

**CITY OF COLUMBIA  
CITY COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP  
APRIL 30, 2008 - 9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.  
CITY HALL – 1737 MAIN STREET  
CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM – 2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR**

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The Columbia City Council met for a Work Session on Wednesday, April 30, 2008 in the City Hall Council Conference Room located at 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. Mayor Robert D. Coble called the meeting to order at 9:16 a.m. The following members of Council were present: The Honorable E. W. Cromartie, II, The Honorable Anne M. Sinclair, The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine and The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann. The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III arrived at 9:57 a.m. Also present were Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk.

**RESOLUTIONS**

1. Resolution 2008-026 – Authorizing consumption of beer and wine at Cinco de Mayo 2008 in Finlay Park

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Ms. Sinclair, Council voted unanimously to approve Resolution 2008-026 – Authorizing consumption of beer and wine at Cinco de Mayo 2008 in Finlay Park.

**CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION**

2. Fiscal Year 2008 / 2009 General Fund Budget

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager, explained that there are 279 vacancies; 113 in the General Fund; 57 City of Columbia / Richland County split funding for firefighters and other shared positions; 21 General Fund and Water and Sewer split funding; and 83 Water and Sewer funded positions. He asked Mr. Gantt to look at those positions, because some are more difficult to staff than other positions and to prepare a report based upon that. He stated that six (6) positions will be reclassified and the anticipated savings of \$195,801 will be used to fund two (2) Historic Planner positions and the remaining funds would be distributed between Parks and Recreation and Public Works. They have budgeted for fourteen (14) new officers; hire seven (7) now and seven (7) after July 1, 2009. They will reallocate funding for 7 officers into the operations at the Columbia Police Department.

Councilor Devine asked for clarification on the number of officers to be hired. She stated that we are funding seven (7) positions now and then seven (7) positions next year.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager stated that we would fill the first seven (7) positions recognizing the lengthy timeframe it takes to get the officers ready.

Councilor Sinclair asked about the Police Department using money from its vacancies to cover overtime cost.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that's because they typically exceed their overtime budget.

Councilor Sinclair asked if additional money would be set-aside for overtime. She has heard that the officers like the ability to generate extra revenue from overtime.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager explained that the downside to excessive overtime is the risk of police burnout. He stated that they will provide for overtime expenditures and there will continue to be a period wherein the Police Department is not fully staffed.

Councilor Sinclair asked if twenty-six (26) Officers were being hired all together.

Councilor Devine explained that with the seven (7) positions being added this year that would total twenty-six (26) potential positions and then an additional seven (7) positions next year.

Mayor Coble said that funding should be used for capital expenditures or to purchase equipment.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that funding would be primarily used for capital expenditures.

Councilor Rickenmann requested that staff make the necessary adjustments to the line items, because it is important to know where the positions are. He said that the city needs a good plan for recruiting the best Police Officers.

Mayor Coble asked for the normal number of vacancies within the Fire Department.

Mr. Bradley Anderson, Fire Chief, explained that there are several variables to consider. The County funds some positions and the City funds some; therefore, the numbers fluctuate from week to week depending on their needs. The training period is 14 weeks. The next graduation date is August 21, 2008. They must hire 20-24 people at a time. While it is normal to have 15 vacancies at any time, the drop out rate has improved.

Mayor Coble suggested that vacancies be reassigned so that the money is available.

Councilor Devine reminded the Council that they will need to vote to fund the seven (7) additional Police Officer positions and to increase the budget to reflect those seven (7) positions.

Councilor Rickenmann asked for a breakout of personnel services; what are the positions and how are they moving; spell out what personnel services and operating expenses mean; non departmental should include the compensation study; and Cost of Living Adjustments and salary adjustments need to be reflected in the department's budget.

Councilor Sinclair asked what is being purchased under capital outlay.

Councilor Devine asked if staff discovered where the money went from vacant positions last year. She asked how we are figuring GASB into the budget.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager stated that GASB is a policy issue.

Councilor Devine asked if there is a minimum amount of funding required for GASB.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager stated that staff is working on a recommendation.

Councilor Sinclair asked about diesel.

Councilor Devine asked about the Abstractor position for the Legal Department, because part of the frustration is not being able to locate the right owners of properties. We need the ability to do a brief title search on the front end, because it is a big reason why cases don't go forward.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager stated that there is the possibility of funding an Abstractor out of the money found from vacant positions. He asked City Council if this should be considered a funding priority.

Councilor Sinclair noted that not every municipality is going through the same things with GASB; other Councils aren't quite as wrapped up about this. She suggested that we see what other cities outside of South Carolina are doing, such as North Carolina, Georgia and Charlotte, because she would hate to do something dramatic.

Ms. Melissa Caughman, Interim Finance Director stated that we are contacting other cities. She noted that GASB45 doesn't require that you fund it, but you must address it so it doesn't impact your fund balance in the future.

Mayor Coble noted that some cities might be funding pensions and not medical insurance.

Ms. Melissa Caughman, Interim Finance Director stated that we are completing an actuary, we contribute toward the retirement by paying the premium and it comes to \$96 million to fund future retirees' health and dental insurance.

Councilor Devine insisted that a policy change is needed, not retroactive, but going forward.

Councilor Sinclair stated that she would not use the Municipal Association of South Carolina as the sole source for information on GASB45.

Mayor Coble suggested that they set aside time during the budget process to discuss GASB45. He suggested that they contact the National League of Cities to get a view from a national level.

Councilor Davis suggested that the City Manager check with the International City / County Management Association.

