

MINUTES

A Special Called Meeting of Walterboro City Council was held at City Hall on Tuesday, February 7, 2012 at 4:00 P.M. with Mayor Bill Young presiding.

PRESENT WERE: Mayor Bill Young, Council Members: Paul Siegel, Dwayne Buckner, Charles Lucas, Randy Peters, Tom Lohr and Bobby Bonds. City Manager Jeff Lord, City Clerk Betty Hudson, and City Attorney George Cone were also present. There were approximately 11 persons present in the audience.

There being a quorum present, Mayor Young called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Everyone then repeated the Lord's Prayer. Council Member Lohr led the pledge of allegiance to our flag.

PUBLIC INPUT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

No public comments were received.

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no Old Business before Council.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Resolution # 2012-R-03, Community Facility Grant Resolution, A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager and City Clerk to Executive Forms Pursuant to Grant Applications in the Amount of \$93,240 (for Ladder Truck \$52,500; Public Works Truck \$2,550; Planning and Codes Truck \$2,550; Parks Department Truck \$3,615; and Sanitation Truck and Pickup Truck \$32,025)

A motion was made by Council Member Peters, seconded by Council Member Lucas, to approve Resolution # 2012-R-03 as submitted.

At this point the Mayor announced that we are pleased to have with us tonight Ms. Nicky Toomes from USDA Rural Development. The Mayor explained that Resolution # 2012-R-03 was the result of a substantial grant from USDA Rural Development. He told Ms. Toomes that the City appreciates all her help with this grant.

Ms. Nicky Toomes of USDA Rural Development then addressed Council. She stated that she works in the Walterboro office. Her office works with the 10 coastal counties. She stated, we are very glad to be able to do these grants with the City of Walterboro. She pointed out that this grant represents a good portion of our grants funds. We worked on this since last year. Ms. Toomes informed Council, that the City was first in line when they received their funds about 3 weeks ago. She stated that Walterboro qualifies for 15% grant funds on any project because of the income level of the city and the population. So, all these six vehicles, the total \$93,240 represents 15% of your total project cost on these 6 vehicles. We are glad to do it and we hope to partner with you on other projects in the future. Ms. Toomes also pointed out that the new ladder truck will be a great help and tremendous asset for the community in firefighting. She said we are glad to be a part of this.

Council Member Buckner then asked Ms. Toomes, what projects meet the qualifications of a Community Facilities Grant. Ms. Toomes responded, typically organizations like a county, city, or a non-profit can apply and can be eligible for things that are normally provided by a public body. It could be a community center, fire protection, police protection, and anything that would normally be provided by a municipality.

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Mayor Young then stated that when he talked with Mr. Hicks today of the USDA Rural Development Office that he was very complimentary of the City Manager, Mr. Lord, and the Finance Director, Dennis Averkin, in working with USDA Rural Development in securing this grant.

The motion then passed unanimously with all members voting in favor.

2. Consideration of Bids Received for Improvements to Jackson Street Pump Station

Utilities Director Wayne Crosby reported that the City received nine bids for rehabilitation of the Jackson Street Pump Station as follows:

Tri-county Utilities, Pacolet Mills, SC	\$204,200.00
MJL, Inc., Moncks Corner, SC	\$232,099.00
Wateree Construction, Sumter, SC	\$237,000.00
McClam & Assoc., Little Mountain, SC	\$246,042.00
Anson Construction, Ravenel, SC	\$262,968.00
Green Construction of Summerville, SC	\$276,500.00
James F. Pederson, Hollywood, SC	\$289,852.00
Tideland Utilities, Summerville, SC	\$311,665.00
L-J, Inc., Columbia, SC	\$323,800.00

Mr. Crosby reported that this project was being made possible as the result of a grant through the Commerce Department. He then recommended acceptance of the low bid of \$204,200.00 from Tri-county Utilities.

A motion was made by Council Member Bonds, seconded by Council Member Lucas, to accept the low bid as recommended of \$204,200.00 by Tri-county Utilities for the Jackson Street Pump Station Upgrade. In discussing the motion, Council Member Buckner asked Mr. Crosby to identify the upgrades planned for the pump station. Mr. Crosby explained that everything would be upgraded except the wet well itself. This included new piping, new force mains, pumps, control panels, permanent mounted bypass pump, chainlink fence; everything except the wet well.

