

**CITY OF COLUMBIA
CITY COUNCIL PLANNING SESSION MINUTES
AUGUST 30, 2006
8:30 AM – CITY HALL
1737 MAIN STREET**



The Columbia City Council conducted a Planning Session on Wednesday, August 30, 2006 in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. Mayor Robert D. Coble called the meeting to order at 8:55 a.m. The following members of City Council were present: The Honorable E.W. Cromartie, II, The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann and The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III. The Honorable Anne M. Sinclair arrived at 9:05 a.m. Also present were Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk.

PRESENTATIONS

- A. **Report from the Homeless Service Center Site Selection Committee - Mr. Mac Bennett, Chair of the Site Selection Committee

Mr. Mac Bennett, Chair of the Homeless Service Center Site Selection Committee presented the Committee's recommendation for the Midlands Commission on Homelessness to pursue the property located in the block encompassed by Taylor, Laurens, Hampton and Gregg Streets for the development of a comprehensive service center for the homeless. He explained that the Committee looked at other facilities in Greenville, South Carolina, North Carolina and Austin, Texas. The criteria for the Center were shared with the City of Columbia, Richland County, the Columbia Council of Neighborhoods and The State Newspaper. The site had to be approved by a super majority vote (2/3 of the committee membership). Requests for Proposals were sent to hundreds of interested parties or landowners having property that met the criteria. The Ben Arnold Company currently owns the selected site. It has twelve (12) buildings, it's expandable and it is accessible to public transportation. This will be a comprehensive site to service the homeless needs such as a sobering shelter, overnight stay, emergencies, mental health, meals and employment assistance. According to the 2000 Census, there are 1,700 homeless women and children. This center will accommodate 150 men and women on a transitional basis with another 100 beds. The intent is for service providers to co-locate within this site, which totals to 94,000 square feet or a square block radius if the railroad easement is included.

Councilor Cromartie, II, asked what other sites were considered. He said that the community has been supportive of the homeless, but they are concerned about security. He suggested that the committee consider the concept of scattered sites like public housing so that the impact isn't so great on any particular area. He further suggested that Mayor Coble lead a charge in visiting the homeless service center in St. Louis. He said that he was not happy with the decision, but he applauded the committee's hard work.

Councilor Devine stated that it is the City's job to secure that area and to resolve public safety concerns, regardless of where the center is located. She requested an estimated development timeframe. She suggested that they visit St. Louis to see how their center operates. She also suggested that they consider how the landscape has changed since the inception of the committee.

Councilor Davis stated that no matter where the center is located there would be public safety concerns. He said that partnerships should be in place to help meet the intended goal. He said that we don't want to lose the support of City residents.

Councilor Sinclair applauded the committee's work during this site selection process. She noted that she would be hesitant to vote today, because the matter was not properly advertised for discussion.

Councilor Finlay stated that this is a difficult issue, but we helped to establish the committee and the criteria. He urged his colleagues to accept the report and move forward with discussions with legal counselors about acquiring property and proceed with community input and other matters.

Mayor Coble stated that the committee was asked to make a recommendation knowing that it would be hard to accept by those that are impacted the most. He said that the process would be dead if we did not accept the recommendation from the BRAC-like committee, noting that not having a location would be a stain on our City. He said that we have an opportunity to do for our citizens just what we did for Katrina victims. Mayor Coble agreed to lead the charge to St. Louis, Missouri. He stated that a site with daytime services would be better for individuals that need help and care. He said that it was because of the City's neglect that we have these associated problems.

Ms. Doris Hilderbrand, President / Historic Waverly Community, appeared in opposition to the proposal. She said that the center should not be located near the local schools.

Ms. Myrtle Gordon appeared before the members of Council in opposition to the proposal, because homeless people are a nuisance. She urged the members of Council to look deeper into the problems.

Mr. Anthony Spearman, Vice President of Operations / Allen University, appeared before the members of Council in opposition to the proposal, because it would be a threat to the University's strategic implementations to ensure the students' safety.

Mr. David Williams, Vice President of Student Operations / Benedict College, appeared before the members of Council in opposition to the proposal, because of the impact it would have on the students' safety.

Mr. Haywood Bazemore, Campus Police Chief / Benedict College, appeared before the members of Council in opposition to the proposal, because they have worked hard to decrease the crime rates in the area.

Mr. Russ Van De Grift, Veterinarian / Taylor Street, appeared before the members of Council in opposition to the proposal. He cited incidents of attacks, theft and panhandling.

Mr. Harrison Rearden, Richland-Lexington Airport District Commission, appeared before the members of Council in support of a resolution, noting that it's the morally right thing to do.

Mr. Bobby Lyles, Chairman / Chamber of Commerce Committee on Homelessness, we agreed that the process should be endorsed. He urged the members of Council to vote in favor of the recommendation.

