



CITY OF COLUMBIA  
WORK SESSION MINUTES  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2014  
CITY HALL – 1737 MAIN STREET  
2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

The Columbia City Council conducted a Work Session on Tuesday, October 21, 2014 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 2:11 p.m. and the following members of City Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Cameron A. Runyan and The Honorable Moe Baddourah. The Honorable Leona K. Plough and The Honorable Brian DeQuincey Newman were 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 MANAGER'S REPORT** – Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager

**UPDATE ON HOMELESS SERVICES**

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager recalled that the approval for the regional coordination of homeless services was made and that contract will be with United Way of the Midlands. She reported that we are still in the process of negotiating that contract and now that we are going to utilize the former shelter for an Inclement Weather Center, the United Way has agreed to help coordinate that effort as an addendum or a separate contract. She reported that United Way met with the Transitions Board of Directors and will utilize Transitions as a subcontractor for the purposes of running an Inclement Weather Center. By way of a voice resolution, she asked City Council to give her the authority to continue negotiating the contract with United Way for the coordination of services in the amount of \$100,000 for the remainder of this fiscal year and a second voice resolution giving the City Manager the authority to work with the United Way to complete an agreement and a budget for the operation of the Inclement Weather Center with Transitions serving in that capacity.

Councilor Runyan inquired about the anticipated number of nights and hours of operation.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said we are basing it on 100 nights at 40 degrees or below from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. She noted that we are working to provide private transportation and security, although Chief Holbrook will provide regular patrols. She reported that the remaining balance is not to exceed \$350,000 for all services.

Councilor Runyan asked about the projected budget amount.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said the budget provided last week was over \$200,000; we received additional numbers today and reviewed staffing needs. She noted that they are working to ensure that the day-to-day operations of Transitions aren't impeded by the additional staffing needed with the Center. She stated that this staff will work on outreach with the homeless population every day, even when it's not as cold.

Mayor Benjamin asked that the procedures be incorporated with the resolution.

Councilor Baddourah asked about the notification process.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager explained that a decision will be made by noon of each day and staff has protocol for wide spread communication. She said that the City's Public Relations Department will be involved with the notification process and this has been communicated with neighborhood leaders by the Community Development Department.

1. Contract with United Way for the Regional Coordination of Homeless Services

Upon a motion made by Mayor Benjamin and seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted four (4) to one (1) to approve a *Resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute a professional services contract between the City of Columbia and United Way of the Midlands*. Be it resolved by the Mayor and City Council this 21<sup>st</sup> day of October 2014 that the City Manager is hereby authorized to commence negotiations with United Way of the Midlands for the regional coordination of homeless services in the Midlands from November 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015. The total compensation for such services under a Professional Services Contract is not to exceed \$100,000. Be it further resolved that, as time is of the essence, the City Manager is authorized to execute a Professional Services Contract with the United Way of the Midlands in accordance with the terms of this Resolution after approval by the City Attorney. Voting aye were Mr. Davis, Ms. Devine, Mr. Baddourah and Mayor Benjamin. Mr. Runyan voted nay.

2. Inclement Weather Center

Upon a motion made by Mayor Benjamin and seconded by Mr. Runyan, Council voted unanimously to approve a *Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to execute an Inclement Weather Center Services Agreement between the City of Columbia and United Way of the Midlands*. We will attach as an addendum, the *Terms & Conditions: Inclement Weather Center Procedures for Homeless Sheltering 2014-2015*. Be it resolved by the Mayor and City Council this 21<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2014, that the City Manager is hereby authorized to commence negotiations with the United Way of the Midlands for the operation of an Inclement Weather Center at 191 Calhoun Street for the provision of overnight sheltering for the homeless, which center shall be open no later than November 6<sup>th</sup> and for which funding shall not exceed Three Hundred Fifty Thousand and No/100 (\$350,000) Dollars. Be it further resolved that, as time is of the essence, the City Manager is authorized to execute a Services Agreement with the United Way of the Midlands in accordance with the terms of this Resolution and the minimum terms and conditions as set forth on the attached, after approval by the City Attorney.

Mayor Benjamin reiterated that this is in the budget as previously approved by City Council and he strongly encouraged all to stay within that budget.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager noted that **Items 3 and 4** are the City's annual allocation of funding for Transitions and Housing First.

3. [Resolution No.: R-2014-101](#) – Authorizing the City Manager to execute a Professional Services Agreement for the Housing First Program between the City of Columbia and the University of South Carolina for Fiscal Year 2014-2015 – *Approved by a vote of four (4) to one (1).*

Upon a motion made by Mr. Baddourah and seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted four (4) to one (1) to approve Resolution No.: R-2014-101 – Authorizing the City Manager to execute Professional Services Agreement for the Housing First Program between the City of Columbia and the University of South Carolina for Fiscal Year 2014-2015. Voting aye were Mr. Davis, Ms. Devine, Mr. Baddourah and Mayor Benjamin. Mr. Runyan voted nay.