Councilor Finlay suggested that they look at the Irrevocable Trust Fund, because it would get a better carry forward from the interest you accrue. This may become a line item in our operational budget once we agree to do it, but it may be 10-15 years before we over accrue.

Mayor Coble suggested that we discuss the matters on May 7, 2008.

Councilor Sinclair asked what the options to dealing with GASB45 are and what are the ramifications and budget implications for those options.

Councilor Rickenmann stated that it is important to know where the unallocated surplus was spent.

Councilor Sinclair asked if the money paid for overtime by organizations for events was put back into that department's budget. For example, when Parks and Recreation is paid for setting up an event does it go back to Parks and Recreation?

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Assistant City Manager for Public Services responded that the revenues generated by Parks and Recreation go into the General Fund.

Councilor Devine stated that those revenues should go back where it is needed. She asked if we could start doing that.

Councilor Finlay asked how much overtime was paid within the Police Department during 2006/2007. He suggested that a line item be added for overtime. He suggested that they look at the Police Department, Fire Department and Parks and Recreation and get the department heads to explain to us how the money is spent, how its operated and then spread the remaining 25% across the other departments.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager explained that the most effective way to do the budget is for each department and department head to come before City Council. He is willing to set this up over a couple of days.

- **Council recessed at 10:39 a.m.**
- **Council reconvened at 11:15 a.m.**

Ms. Brenda Kyzer, Business License Administrator, discussed H4554 a Real Estate Bill that went back to subcommittee the next day with a very favorable amendment for the business license. No revenue would be lost and it would clear up loop holes in the law. She noted that our business license fess rank lowest in the state.

Councilor Finlay suggested that the comparison focus on areas we serve like Lexington County and Kershaw County.

Ms. Brenda Kyzer, Business License Administrator noted that Lexington County doesn't have a Business License Ordinance and Kershaw County doesn't have an Ordinance nor do they charge a fee for licenses.

Councilor Devine asked if a comparable fee was being paid in those counties, if the money for the new system is in the budget and are there capital outlay costs.

Ms. Melissa Caughman, Interim Finance Director noted that no money is needed, because it is already a lease purchase contract

Councilor Finlay asked what services will be provided for the additional fees and how we will value proposition the increase in fees. He stated that we should be the low cost provider

Councilor Cromartie requested that we send this information to all business license holders and professionals announcing that City Council is proposing an increase and show the charges so that everyone has notice.

Mr. David Knoche, Director of General Services reported that Ameresco has been asked to provide a complete and thorough energy audit and that has slowed the process down some. The report should be done by May 2008. While Ameresco has provided examples of cost saving methods we still need complete costs and a proposed project list for the committee to review.

Councilor Devine asked if there are any provisions in place to budget money for the implementation of upcoming recommendations.

Mr. David Knoche, Director of General Services stated that funds were set aside last year for the audit, but no funding was included in the budget this year, because the information was not ready.

Councilor Sinclair stated that new HVAC and hot water heater systems should be purchase

based on the recommendations of the audit.

Mr. David Knoche, Director of General Services reported that the elevators for Washington Square are in the Capital Improvement Project budget. The audit will look at how to make elevators more efficient. He noted that the boiler needs to be replaced.

Councilor Davis wants to know the cost for replacing the boiler and the HVAC system. He stated that such systems should be placed on a replacement schedule.

Councilor Devine said that we should get some estimates to consider during this budgeting process.

Councilor Sinclair said they should be able to give preliminary information on those things that need to be replaced. She is disappointed that this is taking so long, because we need that information before we vote on this budget.

Mayor Coble requested a presentation of the energy audit recommendations upon completion.

Councilor Sinclair noted that the Climate Protection Action Committee is very interested in what's going on and they want to be a part of the roll out process.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Director of Public Works provided an update on the Climate Protection Action Committee's Action Plan, the tool that was developed by CPAC, approved by City Council and intended to be used citywide. She recommended that the city develop an internal Green Team composed of city staff while CPAC continues their efforts. They will work hand in hand. It's an easy cause to get people behind, so recycling bins are being placed in all park facilities.

Councilor Devine asked about other city buildings.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Director of Public Works stated that they already have something in Public Works and will look at other facilities. They will place bins in buildings with a lot of staff and visitors first. There is an upcoming "Green is Good for Kids" event promoting the forever forest program. She noted that the upcoming stormwater permit will help to alleviate trash in the storm drains. The city may consider a bagging ordinance to have citizens bag their yard debris prior to placing it by the road.

Councilor Finlay asked if we can have colored bags that are reusable and don't tear.

Ms. Melissa Gentry, P.E., Director of Public Works stated that the bagging ordinance will improve operations and it will change how materials are collected.

Councilor Davis insisted that we find a way to make dumping charges stick to violators.

Councilor Devine asked if we are planning a Green is Good for Neighborhoods conference. She suggested that this be held on a Saturday. She said that information needs to be provided to those that want to do it, but they don't know how to.

Ms. Dana D. Turner, Assistant City Manager for Commerce and Development added that the Climate Protection Action Committee will be participating in the Community Development Department's Super Saturday event.

Councilor Finlay requested an update on engineering projects within the Capital Improvements Program.

- **Council recessed at 11:58 a.m.**
- **Council reconvened the meeting at 12:21 p.m.**
- **Mr. Finlay left the meeting at 12:23 p.m.**

The members of Council continued to discuss the upcoming schedule for the Budget Work Sessions and Public Hearings.

- **The Council adjourned the meeting at 12:53 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Salley  
City Clerk