The motion then passed unanimously.

3. Consideration of Recommendation to Purchase 2002 Ladder Fire Truck and Equipment for the Sum of \$350,000

Major Ken Dasen of Public Safety Department gave the following information on the proposed ladder truck to be purchased:

- 1) This is a 2002 E-1 Cyclone 75 foot ladder truck. It meets the minimum ISO standards. Major Dasen reported that he researched several different companies' trucks and ladders, all of various ages and styles, and this was the best fit for the City with the newest equipment. Included with this bid is all the required equipment that is needed on this truck. Major Dasen also reported that a Colleton County Fire Rescue maintenance person examined the truck and prepared a short hit list of things to be repaired. It was noted in the contract that they would repair all these issues.
- 2) The cost of the ladder truck is \$350,000 and this is what was budgeted for the truck.

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A motion was made by Council Member Lucas to purchase the ladder fire truck as recommended from Brindlee Mountain Fire Apparatus, LLC in the amount of \$350,000. Council Member Bonds seconded the motion.

In discussing the motion, Council Member Buckner then asked how having this truck would help to bring down our ISO rating and what effect it will have on the community's insurance rates. City Manager Lord explained that the graduate point system is a lot like A, B, C's. 90% is a class one, 80% is a class 2 and 70% is a class 3, and so on. Right now we are at a class 5, and we have been targeting a class 3. Going towards that requirement is to have a ladder truck which is at least 75 feet in length, and that gives you 5 points towards that. So, it's a full half of a class. Of course once that happens, then that affects people's fire insurance rates on their homes. While providing a greater amount of fire protection, the insurance companies are able to lower the amount that they charge for fire insurance.

Council Member Lucas told Council that he had spoken with his fire insurance company and they told him that this could result in approximately a 10% decrease in policy cost per ISO rating that is dropped. It would be approximately a 10% decrease per step that the rates would come down.

Council Member Buckner then stated that he had thought very hard and long about this fire truck, whether or not this was the right time to purchase this vehicle for \$350,000. He said, I know in times past there were trucks around half a million dollars, and this is a deal at \$350,000, but I just feel like because of the economic times that we are in now and the fact that folks are struggling, we don't have a lot of new businesses and a lot of growth in the city at this time. I just think that spending \$350,000 on a fire truck that may or may not help to bring in economic development, we hope that it does. But I am not quite sure this is the right timing to purchase this vehicle. So, I am going to vote against spending this \$350,000. I just cannot in good faith vote for \$350,000, when we've got businesses closing up and folks really need help, and we can take these dollars and do something different with the money. So, I am going to vote against this fire truck. Also, one last point, I am not sure whether we can sustain the efforts currently of our fire department, without possibly looking at consolidating with the County, which already has the fire truck that we are looking to purchase, better, more up-to-date equipment, etc. We are just not growing in the city as economically and in population, to my mind set, to validate purchasing almost a half a million dollar vehicle for the City, so I am going to vote against this purchase.

Council Member Bonds then stated, I think that this is a great purchase. As I understand it, we've just received a \$52,000 grant that's going to be applied to it. So, if anything, now is the time, and I really think this is a safety first item. It also shows a substantial commitment that this City has to its infrastructure, and I just want to thank the hard work that I know people have done to make this come together.

Council Member Lohr felt that one of the major functions of government is protection, and I think that's what we are talking about here. I don't disagree with Mr. Buckner's point for us creating jobs, but there are no specifics to what we could do with \$350,000 and how many jobs would be created. So, I am dealing with the here and now, and I think that now is the time to do what we have just indicated.

Council Member Siegel said, I would just add on to that and say, one life is invaluable. I mean \$350,000 is just a figure if we save one life having this truck. It would be worth it, but beyond that, there is a lot of talk and Mr. Buckner is talking about consolidation with the County's system, and that's an issue we will face, and I don't believe that the purchase of this truck is a liability in that negotiation. Because

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even if there were a consolidation, the County would have to have a truck to cover this area, and this puts us in a much stronger bargaining position if that were to occur. If we were to reduce our ISO rating, it also in the event of a negotiation would increase our position from a value standpoint. I don't think we are backsliding in any manner whatsoever to strengthen our department.