Ms. Elizabeth Florence, Robert Mills Historic District, appeared before the members of Council in opposition to the proposal. She said that the homeless have not left the area since the Lou Holtz Shelter closed. She cited incidents of vagrancy, drama, litter, disrespect, and washing with outdoor water taps.

Councilor Rickenmann explained that the Mental Health site and this proposal are two separate issues and that the City of Columbia did not enlist anyone to go to the South Carolina Budget and Control Board to obtain that site.

Councilor Finlay said that he worked with the Four Corners of Hope to obtain property on Shop Road near his office and now that site is condos. He stated that the issue is difficult and that police protection is the biggest concern.

Mr. Moss Blachman, explained that being homeless is a significant quality of life issue that pervades every aspect of life in this region. He said that the Blueprint to Address Homelessness is based on best practices. He stated that it is not feasible to have eight to ten of the same facilities with identical services due to limited funding. Mr. Blachman explained that the center would be designed to bring people in and help them to rehabilitate, to create change and not just sheltering.

Mr. Ben Arnold, Ben Arnold Companies, announced that he and his family owned the property within the proposed site. He stated that the best thing for them would be to demolish all the buildings and construct a medical facility. He suggested that they close Cherokee Street to increase the 3.8 acres. Mr. Arnold offered to assist the City of Columbia with finding a site for the current year.

Ms. Julie Avin, Mental Illness Recovery Center Inc. (MIRCI) stated that they have not experienced any community problems at their site. MIRCI services its clients during the day.

Ms. Jennifer Moore, United Way of the Midlands, agreed to provide the members of City Council with copies of the Blueprint to Address Homelessness. The Blueprint is available online at www.uway.org.

Mr. Jessie Outen, Greenview Community Resident, appeared before the members of Council in opposition to the proposal, due to the crime already in the community.

- **Council adjourned the Public Hearing.**

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to schedule a Public Hearing and to vote on the Homeless Service Center Site Selection Committee's recommendation on Wednesday, September 6, 2006 at 6:00 p.m.

- **Council adjourned the meeting to break at 11:10 a.m.**
- **Council reconvened the Planning Session at 11:35 a.m. in the City Council Conference Room.**

B. Strategic Planning – Mr. John Hall, Strategic Planner for SCANA Corporation

Mr. John Hall, Strategic Planner for SCANA Corporation presented key concepts related to strategic planning and shared visions. He explained that SCANA's definition of leadership is defined as achieving a shared vision through others. He said that strategic planning is about shared visions, which occur at the corporate level (City Council), the department level (Administration) and the employee level (performance objectives). He asked the members of Council to determine where they did the best job with the City's planning process. Mr. Hall commended the members of Council for the job that is done at the budget level and for tracking major issues. He said that it is Council's job to set the direction for the community. Organizations with shared visions out perform those that don't by 40% to 200%. He added that an employee's performance evaluation ties back into the plan, which ties into the vision. He encouraged the members of Council to stay on their current path.

APPEARANCE OF PUBLIC HAVING BUSINESS WITH CITY COUNCIL

Mr. Mel Jenkins, Rosewood Community resident, appeared before the members of Council to discuss his concerns with Owens Field Park. He urged the members of Council to cancel all actions pertaining to the site and he requested full disclosure of the proposed changes by Richland School District One.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION

- C. Implementation of the Business Utilization Causation Study Recommendations – Ms. Dana D. Turner, Assistant City Manager for Commerce and Development and Mr. Tony Lawton, Director of the Office of Business Opportunities - *Discussion of this matter was deferred.*
- D. Discussion of Pending Legislation – Ms. Gladys Brown, Assistant City Manager for Administrative Services - *Discussion of this matter was deferred.*
- E. Review of the Processes and Procedures for Accommodations Tax and Hospitality Tax Funding – Ms. Libby Gober, Ombudsman - *Discussion of this matter was deferred.*
- F. Annexation Update – Mr. Chip Land, Annexation Coordinator - *Discussion of this matter was deferred.*
- G. Overview of City Boards and Commissions – Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk - *Discussion of this matter was deferred.*
- H. ****City Council Meeting Schedule** – Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk - *Discussion of this matter was deferred.*

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion by Ms. Devine, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 12:03 p.m. for the discussion of **Items I.** through **K.** as amended.

- I. Discussion of negotiations incident to the proposed sale of property – Mr. Steven A. Gantt, Senior Assistant City Manager for Operations
This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.
- J. ****Receipt of legal advice**, which relates to a pending, threatened or potential claim
This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.
- K. ****Employment of an Employee**
This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.
- **Councilor Finlay left the meeting at 12:45 p.m.**
- **Council adjourned the meeting at 12:50 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Salley
City Clerk