

Walterboro City Council  
Public Hearing and Regular Meeting  
February 10, 2009

## **MINUTES**

A Regular Meeting of Walterboro City Council was held at City Hall on Tuesday, February 10, 2009 at 6:15 P.M. with Mayor Charlie Sweat presiding.

**PRESENT WERE:** Mayor Charlie Sweat, Council Members: Randy Peters, Charles Lucas, Bill Young, Ted Parker, Franklin Smalls and Mary Anne Cannady. City Manager Jeff Lord, City Clerk Betty Hudson and Ashley Amundson, representing City Attorney George Cone, were also present.

There were approximately 15 persons present at the meeting.

There being a quorum present, the Mayor called the meeting to order and called on Council Member Smalls for the invocation and Council Member Young to lead the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag.

### **PRESENTATION:**

#### **City Manager Jeff Lord - 2008 Projects Update**

Mayor Sweat announced that Council had decided at its retreat two weeks ago that the public needed to be made aware of the projects that the City has accomplished over the year's time. This report would include what had been accomplished and what has yet to be done for this year. This is probably the first of what we hope will be quarterly updates.

With the assistance of an overhead screen and a PowerPoint presentation, City Manager Jeff Lord gave a review of the city projects that were picked up last year through the retreat process and reported on the accomplishments on those projects.

Mr. Lord then said, starting with the 2008 Annual Retreat, City Council reviewed and updated their Vision Statement. This Vision Statement is long term, which is 20 years plus. From that the goals of the City are reflected in that Vision Statement. These goals have a 5 to 10-year time frame for accomplishment. From those goals, projects were identified which have a 1 to 2-year completion date. So, you break it down from the broad vision to these goals or projects. These projects are major projects. These are not the small things that we do through the function of the City. These are the major projects that we have undertaken either policy or construction.

Mr. Lord pointed out that from the Vision Statement; some of the goals identified by Council were as follows:

1. All property is kept clean and well-maintained. At the retreat, Council identified the need for an improved Planning and Codes Enforcement function. Since that time, the City has added 2 new positions - a director and a part-time clerk. The City has implemented some improved procedures to find new violations and try to address them. We realigned some of the personnel and tried to improve our follow-up on complaints. Right now, we are still facing challenges because we have a backlog of issues and we have had some turnover. This is an ongoing issue for us.

2. Major entrances to the City have been landscaped and beautified to reflect the City's own natural beauty. The project at the Exit 53 and 57 has an Adopt-an Interchange Grant. This is a very large grant project to improve those interchanges. These are improvements well beyond the interchanges. They go up the interstate about a mile, so people have some lead time to get a view of what they can expect if they pull off the interstate. This grant program comes through SCDOT and is matched with both monies received through the county and from the City's Accommodations Tax. Mr. Lord reported that currently the city is maintaining the landscapes that are out there and the City has completed the design. We have a permit and the bid documents. However, as the City was about to bid out the project, some new regulations came up and SCDOT is trying to figure out how to implement those regulations. However, the City is expecting a go-ahead on this project any day now. When we get that go ahead, the City will bid this project out. We really wanted to get the project done during this fall winter planting season.

3. S. Jefferies Boulevard has become a beautiful tree lined entrance to the city and businesses are thriving in the new atmosphere. This project is the I-95 Loop Project. This project is currently still in the conceptual phase and the design of this project is to begin upon the completion of the interchanges. Once we get the interchange project bid out and under construction, we can start the design phase on this project.

4. Recreational Opportunities to include activities for all age groups and neighborhoods served by parks and playgrounds. Under this goal, there are 3 different projects, which are:

a. The Pinckney Park Monument. This was constructed on the corner of Hampton and Miller Street, similar to what's out in front of the Little Library. This is to enhance the appearance of the park.

b. Resumption of maintenance of City Parks. This is one of those projects that came along during the year and the City is currently working with Colleton County to resume the responsibility for those parks and expect to have it to begin in the next fiscal year.

c. Dog Park. Currently, the City is re-evaluating the site selection and trying to find alternate locations.

5. North Lemacks Street has been restored to its residential heritage. Mr. Lord stated that the goal was to secure residential development for vacancies and lots. About a year ago, the City gave some properties (on Lemacks Street) to Habitat for Humanity with a condition that they build 4 new homes in 4 years. One home is under construction now and groundbreaking will be held on another home very soon. So, this seems to be a very successful project.

6. Tourism is a major industry anchored by the Great Swamp Sanctuary and the Ace Basin and improvements to Ireland Creek. Mr. Lord stated that under improvements to Ireland Creek, the City purchased a long arm tractor last year in this budget. This allows the City to mechanically maintain the vegetative banks around the creek to keep it from growing over. So, this goal was accomplished.