4. [Resolution No.: R-2014-098](#) – Authorizing the City Manager to execute an Agreement between the City of Columbia and The Midlands Housing Alliance, Inc. for Fiscal Year 2014-2015 - *Approved*

Councilor Davis asked if there were budgetary changes.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said no.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Devine and seconded by Mr. Baddourah, Council voted unanimously to approve Resolution No.: R-2014-098 – Authorizing the City Manager to execute an Agreement between the City of Columbia and The Midlands Housing Alliance, Inc. for 2025 Main Street for Fiscal Year 2014-2015.

### **CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION**

5. Flooding in Five Points – The Honorable Cameron A. Runyan and Dr. Kelly Hynes

Dr. Kelly Hynes, Owner of 20/20 Vision in Five Points expressed concerns about significant flooding in the area. She presented photographs of floodwaters in August 2011 and the vortex that was created as she swept the debris away. She presented additional photos and a video of the debris that is found around the drains. She alleviated flooding on her side of the street by removing debris from grates. She suggested that there needs to be manpower available to remove debris when there are flood alerts. She suggested that the city clear upstream obstructions, because the capacity is there, but the water isn't getting in.

Mayor Benjamin thanked Dr. Hynes for her active civic leadership. He requested an update from staff on the protocol that is in place. He encouraged communication and working together on this.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Operations said we monitor the weather and we have flood monitors at Whaley Street and Main Street. She explained that when the water rises 4' and 6' above normal, we receive a warning. She acknowledged that Five Points is a major hotspot and there are other areas in Columbia that flood. She noted that they clean up as much debris as possible prior to major events. She also noted that we no longer use mulch in Five Points. She pointed out that a lot of the debris comes from upstream and a lot of major

projects are underway that will improve our branches. She said we know that people are impacted and we do care; staff is looking at rollercoades that will allow us to quickly close streets to prevent cars from passing through. She said they recently brought a sock to put around the catch basin.

Councilor Baddourah also thanked Dr. Hynes and offered to assist in any way.

Councilor Runyan asked the City Manager to bring back mechanical options for Council's consideration. He said someone has to deploy the socks since they can't be left out at all times. He asked if we could install infrastructure at certain choke points that would keep the drains clear in the event of a storm hitting at an inopportune time.

Mr. Robert Anderson, Director of Public Works said the water velocity and volume will cause light objects to wash away. He said the socks are filled with rubber, weigh 75 pounds and are up to 8' long. He said they will continue to look for other options.

Councilor Devine recalled that the Environment and Infrastructure Committee discussed looking at sagging yard debris as part of the Shandon Green Infrastructure Pilot Project. She requested an update. She suggested that Council consider an ordinance against blowing leaves into streets, because that is a big contributor to the drains being clogged.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Operations said there are pros and cons and costs associated with a bagging ordinance. She said the Shandon Pilot Project was approved by Council and we will reach out to those residents to determine if there is support for a voluntary bagging pilot program using biodegradable bags or we will need a process for breaking the bags to remove the debris. In advance of storms, we do look at all major areas that are prone to flooding to ensure that they are clear.

Councilor Davis also commended Dr. Hynes. He suggested that we consider the other hot spots across the city while working to address flooding in Five Points. He agreed that Council should consider banning blowing leaves into the street or holding the employer responsible.

Mayor Benjamin said the approaches aren't mutually exclusive and we should encourage staff to work with the community to find a way to get things done.

Ms. Ryan Nevius insisted that composting is key; we want to manage yard waste. She noted that Richland County uses roll carts. She said storm water needs to go into the ground for many reasons, but mainly to reduce the load on our existing storm water system. She announced that an Adopt Your Drain Program will be a part of the Rocky Branch Watershed Plan. She insisted that the city not use the term "bagging leaves"; it is a matter of community outreach.

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT** – Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager

**UPDATE ON THE POLICE EVIDENCE & PROPERTY STORAGE FACILITY**

6. Executive Session Discussion of Negotiations Incident to Proposed Contractual Arrangements - [Resolution No.: R-2014-102](#) – *Authorizing the City Manager to commence negotiations with NAI Avant for a building lease to locate the Police Evidence and Property Storage Facility*

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager reported that we have pursued all options for an evidence and property storage facility and we have a recommendation for a lease of property that we'd like to brief Council on in Executive Session for a later vote if you choose to do so.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Baddourah and seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 2:57 p.m. for the discussion of **Item 6**.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Runyan and seconded by Mr. Baddourah, Council voted unanimously to adjourn the Executive Session at 3:22 p.m.

