

**CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING AGENDA MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2014 – 6:00 P.M.  
CITY HALL – 1737 MAIN STREET  
COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM – 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR**



The Columbia City Council conducted a Special Called Meeting on Wednesday, March 12, 2014 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Brian DeQuincey Newman, Mayor Pro-Tempore called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Leona K. Plough, The Honorable Cameron A. Runyan and The Honorable Moe Baddourah. The Honorable Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin was absent. Also present were Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Moore, City Clerk. This meeting was advertised in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

**CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION**

1. Proposal to Consolidate the Public Safety Function (Columbia Police Department) with the Richland County Sheriff's Department

Councilor Newman said when this issue came up in 2010, he voted against the proposal then; he is a big supporter of the Columbia Police Department; and he is not interested in supporting this arrangement with the Sheriff's Department. He said it is important for the citizens to hear Council's individual positions.

Councilor Runyan stated the following for the record: When I believe in something, I commit to it completely; whether it's my family, whether it is my Lord or whether it is some issue that I am very passionate about; if I'm in, I am in all the way. That can be a great asset, but it can also lead me into a position sometimes where my mouth gets ahead of my brain. A couple of days ago when I held this press conference, trying to make a very fine distinction between an elected official and an appointed official, I think Teresa I used a term bureaucrat that was probably hurtful to you and I take responsibility for that and I apologize. There has been some discussion about the timing of this and I want to share a quick timeline. In September 2010 as Mr. Newman alluded to, Council voted six (6) to one (1) to constitute a commission of citizens and law enforcement leaders to study the possibility of forming a unified service for the coordinated delivery of law enforcement services to the people of Columbia and Richland County. In the fourth quarter of 2013, I began having discussions with various sectors of the community. People were contacting me over concerns about what was going on in the Police Department. In January 2014, two months ago when I had just taken over as chair of the budget committee, I brought this issue to the budget committee as part of the agenda to have a discussion looking at the cost benefit of the possible consolidation of the two departments. We had a very lively discussion inside the budget committee and it got tabled in committee; I couldn't get it out; and so I backed off. Then we had the issues that arose with the search process and again I called for a pause in what we were doing and a reassessment of direction and path forward. And then finally the SLED

report was recently released with some very concerning information that was in there. Again, hearing from constituents quite loudly, this is something that we have got to hit the pause button and take a look at. As you know, on Monday I called a press conference and in that press conference, asked the City Manager to please press the pause button on naming a chief so we as a community and Council could have this discussion. It's important to understand my thought process and why I thought it is important to have this discussion. This is not about the Police Chief candidates. I am sure that whoever Ms. Wilson names is going to do a fabulous job and I am going to support that person whole heartedly, because we have to have them succeed; whoever they are. And it's not about the City Manager. It's about public safety in Columbia. And it's about an efficient, effective and accountable government for the people of this city. It's about a seamless unified law enforcement agency with over a thousand officers and a \$75 million budget all coming to bear on crime in the City of Columbia. It would be the largest agency in the State of South Carolina and perhaps one of the largest in the region. It's about the addition of unparalleled assets to fight against crime such as having a state of the art crime lab to include DNA analysis, aerial vehicles, tactical training facilities, 700 additional vehicles, and gang, narcotics and special response units that build on what we already have. And most importantly, it's about stability. We are about to have our eighth chief in eight (8) years and if were to choose to enter into a contract with Sheriff Lott, we know that it will be three (3) years of stability at the top of the organization. We have seen this work in Jacksonville, Charlotte, Columbia Fire Services, 911 and the Animal Services Division. If you are worried about the timing, then let's have a separate conversation completely from the police chief search conversation; however, I think a consolidation conversation is what we need to have. How to have the most efficient, effective and accountable government possible? The dialogue on this Council has become much uncivilized and there is a great lack of civility on the body. At times, there is a perception of a lack of truthfulness, lack of communication and I take full responsibility for my role in that. Our discussion has become very shrill. It has become very unproductive. "When the elephants fight, it's the grass that suffers". We are the metaphorical elephants; we are the leaders who have been chosen to lead this city and when we engage in such heated rhetoric, it encourages others to engage the same way. The City will only behave as we behave; if we are winsome and civil, then the discussion largely will be winsome and civil; if we are acrimonious, then the discussion will be acrimonious. He read the following portion of an email that was sent from the Mayor: "The responsibility to maintain a positive civil dialogue rests with every citizen of our city, the public and the press; the higher duty is owed by elected officials. Over the last several months, the tone and tenor of our elected rhetoric has left a great deal to be desired. Only we can change that. I pledge to lead that change and will each of you join me. It is also very important to know that minority opinions must be respected in a mature democracy and we must make every effort to include the voices of dissent and to also expect and require civility then. I believe we should spend the next several weeks talking to one another, talking with one another and not talking at one another. Let's ratchet down the dialogue and let's breathe; let's talk and let's remember why we are here; and why we serve. Let's focus on making our community a better place to live, work, play, worship and raise a family." He quoted William Wilberforce, "Let everyone regulate his conduct by the golden rule of doing to others as in similar circumstances we will have them do to us and the path of duty will be clear before us". I pledge going forward to conduct my decision making process and my duty by that code. He quoted the Chronicle of Israel, "God

