

Walterboro City Council  
Regular Meeting  
October 24, 2006

### MINUTES

A Regular Meeting of Walterboro City Council was held at City Hall on Tuesday, October 24, 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. Also present were Mr. Thomas Angell, Chairman, Mr. Chris Bickley and Mrs. Judy Bridge on behalf of the Municipal Planning Commission.

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.

The Minutes of the October 10, 2006 Regular Meeting were **APPROVED** as submitted on the motion of Council Member Lucas, seconded by Council Member Cannady and passed unanimously.

Under Old Business, Ordinance # 2006-23 was given Second Reading and Adoption on the motion of Council Member Lucas, seconded by Council Member Smalls and passed unanimously, being: AN ORDINANCE TO CHANGE THE RETURNED CHECK AND CUTOFF POLICY FOR WATER AND SEWER ACCOUNTS.

Under New Business, consideration of a tree-cutting appeal by Jeynean Tant at 117 Fishburne Street was deferred by Council for resubmittal to the Tree Protection Committee.

Next, Mr. Thomas Angell, Chairman of the Municipal Planning Commission read in its entirety a copy of a position statement by Walterboro City Council and the Walterboro Municipal Planning Commission regarding the Colleton County Water and Sewer Referendum to be placed on the November 7, General Election ballot. This statement is as follows:

**The Colleton County Water and Sewer Referendum—  
A Public Statement by Walterboro City Council and  
the Walterboro Municipal Planning Commission**

**Colleton County voters will face a referendum question on the November 7, 2006 General Election ballot to decide if the County can get into the water and sewer utility business. The issue hasn't generated much public discussion, and we have concerns about whether to do so will be in the best interest of most County and City residents. The two primary questions are who will benefit and who will pay.**

**Water and sewer systems are expensive to build. Funding must come from some combination of four different sources: taxpayers, customers, grants and developers. Taxpayers countywide shouldn't pay for a system that will not serve everyone. City water and sewer customers, whether they live inside or outside the City, shouldn't pay for another system they won't ever use. The same is true for residents in the more rural parts of the County with their own wells and septic tanks. Grants typically fund water and sewer systems only in lower income areas and for economic development projects. The County and City have a long history of working together on these needs.**

**That leaves developers. City policy is that developers must pay to put water and sewer service in their new subdivisions and commercial projects. Some**

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**developers don't like this, but the City doesn't think its existing customers or taxpayers should bear this cost, which only benefits developers. The City is pro-development and pro-growth, but believes that new development should pay its own way.**

**City water and sewer rates are among the lowest in South Carolina, and the City doesn't charge impact or capacity fees common in other parts of the state. At the same time the City has planned its utilities well, with significant capacity available for both water and sewer expansion. The City stands ready to work with the County to meet any utility needs the County might have - be they residential, commercial or industrial.**

**On Election Day, we urge voters to remember the two questions about the water and sewer referendum that we raised above: Who will benefit from it, and who will pay for it?**

**—signed by the Mayor and the Planning Commission Chair.**

Mr. Angell stated that the Commission wanted to make this public statement in hopes that it would initiate some positive dialogue with the County. He stated that with all the impending growth that seems to be knocking at our door steps, we hope that our City Planning Commission can actually get with the County Planning Department to make some decisions together. We did want to make this statement, but we also wanted to see it as a positive opportunity for possibly greater communication between the City Planning Commission and the County Planning Commission.

A discussion was then held on whether to publish the position statement in the local newspaper and to place it on the local government channel.

Council Member Young asked if there had been any discussion from people in the county who have wells and how this will impact them if the county gets into the water business. Will there be a mandatory tap fee? He stated that this has always been a touchy point with people with wells who are given a mandatory tap on fee. He stated that if he lived in the county and had a well, he would certainly want to know if he would be forced to tap on to a new water line before voting on this referendum.

Council Member Lucas pointed out that this would certainly raise taxes. He proposed that different organizations against tax increases should be given a copy of the position statement.

Council Member Young then made a motion to place an ad for the position statement in the local newspapers. Council Member Parker seconded the motion. Council Member Cannady raised concern about including the cost factor sheet in the ad which details the costs involved for the county to operate a new water and sewer system. City Manager McConnell gave a brief description of the cost sheet. It was then agreed that the ad would be placed in the newspaper with both the position statement and the cost description sheet together. The motion then passed unanimously.

On a question raised by Council Member Young on the legality of placing the position statement in the newspaper, City Attorney Cone stated that he would double check on this, but as of right now, he felt it was appropriate. He said, you are not advocating for your own referendum, and in the position statement it does not say "vote for it" or "against it". I think you can read pretty well the intent. If the main intent is to raise discussion and bring out the facts, I don't see where we would have any problem with this.

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A motion was then made by Council Member Parker to enter an Executive Session for a discussion on a contractual matter on the BIOS, LLC Contract. Council Member Smalls seconded that motion which passed unanimously.

The meeting returned to an Open Session with no action being taken in the Executive Session. There being no further business to consider, a motion to adjourn was made by Council Member Parker, seconded by Council Member Lucas and passed unanimously. The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:05 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 November 14, 2006**