Mayor Young then stated, this is one of the things that we have been working on over a number of years through several different Councils. We've built substations around Walterboro to improve our ISO rating. We completed a number of water looping projects to increase fire flow, so that we could provide better protection for our citizens and improve our ISO rating. We went from having separate police and fire departments to having a Public Safety Department so that our people could be cross-trained so that we could provide more personnel for both. We made a substantial investment in that. I will remind everybody that this Council approved a bond, not long ago, for the purpose of buying this fire truck. So, we had already considered that at that time.

The motion to purchase the ladder fire truck as submitted then passed with a vote of 6/1 with Mayor Young, Council Members Siegel, Lucas, Peters, Lohr and Bonds voting in favor and Council Member Buckner voting against the motion.

4. Consideration of Parade Permit Request - Gwendolyn Wiggins, Direct General Insurance Company

Chief Otis Rhodes informed Council that Ms. Wiggins was not present tonight. He stated, she initially submitted her request and I met with her about the route that she wanted to take. Personnel wise and safety wise, we revised the route. So, instead of the old route, we changed it to start at the court house and go to Greater St. James Church on Hampton Street which is less traffic and more safety.

A motion was made by Council Member Lohr to approve the request. Council Member Peters seconded the motion. In discussing the motion, Council Member Lucas said he had a concern that the request is listed from an organization, Direct General Insurance, which would be a private entity. If we start doing parades for private entities, then it will be hard to say no to anybody. As requested, my feeling is no.

Mayor Young then said, as I understand it, this is a walk-a-thon against breast cancer with the proceeds to go to the United Way. But the name on the parade permit says Direct General Insurance.

Council Member Peters pointed out that according to the application, the group will not be using the street, but will be using the sidewalks. So, I don't see where it would be any different than anybody else that was to walk down the street. I mean we are not closing the street. We're just granting permission for them to walk on the sidewalk. Which I believe they would have permission to do so anyway.

Chief Rhodes added, that she just wanted police protection. Part of the problem with the other route she had, we did not have sidewalks in some areas, but we changed the route to Hampton Street instead of Roberston Boulevard to Highway 15. The walk is for breast cancer awareness.

Council Member Lohr said, I guess I am assuming that she is anticipating enough people that it would necessitate some safety personnel being there.

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Council Member Buckner then said, I just want to make sure I am clear. The name of her organization is Direct General Insurance and they are doing this parade for breast cancer awareness. City Manager Lord answered affirmatively.

Council Member Bonds asked if the city had a policy on this type request. Mayor Young said he does not remember ever having a request that was filled out with a business name requesting it.

City Manager Lord said he could remember a request from Sears where they used the sidewalk.

Chief Rhodes offered to contact Ms. Wiggins again, so she can come in and explain. He said, I do know she works for Direct General Insurance.

Council Member Lucas then said, I would have no problem if she would change the name of the organization as being "United Way" or Breast Cancer Awareness Association or whatever it may be called. I am just concerned about a private industry being the organization.

Council Member Siegel then said, if we are going to give police protection, I just want to make sure it's not a private company promoting a product, and then we are providing police service in the guise of a fund-raiser for an organization that is not on the list requesting the event. I just want some sort of verification that there is an arrangement. Mr. Peters agreed with Mr. Siegel. He said, I think if these people were getting the money direct or trying to make a profit out of it, I would be totally against it. But, if we table it, we've got time for her to come back in and tell us.

Council Member Lohr then moved to Table this agenda item. He said we have two more meetings before the event, but I would prefer to get this out the way at the next meeting. Council Member Peters seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

5. Request to Use the Waterfall Plaza for a Sidewalk Sales Event on May 5, 2012 by Walterboro Merchants Association

Following a brief explanation of this event by Ms. Suzy Anderson, present on behalf of the Walterboro Merchants Association, a motion was made by Council Member Lucas, seconded by Council Member Peters, to grant the request as submitted. The motion passed with all members voting in favor.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

There were no Committee Reports given.

A motion to enter an Executive Session was then made by Council Member Bonds, seconded by Council Member Lucas, and passed with all members voting in favor. The Mayor then announced that the meeting will enter an Executive Session for a discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements.

The meeting returned to Open Session, and there being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Council Member Lucas, seconded by Council Member Peters and passed unanimously. The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 5:15 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: March 13, 2012