said if my people humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land"; our land needs healing; there is shrillness in our discourse. When we disagree with one another, faces get red. We have wrong motives in our actions. We are watching families disintegrate around our city. Our discourse is hostile and unproductive and we live by the politics of division and not unity. Throughout the nation's history, during times of transformation and difficulty, the government of America has declared national days of prayer and humility. In 1775, on the cusp of the birth of a new nation, the Second Continental Congress in declaring a day of prayer and humility said the reason was that we may with united hearts and voices, confess and deplore our many sins and offer up our joint supplications to the all wise, omnipotent, and merciful disposer of all of events; humbly beseeching him to forgive our inequities; and to remove our present calamities. He read a quote by President Abraham Lincoln, which states "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounty of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown, but we have forgotten God. We have vainly imagined that all of these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended power to confess our national sins and pray for clemency and forgiveness." He read a quote from President John F. Kennedy, which states, "During deliberations and constitutional convention, the founders are called to daily prayers and the reminder and sacred scriptures it is written; Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain to build it and they were warned without the concurrent aid of providence they will succeed in the political building no better than the builders of Babylon. Let us all pray for divine guidance in our efforts to lead our children in the ways of truth, for a spirit of wisdom and understanding; for willing hands and a spirit of dedication; and recognizing our own shortcomings. May we be granted forgiveness and cleansings and God shall bless us and be gracious unto us and cause his face to shine upon us as we stand on this day in his presence." He said Columbia, South Carolina needs such a day; we need a day of new beginnings; a day for tearing down, but tearing down our differences between us; the differences of race; differences of political affiliations, of ideological inclination and economic status. He read a quote from John Winthrop, which states, "We must consider being a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon else." I believe Columbia can be that city upon the hill; we can become a light to this nation, but it's going to require us humbling ourselves; all of us up here are not perfect. We are falling creatures and we must pledge ourselves to work together for the betterment of this city going forward. And while I still believe it is the proper decision to consider to consolidate the departments, but in the spirit of humility in moving forward, I move for the adoption of authorizing the City Manager to continue with the police chief search and I further move that City Council will work the Mayor upon his return next week to sanction a day of citywide prayer in April in order that we may begin the process of becoming one people united in mutual respect, in resolve and purpose that we once again be our brother's keeper as we seek the healing of our land.

Councilor Devine asked are we moving item two (2) as revised.

Councilor Runyan said yes.

Councilor Davis said he will second the motion to allow the City Manager to continue with the search process and we will wait for her notification of the selection.

For public awareness, Councilor Plough read [Resolution No.: R-2014-036](#) in its entirety.