7. Great Swamp Sanctuary invasive species rehabilitation. Mr. Lord reported that part of the Great Swamp Sanctuary which is on this side of Ivanhoe had been heavily impacted by wisteria, etc. So, this project is to clean that up to prevent damage to the habitat, because if you loose the habitat, you loose the Sanctuary. The City has applied for grants and is still waiting on those grants to come in. We will proceed once we do get approval on those grants.

8. The Great Swamp Sanctuary Discovery Center is operational and viable as an educational and recreational resource that is consistently utilized by local citizens and tourists. Mr. Lord reported that for the Discovery Center, the City has the plans, the documents, permit and the land. He said, we have absolutely everything we need, but we just need to secure the funding. So, we are waiting on the funding for this project.

9. There is a strong public school system supported by the entire community.

Under this goal, Mr. Lord reported that the City has been working with the county and the school district on infrastructures to provide a gravity sewer system to the Thunderbolt Career and Technology Center and the Quick Jobs Center. The City is also working with the school district to provide water and accept wastewater for the new high school. So, those are two projects that are moving very well.

10. Significant trees in our area have been recognized as a unique resource. Mr. Lord stated again, this is one of those projects that evolved during the year. He noted that the City reviewed and strengthened the Tree Protection Ordinance by clarifying some language that was difficult to enforce before. Now, the City has created a permit that people have to display, which is a lot less confusing, and we are getting better compliance.

11. The beltline has been completed to Green Pond Highway and plans are underway to extend it to S. Jefferies Boulevard. Mr. Lord reported that the beltline has been completed. This was not a City project. SCDOT did this, but the City worked with SCDOT to get it on their list. For the past 20 years, I think it has been on their list. Obviously, when SCDOT did construction on this project, the City worked with them to resolve any utility conflicts. On the second part - extension to S. Jefferies, the City is currently working with SCDOT to get it on their long-range plan.

12. Utilities Master Plan continues to address the growing water and sewer needs. Mr. Lord reported that the City has had a lot of success in this area. The Highway 63 Pump Stations - those are 2 pump stations, but it is one project combined, because one pump feeds into the other. The I-95 Pump Station is currently under construction. The Highway 63 Pump Station bids are to be received this week. This is funded by a series of grants and local match. Mr. Lord also reported that the wastewater treatment plant upgrades are complete. These were improvements to the influent stations which increased our efficiency and in our screening system, which increased our capability to treat the wastewater.

13. Walterboro residents and property owners are proud of the City's ISO Class III Fire Rating. Mr. Lord stated that this includes some waterline extensions and the Robertson Boulevard waterline. The City did this in conjunction with the extensions to Greenpond Highway. This was a wonderful project paid for through grant monies, which was a 12-inch water main line into that area. The Highway 63 Waterline Looping Project is complete. It was paid out of the city's money, but it was about ½ of estimated cost. The water pressure out there has increased greatly for fire flow. I think it is almost doubled. So, that was a big project for us to complete.

The last big waterline looping project is the Hiers Corner Waterline Looping. This project will go down Hiers Corner Road from near Exit 57 down and connect into the back of Forest Hills. This project is currently under construction and the winning bid was one-half of estimated cost as well.

14. Enhanced Patrol and Active Crime Prevention. Walterboro Police Department is recognized as a leader in small city efficiency. Citizens are proud of our department. Mr. Lord stated that under this goal and the ISO goal, the City completed a Public Safety Building on Robertson Boulevard. The City is also currently constructing the expansion of the current main Fire Station in order to hold a ladder truck.

15. Commercial areas of the city offer shoppers a wide variety of goods and services. Our occupancy rates remain high in the Central Business District and it has become a model for revitalization with ample off-street parking. Mr. Lord stated that a lot of this goal has been accomplished by the merchant's downtown, not through the City. However, the City did redo

the City Parking Lot - cleaned it up and repaved it. He said, I think that was a very successful project for us and it is complete.

In summary, City Manager Lord pointed out that the above projects were the major projects identified by the City last year. Those are the ones that are complete and these are the ones that we expect to complete by the end of the fiscal year. The remaining five projects, either we know there is no way they will be done in the near future or is unable to judge how long it will take.

Mayor Sweat then thanked the City Manager for his presentation on the City projects.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The Minutes of the January 13, 2009 Regular Meeting were approved with an amendment as submitted to Council and the Minutes of the January 27, 2009 Public Hearing and Regular Meeting were approved as submitted. The motion for approval of said minutes was made by Council Member Lucas, seconded by Council Member Smalls, and passed unanimously.

There was no Old Business before Council.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

##### **2009 Rice Festival Request, from Donna Laird, Colleton County Rice Festival and Parade Permit**

A motion was made by Council Member Young, seconded by Council Member Parker, to grant the requests and the parade permit as submitted for the 2009 Rice Festival. The motion carried with all members voting in favor. The Rice Festival will be held April 24-25, 2009.

