

**CITY OF COLUMBIA
WORK SESSION MINUTES
DECEMBER 10, 2008 – 9:00 AM
CITY HALL - 1737 MAIN STREET**



The Columbia City Council held a Work Session on Wednesday, December 10, 2008 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable 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 Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann and The Honorable Belinda F. Gergel. The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III and The Honorable Sam Davis arrived at 9:18 a.m. Also present were Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk.

ORDINANCES – SECOND READING

1. Ordinance No.: 2008-101 – Annexing 3419 Park Street Richland County TMS #09106-02-07 – *First reading approval was given on December 3, 2008. – Approved on second reading.*

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to give second reading approval to Ordinance No.: 2008-101 – Annexing 3419 Park Street Richland County TMS #09106-02-07.

2. Ordinance No.: 2008-106 - Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 14, Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions, Article VII Prostitution – *First reading approval was given on December 3, 2008. - Second reading consideration was deferred until December 17, 2008.*

▪ **Mr. Finlay and Mr. Davis joined the meeting at 9:18 a.m.**

Councilor Cromartie said that in looking at a portion of this, it indicated the manner in which a person dressed in public. Specifically as it relates to entertainment, how does this effect our various theaters if there's a nude scene.

Mr. Ken Gaines, City Attorney said I don't think it would effect it.

Councilor Cromartie stated that the reason he asked the question is because things happen in the theater; in the modern theater you have a lot of things that go on, on the stage and it's a public place and the ordinances does talk about public places. You need to make sure that it doesn't have unintended consequences, because if you go to any of our theaters in America today you have all kinds of things that happen on the stage. I simply saw that as a potential concern. We would hate for a Police Officer to come in and arrest somebody on the stage, because they say it is a violation of this ordinance. It is in fact in a public place. The statute speaks of a place open to the general public including those which serve food or drinks or provide entertainment. That would qualify technically if in fact you had a Calcutta here. I am not trying to cause a concern; it is an issue of reality.

Councilor Finlay said I think he just wants us to massage the ordinance.

Mr. Ken Gaines, City Attorney said we'll look at it and if you'd like to hold it for second reading next week, we will make sure that we've got that exemption in there.

ORDINANCES – FIRST READING

3. Ordinance No.: 2008-065 - Authorizing a property tax credit to taxpayers within the corporate limits of the City of Columbia for installation of fire sprinkler systems in compliance with S.C. Code Ann. §12-6-3622 – *Approved on first reading.*

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to give first reading approval to Ordinance No.: 2008-065 - Authorizing a property tax credit to taxpayers within the corporate limits of the City of Columbia for installation of fire sprinkler systems in compliance with S.C. Code Ann. §12-6-3622.

PRESENTATIONS

4. **Operation Taking Back Our City – Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of Columbia Police Department

Councilor Finlay said that he had requested a financial impact on what we predict the potential of this plan to be. Have we received anything on that?

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager agreed to work on that information and to provide the analysis. He reported that clients of the Winter Shelter were present today and that he had a preliminary meeting with them, but he will schedule time to meet with them again immediately after this meeting. I just want to acknowledge that they are here; we've had some discussions about their concerns; there are issues that I believe we are in a position to resolve; and I will have a full report to you by our next meeting.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of Columbia Police Department presented an award to Mayor Coble and the members of Council recognizing outstanding participation in the 2008 America's National Night Out Against Crime for the Greater Richland/Lexington County of South Carolina.