2. [Resolution No.: R-2014-036](#) – Authorizing the City Manager to continue with the Police Chief Employment Search – *Approved*

Upon a motion made by Mr. Runyan and seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to approve Resolution No.: R-2014-036 – Authorizing the City Manager to continue with the Police Chief Employment Search to include adding a sanctioned day of citywide prayer in April.

Councilor Plough said she appreciates the comments Mr. Runyan made; it was appropriate and timely. I want to take us back from my perspective of how we ended up here. I am a strong advocate of consolidated government. In the long-term that will serve this entire community well, but that's a long process. We ought to think in those terms as opposed to thinking about picking off piece by piece; we do that by joining forces with our colleagues in County Council and working with them to see if we can come to some resolution that will work. It's a long procedure, but it begins when we start that process. That's how we move this government forward in a consolidated way. In 2011, this community went through an intensive process; we conducted public hearings, community input and meetings with Sheriff Lott on how to move forward with the operations of our Police Department, but this Council voted not to move forward. We chose to move in another direction. I am not prepared to put this community back into that process. The City Manager has put together an impressive process of bringing together two (2) different groups; Law Enforcement professionals volunteering their time to help identify five (5) top candidates for this very important decision and the citizens process where each of us on Council had an opportunity to give names to the City Manager for citizens to serve and be involved in the review process. There was a broader public meeting to allow individuals to hear the candidates' responses. I commend the City Manager and support her for where we are. We have to ensure that politics stays out of the hiring of our next Police Chief and the operation of the Police Department and every department of this city. We are well on our way to having an excellent choice; I trust that the City Manager will make the right decision. We owe it to ourselves, to our city and to our God to continue in the process that was laid out before us months ago.

Councilor Devine said we all need to understand the process and why we are here; we are all very passionate about a lot of issues. No one is asking anyone to compromise the way they feel, but there is a problem when one or two people decide to go into a different direction no matter what Council says. We got to this point of calling a Special Meeting to set the record straight as to where we are. We have to recognize that whatever position we are in, we have to speak collectively. We are going to disagree; we have to expect that, but disagreement doesn't mean to find an end road to what the rest of my colleagues have said. We will have more passionate discussions, but we have to recognize there is a process and procedures on how those things come before this body to discuss and decide on. We do not need to go out on our own on any particular topic and cause a stir especially when this Council didn't have

an opportunity to discuss it and the community hasn't been involved. As we talk about moving forward, let's remember how we got here and hopefully we don't do this again. She said a day of prayer is good; we all, in our own way need to go to our Lord, meditate, pray, and ask for guidance and wisdom on every decision that we make for this city. We need to come forward in a genuine way of reconciliation. It's not about the words we say, it's about our actions; respecting isn't just each other, but it's respecting our City Manager, our staff and our citizens.

Councilor Baddourah congratulated and thanked Ms. Wilson for the process. He said I am proud and waiting for the process to be completed. Ms. Wilson stuck with the game plan in spite of the pressure and that is the proper way to conduct business in the city. This is a good process. It shows that we can work and it shows that we can follow Council's command. He thanked every police officer for their service. We are here to give the proper tools needed for the Police Department. We understand that the proper channel is to go through the City Manager, and as Council we will provide the best tools to help the new police chief be the best in this country.

Councilor Davis said I believe in the process and appointed some people to sit on the committee. I have been around this block a few times with this process and I have no problem with where we are now. There was a methodology to it; there are some expected outcomes and the City Manager will make the final decision. She has been communicating with us and she has my full support. He said the Columbia Police Department is one of the best in this region; they don't shy from their responsibility. We as a Council have never given directives to the police chief and the best way to keep the politics out of the department is to keep the elected officials out. I will publicly say Sheriff Lott is a good friend of mine, but I believe that Columbia, the Capital City should have its own police chief. Based on my experiences and history with the department, I am very comfortable with the Columbia Police Department and to put another layer over one of the best police departments in this state would be demoralizing to the present forces; they don't deserve that. We are committed to continue to support the police department with whatever tools they need.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Davis and seconded by Ms. Plough, Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m. Mr. Baddourah was not present for the vote.

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore  
City Clerk