers are now forced to drive 80 miles round trip to Summerville to take a date. This is a very hazardous journey as they travel back and forth.

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- 7) The old theater employed only 5 people, while the new theater will employ between 8 and 10 employees.
- 8) By partnering with our school system, we can use the theater as a means to motivate our students and offer another venue for their activities.
- 9) It has been said that government cannot be involved with a private business, but that is not true. States, counties and cities have given huge tax breaks and other support for big business to move into their area.
- 10) In a small town like Walterboro, we should support a business that will have a positive impact on the quality of life of our citizens.

Mr. Ison then outlined the following plans for updating the theater.

- 1) Update two of the 4 auditoriums with the latest Digital Movie Projection and Dolby 7.1 Surround Sound System. Each theater will have a Dolby sound system consisting of three-way screen speakers; 8 surround sound speakers, and one woofer (per auditorium) in addition to the finest amplifiers available. Not only will we be equal to the best theaters in Summerville and Charleston, but we will be superior to many of them due to our up-to-date and state-of-the art 2014 systems.
- 2) The plan also calls for seating to be replaced, new upholstery and carpeting, as well as an updated concession stand.
- 3) The remaining two smaller theaters would be converted into an arcade game room with tables and chairs as a staging area for children's birthday parties. The remaining auditorium would be used for a bingo room for 2 nights a week. This room will also be available for rent for private parties and business meetings.

Mr. Ison stated that the need for entertainment is a basic necessity for the health and well-being of our citizens. He said, we have talked to movie operators in small towns across the south and many of them are out of business or going out of business due to the high cost of digital equipment now required by the movie studio. They simply cannot afford the \$150,000 it takes to refit theaters.

Mr. Ison said this is going to take team work to make this work. The team will be, you, the investor, the bank and the public. All four of those have to come together with the common desire to bring this theater back.

Mr. Ison asked that the City invest \$147,000 in funding to help cover renovation costs to the former Ivanhoe Theater. The investor, Kim Steedley, will sign a 5-year lease to buy a contract that will pay off the equipment within 5 years. Mr. Ison asked that the City create a \$1.00 ticket tax to help pay for the new equipment. Mr. Ison stated, we project a total of \$2,500 each month including the investor's contribution. This \$2,500 a month will create a total of \$30,000 a year and over 5 years will yield \$150,000 to pay off the debt. Mr. Ison pointed out that the investment in this theater will total over \$300,000.

In conclusion, Mr. Ison told Council, "It's for you to decide, will you get involved and make it happen?"

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2. Phillip Slayter, Colleton County Director of Planning and Development, addressed Council regarding the Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan.

Mr. Slayter appeared before Council to update Council on the county's bicycle and pedestrian master plan. This plan will combine most of the walking and biking paths throughout the City. Mr. Slayter told Council that this project by the county is in corporation with the Eat Smart Move More Colleton County. This is a positive step to improve some of the recreational alternatives locally, as well as generate some physical activity. As you know, obesity has been a problem for South Carolina for a number of years. At the beginning of the summer, Eat Smart, Move More Colleton County received a \$22,000 grant from DHEC to undertake a master plan for bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks within the county. The focus of it was to be primarily the city and the surrounding suburban area. When Eat Smart Move More received the money, Mr. Slayter stated that he was approached to steward the project and help with the efforts to identify consultants to undertake it. Mr. Slayter also reported that he was able to get the Colleton County Transportation Committee to contribute \$15,000 for the effort. The total project cost is about \$36,000. With that budget we were successful in paying a consultant, who is not only known statewide, but known nationally, to come in and undertake a planning process for that project. We started in July this year and have assembled a project team, as well as a citizen advisory group. We have made presentations to the City Planning Commission, which offered their input as well as suggestions about membership to that advisory group. Last week, we had an open house meeting which was well attended by members of the public and some of our advisory group members that provided thoughts and ideas about opportunities and weakness within our network of sidewalks, as well as identifying possible routes for bike paths. We are looking at a time line of another six months to come back with an actual draft document with recommendations. We will certainly be making presentations not only to the county, but also to the City Planning Commission.

