

Walterboro City Council
Public Hearing and Regular Meeting
September 26, 2006

MINUTES

A Public Hearing and Regular Meeting of Walterboro City Council was held at City Hall on Tuesday, September 26, 2006 at 6:15 P.M., with Mayor Charles H. Sweat, Jr. presiding.

PRESENT WERE: Mayor Charles H. Sweat, Jr., Council Members: Charles Lucas, Bill Young, Johnnie Thompson, Ted Parker, Franklin Smalls and Mary Anne Cannady. City Manager Tuck McConnell, City Clerk Betty Hudson and City Attorney George Cone were also present.

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

The Mayor then opened a public hearing, duly advertised in a local newspaper, to receive comments on proposed Ordinance # 2006-22, An Ordinance Relating to the Recovery of Collection Costs as a Part of Delinquent Debts Collected Pursuant to the Setoff Debt Collection Act.

Finance Director Jeff Lord explained that this program was done through the Municipal Association, where they go after bad debts for the city. They have been doing this for several years, and just wanted a refinement of the ordinance so they can continue to do so. They do this through taxes.

No further comments were received and the public hearing was closed.

The Minutes of the August 22, 2006 Public Hearing and Regular Meeting and the Minutes of the September 12, 2006 Public Hearing and Regular Meeting were approved as submitted on the motion of Council Member Cannady, seconded by Council Member Thompson and passed unanimously.

Next, the following proclamations and resolutions were approved by Council.

A proclamation designating October 2006 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month was adopted on the motion of Council Member Lucas, seconded by Council Member Parker and passed unanimously.

A second proclamation designating September 2006 as "Life Insurance Awareness Month," and granting a request to hang an informational banner across Jefferies Boulevard announcing Life Insurance Awareness Month was approved on the motion of Council Member Thompson, seconded by Council Member Young and passed with all members voting in favor, except that Council Member Cannady did not vote due to a potential conflict of interest. It was noted that the banner would be up for 7 days.

Resolution # 2006-R-10, a resolution to accompany the application for the Preserve America Community Designation was approved on the motion of Council Member Parker, seconded by Council Member Smalls and passed unanimously. A copy of said resolution is attached as part of these minutes. It was noted that a copy of the Preserve America application was submitted for Council's consideration with the agenda packet.

Under Old Business, Ordinance # 2006-22 was adopted on Second and Final Reading on the motion of Council Member Lucas, and seconded by Council Member Cannady; being: AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO THE RECOVERY OF COLLECTION COSTS AS A PART OF DELINQUENT DEBTS COLLECTED PURSUANT TO THE SETOFF DEBT COLLECTION ACT. The motion passed unanimously.

Under New Business, a request by the Downtown Development Corp. to close East Washington Street between Walter and Lucas Streets, for the Annual Halloween Carnival on Tuesday, October 31 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. was approved on the motion of Council Member Thompson, seconded by Council Member Lucas with all members voting in favor.

Next, before Council was a petition, submitted by Mr. Norman Ketchie, to move the 2007 Rice Festival activities from East Washington Street to Ireland Creek. Mr. Ketchie told Council that he took the petition to all the merchants on Washington Street and they were all in favor of moving the Rice Festival, with the exception of Hiott's Pharmacy, who stated they received good business during the Rice Festival. Mr. Ketchie told Council there are

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approximately 400 signatures on the petition. He analyzed the petition and some people did not give a comment. Of the ones who did comment, 64% stated that it (the Rice Festival) hurt local businesses, it was negative to business and it blocked business. 30% commented about gangs, congestion, carnival atmosphere, leaving downtown dirty and does not contribute to downtown. 29 of them said - it should be more like Summerville, it was time to move, need more space and too crowded. 26 of them cited parking problems, traffic problems and one said he could not get to the post office.

In concluding Mr. Ketchie stated that he knows that City Council has nothing to do with the Rice Festival itself, but they do have control over the street closing.

Mr. Gary Davis, a downtown merchant, also commented on the Rice Festival. He stated that 4 years ago, he also brought a petition to Council to have the Rice Festival moved. He stated that the Rice Festival is part of our heritage and none of us want it to go away, but we are concerned with the carnival atmosphere. All of us would love to have the arts and crafts back down on Main Street. What we don't like to see is when the vendors from out of town come, bringing their wares with them and trashing up the street. It's just two days and it closes us down. Mr. Davis pointed out that Council has the power to redirect the festival. He asked that Council consider it; maybe get a group together to look at alternate locations. He pointed out that it's difficult to get an emergency vehicle on Washington Street during the festival, because there are so many people downtown. Both alleys are blocked off, as well as Washington Street.

Mr. Arden Lommen, a resident near Gladys Whitten Park, then addressed Council. He told Council that the Highway Department recently paved 20 feet of his driveway. He stated that maybe with Council's approval; he could ask the Highway Department to see if they could repave the parking area at Gladys Whitten Park. He said this would be an improvement to the park. City Manager McConnell stated he had no problem with this request.

Next, Mrs. Cornelia Neeley then asked permission to address Council. She stated that she drove 3½ hours to get here. She said, I am not asking you for anything, I just want to read a statement.

City Attorney George Cone told Council it would be up to them to hear the matter. Previously it was decided by Council that the matter would be handled with the City Manager and legal counsel, but of course, they can change their minds.

With the approval of the Mayor and Council, Mrs. Cornelia Neeley then read the following statement, which is attached as part of these minutes.

Following the reading of Mrs. Neeley statement, City Attorney Cone suggested to Council to tell the Neeleys to call ahead and request to be put on the agenda, if they wish to address this issue again. It's been addressed 5 or 6 times. It's repetitive and he stated I believe this would save them from a 3½ hour drive if Council decides not to hear the matter. He stated that he felt some Council Members probably decided to hear the matter tonight because of the time the Neeleys devoted to coming to the meeting.

Next, a motion to enter an Executive Session to hear a contractual matter was made by Council Member Parker, seconded by Council Member Cannady and passed unanimously.

The meeting returned to Open Session and there being no further business to consider, a motion to adjourn was made by Council Member Cannady seconded by Council Member Parker and passed unanimously. The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:20 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