Upon a motion made by Mayor Benjamin and seconded by Mr. Runyan, Council voted unanimously to approve Resolution No.: R-2014-102 – Authorizing the City Manager to commence negotiations with NAI Avant for a building lease to locate the Police Evidence and Property Storage Facility. Be it resolved by the Mayor and City Council on this 21<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2014 that the City Manager is hereby authorized to commence negotiations with NAI Avant for a lease in a form to be approved by the City Attorney which shall meet the minimum conditions as set forth in the attached for a building to locate the Police Evidence and Property Storage Facility. Be it further resolved, that as time is of the essence, the City Manager is authorized to execute a lease after approval by the City Attorney, should the minimum terms and conditions as set forth on the attached be met.

Mayor Benjamin commended staff for coming up with a very sound resolution in a very cost effective manner.

- **Mr. Baddourah left the meeting at 3:35 p.m.**

**CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION**

7. [Fifth Judicial Circuit Solicitor's Office Worthless Check Program](#) – Ms. Cheri Reed, Director of the Solicitor's Office Worthless Check Program

Ms. Cheri Reed, Director of the Solicitor's Office Worthless Check Program said the main focus of the program is to discourage bad check writing and to help our community members collect on bad checks. She reported that they receive 350 to 400 bad check cases per month and they are very successful in getting restitution to victims. She offered to help the City departments that may be receiving bad checks. She noted that they've collected \$140,000 for the Treasurer's Office since 2012. She explained that they take the burden off of the victim by sending certified letters, contacting the offender and setting payment arrangements. She said they also assist in

cases of identity theft. She noted that the program is free for the victim, but the offender is charged a fee. There is a \$50 to \$150 solicitor's fee that depends on the amount of the check; a \$41 county fee; and a \$30 NSF charge for the merchant.

Ms. Galena Alford, Payment Center Administrator said 90% of checks we receive back are for water. She explained that the check is sent to Customer Care and put back on the account. She said the remaining 10% are for different departments; a letter is sent to the customer and the department; and those checks are normally paid.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager clarified that the fees would be handed over to the Solicitor's Office and the City is no longer in the process.

Ms. Angela Adams, Customer Care Administrator said we receive three (3) batches of checks per week and twenty five (25) checks are bad per batch. She explained that bad checks written for water and sewer services are reversed to the account and once services are cutoff, we collect for that bad check before services are restored; the majority of these checks are collected.

Ms. Cheri Reed, Director of the Solicitor's Office Worthless Check Program clarified that they will collect the face value of the check, the \$30 NSF fee and any other fees that the City is entitled to. She explained that they have to send a 10-day certified letter and the turnaround time may be up to 25-days.

Ms. Angela Adams, Customer Care Administrator said water and sewer accounts are scheduled for termination once the account is reversed on the following business day; we are collecting within 24-hours. She stated that staff time is minimal for water and sewer accounts; a batch of twenty five (25) can be reversed within ten (10) minutes.

Councilor Devine said she used this program with her business and it has been effective. She said there may not be a huge need to use this program for water and sewer customers, but this is a good program.

Councilor Runyan agreed that this a great program. He expressed concerns about adding another layer of fees for individuals that are already economically disadvantaged. He said it sounds like we already have an efficient system for handling the bulk of bad checks.

Councilor Davis asked if this can be done in other departments.

Ms. Angela Adams, Customer Care Administrator said yes.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager agreed to look at this and bring back a recommendation, if we can use the program.

8. [Customer Billing System Upgrades](#) – Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget and Program Management Director

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget and Program Management Director outlined the next phase for Banner Utility Billing System upgrades for water and sewer, parking garages and solid waste services. She said that the system will be down during November 7-14, 2014. She noted that customer web access will be affected; however, customers can call or come into the Customer Care Center during the normal hours of operation and payments will be accepted at Washington Square, over the telephone, in the mail and at First Citizens Bank. She said that customers will receive notification through the mail, email and our website.

9. [Tweet My Jobs Funding Request](#) – The Honorable Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin

Mayor Benjamin said this request is to renew the agreement with Tweet My Jobs in the amount of \$50,000 and to have the City Manager work with them on the deliverables. He said we want to take it to another level of success and they have bold projections as to where they believe they can get to; we want to make sure the goals are achievable. He asked the City Manager to negotiate the deliverables similar to those we have with all economic development partners.

Upon a motion made by Mayor Benjamin and seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to allocate \$50,000 to Tweet My Jobs and for the City Manager to negotiate deliverables similar to those we have with all economic development partners.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Upon a motion made by Mayor Benjamin and seconded by Mr. Runyan, Council voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 4:02 p.m. for the discussion of **Items 10 and 11** as outlined.

10. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
11. Receipt of legal advice as it relates to a matter covered by attorney-client privilege – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*

- **Council adjourned the Executive Session discussion at 4:51 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore  
City Clerk