Council Member Siegel then asked if the project would involve the railroad right-of-ways that have been discussed for years and years. Mr. Slayter responded affirmatively. He said, that would certainly be an advantage as part of the plan. As you know, the railroad right-of-ways are owned jointly by the City and County and extend from the City limits all the way to Green Pond. Mr. Slayter said, I know since I have been here, I have been looking at it from the county's perspective. We have been successful in identifying how we might go about doing that. We are hopeful with this process, we might be able to open doors to a financial entity to take that project.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The Minutes of the August 26, 2014 Public Hearing and Regular Meeting were approved as submitted upon motion of Council Member Broderick, seconded by Council Member Bonds, and passed unanimously.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

There was no Old Business before Council.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Request to Hold a "Ghost Walk" October 30, 2014 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in a portion of Walterboro Wildlife Sanctuary

A motion was made by Council Member Bridge, seconded by Council Member Broderick to approve the request as submitted. All in favor, None opposed. Motion carried.

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2. Consideration of Veterans Day Parade Permit Request, November 9, 2014 - Veterans Council

A motion was made by Council Member Siegel seconded by Council Member Lohr, to approve the Veterans Day Parade Permit as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Request to Hold a "Teal Walk" September 27, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. for Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

Council Member Siegel made a motion to approve the request as submitted. Council Member Broderick seconded the motion that carried with all members voting in favor. None opposed.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

There was no Committee Reports given.

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:**

1. Lucas Street Drainage Project:

City Manager Molinari reminded Council that a couple of months ago, City Council awarded a contract to Bionomic Services, located in Charlotte, NC, to eradicate the cypress knees that had grown into the storm drain on Lucas Street. The City secured a \$52,000 appropriation from the Colleton County Transportation Committee (CTC). The contract that was awarded was in the amount of \$36,890. Mr. Molinari then introduced Public Works Director Charlie Chewning to give a brief status update on that project, since he has been leading that effort.

Mr. Chewning stated, I am sure most of you are aware of the chronic drainage problem there. The 18 inch storm drain pipe from Washington on the corner of Lucas and Washington - it started there and it drained down to Wichman Street. That was basic draining for that area and part of Washington Street. We let a contract to Bionomics of Charlotte and they were probably \$9,000-\$10,000 lower than the others, and we were a little skeptical about what they were going to come in and do. I was afraid that they didn't realize what was in there, even though we had pictures of cypress knees. With all my experience with SCDOT and drainage problems, I have never seen cypress knees growing down in a storm drain. Back in 1987 when the first project was developed downtown, we did not realize that it was a storm drain right near there draining Lucas street. Cypress trees being planted on a hill are going to go wherever they need to get water. So, it was a real mess. They (Bionomics) came in with a trailer loaded with two high pressure pumps that created up to 10,000 psi of water pressure. The water hose was constructed so as to have jets to push it up against the inside of the perimeter of the pipe. They got it up to 7,000 psi. They had a camera in behind it and the water was just cutting those roots and leaves out. It was an amazing thing to watch. We had it set up for 30 days and they completed the job in 2½ days. We hope that at this point the water will not back up on main street for those restaurants and stores. However, we still have the problems of roots from the cypress trees. The pipe was over 60 years old and some of the joints were in bad shape and it definitely needs relining. So, I think we are going to have to find some money somewhere to get it relined. Right now, it is draining.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

The Mayor then entertained a motion to enter into an Executive Session. Council Member Syfrett So Moved and Council Member Broderick seconded the motion.

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The motion passed unanimously. The Mayor announced that the meeting will convene into an Executive Session for:

- 1) Personnel matters:
  - a) Police Chief Search Update
  - b) Appointment of Municipal Judge and City Attorney, and
  - c) Boards and Commissions Appointments.

At approximately 7:49 p.m., a motion was made by Council Member Lohr to exit Executive Session and return to Open Session. Council Member Bridge seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

The meeting returned to Open Session, and a motion was made by Council Member Syfrett to reappoint Attorney George Cone as City Attorney. Council Member Broderick seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

Next, a motion was made by Council Member Lohr to appoint Charlie Sweat to the Accommodations Tax Advisory Board effective October 1, 2014. Council Member Broderick seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

Next, a motion was made by Council Member Bonds to appoint Thurston Hiers, Jack Jones and Amar Patel to the Accommodations Tax Board. Council Member Siegel seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

Council Member Siegel then made a motion to appoint Hattie Bush, Vondeste Fishburne, Clarence Albright and Patrick Thomas to the North Lemacks Street Revitalization Committee. Council Member Broderick seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

There being no further business to consider, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Council Member Broderick, seconded by Council Member Lohr and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:52 P.M. Notice of this meeting was distributed to all local media and posted on the City Hall bulletin board at least twenty-four hours prior to meeting time.

Respectfully,

Betty J. Hudson  
City Clerk

**APPROVED: October 14, 2014**