Mayor Coble offered a special thanks to Tige Watts, who organized a great event at Finlay Park. We will ask Mr. Watts to bring together the other entities to share this award.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of Columbia Police Department said that the award also speaks volumes about community involvement. I am here today to give you an overview of the components of the Comprehensive Plan. I appreciate the opportunity to sit down and talk with you all individually; that was extremely valuable for a new Chief and I hope that in the future we can engage in another healthy exchange about crime fighting. I know that we are all looking for the same thing. I've always been impressed with the support this Council gives the Police Department. The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to tell you what we need and how we are going to get there from a Police Chief perspective. He announced that the Columbia Police Department has received its reaccreditation; it's our 4th award and that is a monumental achievement for any Police Department. We had a lot of discussions about crime going up about 7%, but we have arrested 500 more people today than we did last year. That tells me that we are doing a lot of things right; we have a lot to be excited about. We have 15,000 more 911 phone calls year-to-date than we did last year, which says that the citizens are more involved in calling the police and police are more involved with working with the community; so it's about trust. Our mission for crime fighting is about establishing relationships, building the public trust, earning the citizens confidence and reducing crime to make this the safest city in the United States. The Comprehensive Plan is designed to coincide with our mission statement as we go about doing our business. I want to highlight the components of the plan and I do want to emphasize that a lot of things are being requested over a five (5) year period; this will be phased in. There are some things that must be done immediately and some things that are long-term. The first component is recruitment

and retention; we have been struggling with that for several years and it's a problem that we have to deal with. I want to say that I put very little emphasis on pay, but officers do put a lot of emphasis on pay. I will be talking specifically about those kinds of things that we can do to enhance recruiting and retention. Mr. Finlay asked me to look closely at the data to see why we are losing people. We do exit surveys with the Police Department and Human Resources and it gives us a particular profile over a period of time as to why people are leaving. We have lost almost 181 (one hundred eighty one) officers over four (4) years, which is a lot of turnover for a Police Department and that's where we have to stop the bleeding. I think it's too early to make a ruling on the compensation package that you have provided. Applicants can go through the application process on the website and we can track the number of people that have been interested. He reported that the level of interest has increased since July when the new compensation package was put into place. We have to look at ways to create volume from those that are interested. The next area of concern is how we go about reducing crime. I've asked you for some help in the long run, but I also have to look at the immediate needs of our population. People want to know what we are going to do now; they want answers. Starting January 1, 2009 we are going to restructure the Police Department; we are taking people that are specialized and putting them in neighborhoods thus creating more officers in neighborhoods. The average citizen should see a larger presence of police. There were also discussions about the size of patrol areas such as the south region where patrol areas are much larger. We are going to shrink the patrol zones and give officers more time to spend in neighborhoods. I included three (3) additional categories: equipment, technology and training. How we approach these issues has a lot to do with the retention of officers. A full briefing on the Comprehensive Plan will be provided on December 17, 2008.

Councilor Finlay said that over the last two (2) years we have lost approximately forty (40) officers, which is virtually the same number of officers that we've been able to hire. At the next Council meeting I'd like to have the cost of training an officer to include salary, sending an officer to the academy and any other expenses, because anything we do at this point beyond focusing on retention issues is neither cost effective nor is it going to help us in the long run. If we could cut our loss rate in half then the size of the force would begin to grow by natural attrition and instead of spending \$500,000 on training new officers that money or a portion thereof could be given to pay existing officers for retention. I do think that the other question we will have to focus on is why we are losing officers. Money is frequently put out as an issue, but this Council did a good job of increasing that through retention pay. We need to understand what is causing people to leave our force and without understanding that we won't understand the primary issue that must be fixed for us to have an older, more mature, better trained force that is cost efficient and can grow over time.

Councilor Devine thanked Ms. Florence and our lobbyists, because this year we successfully pushed for and received legislation that will allow us to recoup some of our costs if we invest in training an officer and then he/she leaves to go to another agency. I think some people didn't realize how that was impacting us and how it could potentially impact us in the future as we're putting even more dollars into recruitment and training of new officers. She added that if an officer leaves to pursue another career path then we won't get that back. I wanted to point out that we discussed the fact that there is a misconception in the community as far as where we are with recruitment and why other people may choose to go to another agency versus applying in the City of Columbia. In your report, it is important that you articulate the standards and requirements that we have here that may be fairly different from some of the other agencies. While we do have vacancies and we want to fill them; I think we do have very high standards for our applicants, which says a lot to the kind of officers that we are putting on the streets here in Columbia and that needs to be explained as well. It is also important to note that you met with the Sheriff; you've seen some of the things they are doing as far as recruitment; and you will be incorporating some of that. We need to recognize that a Comprehensive Plan is not the end product; it is just the middle; and we need to evaluate the plan consistently to see if some things need to change. We are changing as a city everyday and things that are a need for our city today may not be a need that we will have