##### **Request to Place Rodeo Directional and Information Signs in City Limits - Tommie Derry, Rodeo of Champions.**

After a brief explanation of the request letter submitted to Council on this agenda item, Ms. Tommie Derry told Council that the rodeo was a great success last year. This year the rodeo will be held May 1-2, 2009.

A motion was made by Council Member Cannady to approve the request to place rodeo directional and informational signs in the city limits announcing the 2009 rodeo as submitted. Council Member Peters seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

##### **Acceptance of Resignation of Mary T. Jones from Election Commission and Consideration of Appointment to Fill Vacancy.**

The Mayor announced that the letter of resignation had been received from Mrs. Mary T. Jones from the Election Commission. The Mayor then asked Council to consider replacing Mrs. Jones with Mr. James T. Rabb on the Election Commission. Mr. Rabb is already on the City's Tree Protection Committee. The Mayor explained that Mr. Rabb would like to be taken off the Tree Committee and appointed to the Election Commission. Council Member Young then suggested that Mrs. Jones' resignation be accepted with regret and appreciation. The Mayor then instructed the Clerk to write a regret letter to Mrs. Jones. A motion was then made by Council Member Cannady, seconded by Council Member Smalls to accept Mrs. Mary T. Jones' resignation with regret. The motion passed unanimously. A second motion was made by Council Member Cannady, seconded by Council Member Smalls to remove James T. Rabb

from the Tree Protection Committee and appoint him to the Election Commission, replacing Mary T. Jones, for an unexpired term. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Consideration of 2009-2010 Budget Calendar**

A motion was made by Council Member Peters, seconded by Council Member Lucas, to approve the 2009-2010 Budget Calendar as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Consideration of Funding Assistance for Colleton Improvement Collaborative, Colleton County Veterans Council and Colleton County Arts Council**

A motion was then made by Council Member Parker, seconded by Council Member Smalls to grant funding assistance in the amount of \$5,000 to the Colleton County Arts Council, \$1,400 to the Veterans Council and \$2,500 to the Colleton Improvement Collaborative. In discussing the motion, Mayor Sweat explained that this action will complete Council's obligation with the budgetary discretionary funds that were left in the budget this year. So, now the funds are gone. The motion passed with a vote of 6/0, with Council Members Peters, Young, Parker, Smalls, Cannady and Mayor Sweat voting in favor. Council Member Lucas did not vote, nor participate in a discussion of this agenda item, due to a potential conflict of interest in that he is one-third owner of the building where Colleton Improvement Collaborative rents office space. A copy of his recusal statement is attached as part of these minutes.

#### **Ratification of Acceptance of Grant Award for the City of Walterboro, Colleton County and Walterboro-Colleton County Airport in the Amount of \$123,694 for Airport Development**

The Mayor announced that this was a fencing project that has been awarded to the airport through the Federal Aviation Agency.

A motion was made by Council Member Cannady, seconded by Council Member Parker to ratify the acceptance of the grant award for the City of Walterboro, Colleton County and Walterboro-Colleton County Airport in the amount of \$123,694. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Consideration of a Proposal to Develop a Retail Economic Development Strategy for the City of Walterboro - the Buxton Company**

The Mayor noted that all Council Members had received a copy of the proposal.

City Manager Jeff Lord then introduced this agenda item. He stated that this is a program from the Buxton Company. This company does retail recruitment and consulting. What they are going to do in this proposal is identify or you can call it a fingerprint for the City of Walterboro. This is a lot more in depth than just demographics. This is how many persons shop at certain stores, or how many persons subscribe to a certain magazine. They then match it to all the franchises in the country and identify those franchises which have chosen to be in places just like yours. At the same time, they look at your community and identify the leakage that you have. What potential markets there are and then you cross-reference those two things, along with your existing commercial establishments, because you don't want to take away from what you already have. They then identify those establishments which you can go after and bring into the community to improve your commercial and retail development.

On a question by Mayor Sweat on the cost of the program, City Manager Lord noted that the cost would be \$25,000. He told Council this was not a budgeted item, but the City could do the program within the current budget.

A motion was made by Council Member Cannady, seconded by Council Member Young to accept the proposal of the Buxton Company to Develop a Retail Economic Development Strategy for the City of Walterboro in the amount of \$25,000. In discussing the motion, Council Member Peters said he had a lot of questions on this proposal, but did not want to go into it right now. The motion passed on a vote of 6/1, with Council Members Young, Lucas, Cannady, Smalls, Parker and Mayor Sweat voting in favor of the motion. Council Member Peters voted against the motion for approval.

There were no Committee Reports given.

The Mayor then opened the floor to receive Public Comments. No comments were received.

A motion to enter an executive session for a discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements was made by Council Member Lucas, seconded by Council Member Smalls and passed unanimously. The meeting then entered into an executive session.

The meeting returned to Open Session with no action taken by Council as a result of the Executive Session.

There being no further business to consider, a motion to adjourn was made by Council Member Parker, seconded by Council Member Young and passed unanimously. The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:15 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: February 24, 2009**