tomorrow. We need an on-going process for updating the plan once it is presented with the understanding that it is subject to change.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of Columbia Police Department said that he spoke with the Sheriff today and he believes that the Columbia Police Chief should be coordinating with all local, state and federal agencies in terms of sharing resources and training.

Councilor Davis said that he would like to see milestones as part of the Comprehensive Plan so that we have some measurements to look at over a period of time before we reach the five (5) year mark and do the comparisons with the dollar investment as well. The other thing that I would look for is that we be as finite as we can with the relationships in the communities; it should be a true community policing concept so that the relationships the citizens want and the criminals don't want to see are put in place. The bad guys don't tend to hang around in areas where they see and understand that there is a relationship with law enforcement and that reduces crime.

Mayor Coble said that accreditation and reaccreditation is something that we are very proud of. There is not going to be anything more important than this Comprehensive Plan.

Councilor Cromartie said that he met with Chief Carter and asked for specific benchmarks on what we wanted to do and how we could do it. I was more concerned about the immediate things that this city can provide based on the recommendations. He asked that the recommendations be broken out into phases along with the requested allocations; how the equipment would be used to benefit the people of the City of Columbia; the funding allocation needed; the immediate things that can be done; and those things that are long-term.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

5. Design Development Review Commission - *This item was withdrawn from the agenda and will be considered on December 17, 2008.*
6. Fiscal Year 2009 / 2010 Budget Priorities

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager reported that the fiscal year 2009/2010 budget priorities were included in Council's packets. He asked the members of Council to rank the listing of priorities as it relates to the citywide Strategic Plan initiatives and to provide those rankings to him by next week.

Councilor Davis said that he understands that this list is not all inclusive; there's some wiggle room somewhere.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that the list is not exhaustive and there is absolutely some wiggle room.

Councilor Rickenmann asked if they would get the list today. We talked about starting budget discussions with the Budget Committee; have we set a date for the Retreat so that we can set a date for a Work Session.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that Ms. Brown has collected some dates and we are in a position to begin to narrow that down.

Councilor Rickenmann asked that the date for the Retreat be set by the next meeting so that we can set the schedule for the next period of Work Sessions, which will not be agenda driven, but we want to talk about issues and be proactive instead of reactive.

Councilor Gergel asked where the priority items came from. She would like an opportunity to add transportation and buses to the list.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager stated that these are items that have been raised by Council members during our strategic planning sessions.

Councilor Finlay said that he requested a report on the discrepancies in workers compensation. Have we received anything on that yet?

APPEARANCE OF THE PUBLIC HAVING BUSINESS WITH CITY COUNCIL

Ms. Beverly Lorraine Moyd appeared before the members of Council to express concerns related to pictures she had taken for the homeless shelter this past winter that were also shown in the art museum. I would like to have my pictures back, because I never knew that the pictures would be displayed in the art museum.

Councilor Devine asked Ms. Moyd if she is referring to the Columbia Museum of Art.

Ms. Beverly Lorraine Moyd replied yes. She said that she can't find any of the people that were in the program when they took the pictures.

Mayor Coble asked if she would like the pictures back.

Ms. Beverly Lorraine Moyd replied yes sir. I don't know who has them.

Councilor Devine told Ms. Moyd that someone would call Ms. Brosius to find out about the pictures.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Rickenmann, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 9:56 a.m. for the discussion of two (2) employment matters. Please note that one (1) matter is the continuation of the City Manager's annual evaluation from December 4, 2008.

7. Discussion of employment of an employee – *Two (2) matters was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*

- **Mr. Finlay left the meeting at 12:30 p.m.**
- **Council adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Salley
City Clerk