



CITY OF COLUMBIA  
CITY COUNCIL  
DISTRICT IV EVENING MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2009  
6:00 P.M.  
HEATHWOOD PARK  
800 ABELIA ROAD

The Columbia City Council met for an Executive Session at 3:32 p.m. at City Hall, 1737 Main Street and conducted a District IV Evening Meeting on Wednesday, April 1, 2009 at Heathwood Park located at 800 Abelia Road, Columbia SC 29205. The Honorable Mayor Robert D. Coble called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. The following members of Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III and The Honorable Belinda F. Gergel. The Honorable E.W. Cromartie, II arrived at 4:40 p.m. and The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann arrived at 6:10 p.m. Also present were Mr. Steven A. Gantt, Interim City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Mr. Finlay, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 4:32 p.m. for the discussion of **Item A.** as outlined.

- **Mr. Cromartie joined the meeting at 4:40 p.m.**
- A. \*\*Receipt of legal advice, which relates to matters covered by attorney-client privilege
  - City Manager's Retirement  
*This item was discussed in Executive Session. Please refer to **Item 26.***
  - Absentee Landlord Registration  
*This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
- **Council adjourned the Executive Session at 5:37 p.m.**
- **Council convened the District IV Evening Meeting at 6:08 p.m.**

\*\*Mayor Coble offered Miss Mattingly Easley, daughter of Fred Easley the privilege of calling the meeting to order by banging the gavel.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. Minutes of October 8, 2008 – *Approved as presented.*

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of October 8, 2008 as presented.

### **PRESENTATIONS**

2. Welcome to the District IV Evening Meeting – The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III

The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III welcomed everyone to the District IV Evening Meeting at Heathwood Park. He thanked everyone for coming out.

3. Welcome to the Historic Heathwood Neighborhood – Mrs. Mary Baskin Waters, Presidents of the Historic Heathwood Neighborhood Association

Mrs. Mary Baskins Waters, Co-President of the Historic Heathwood Neighborhood Association welcomed everyone to the Historic Heathwood Neighborhood. It has been my pleasure to work with and to get to know this eminent Council and the many City employees that have professionally assisted us with our issues and concerns. We meet at Heathwood Park on the second Tuesday of every month and I would like to thank the Parks and Recreation Department for supporting our park. This City is a wonderful place to live and work and we are appreciative of the time and talents of our Mayor and Council as you toil tirelessly to help Columbia achieve a heightened status. Your accomplishments and support does not go unnoticed.

- 4a. \*\*Richland Sertoma Club 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Proclamation - Mr. Steven Langer, President of the Richland Sertoma Club

Mr. Steven Langer, President of the Richland Sertoma Club explained that the Richland Sertoma Club has been a part of Columbia for nearly fifty years now. We are very proud to be a part of this community. We will be celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this Saturday and we will be doing that in grand style at 300 Gervais Street. We invite you all to be a part of our event and our meetings, which are held on the first and third Thursdays of every month at the Summit Club from 11:45 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. This organization is truly dedicated to helping those that are less fortunate. We help those with speech and hearing impairments and we support Camp Sertoma, a summer camp in Clemson that we send children to. We purchase hearing aids for those that can't afford them; we support Children's Champs, an organization that helps to support families who are facing pediatric cancer; we support other umbrella organizations including the Palmetto State Base Camp, which is a home for homeless veterans. Please visit our website at [www.richlandsertomaclub.org](http://www.richlandsertomaclub.org) to learn more about our organization.

Mayor Coble and the members of Council presented a Proclamation declaring Saturday, April 4, 2009 as Richland Sertoma Club Day in the City of Columbia in recognition of their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

- 4b. \*\*Toastmasters Month Proclamation – Ms. Pat Gann, Distinguished Toastmaster / District 58 Toastmasters Governor

Ms. Pat Gann, Distinguished Toastmaster / District 58 Toastmasters Governor appeared before the members of Council representing the members of Toastmasters International in the State of South Carolina. We have 124 clubs in the State; over 3,000 members; and 20 of those clubs are in Columbia, especially the City of Columbia It Starts In Parks and the City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Club. Toastmasters strive to help us enhance our communication and leadership skills and we will be having Toastmasters from all over the State of South Carolina in Columbia on April 24-26, 2009 to attend our spring conference. We thank you very much for this proclamation and we will proudly display it at our conference.

Mayor Coble and the members of Council presented a Proclamation declaring April 2009 as Toastmasters Month in the City of Columbia.

5. Update on Keep the Midlands Beautiful – Ms. Heidi Johnson, Executive Director of Keep the Midlands Beautiful

Ms. Lisa Harvey, Chair of the Keep the Midlands Beautiful Board of Directors introduced Ms. Heidi Jenkins as the new Executive Director

Ms. Heidi Jenkins, Executive Director of Keep the Midlands Beautiful provided an update on the activities and financial support for the organization. She announced that 2009 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Keep the Midlands Beautiful service to the City of Columbia and the Midlands.

The City of Columbia was instrumental in establishing the organization in 1989 to encourage community engagement with issues related to waste reduction, recycling, litter prevention and beautification. To celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we are declaring the summer of 2009 as the Summer of Sunflowers and we are encouraging residents, schools, neighborhoods, parks and businesses to plant sunflowers to help us celebrate. She said that funding Keep the Midlands Beautiful remains a good investment and it saves the City money. Our 2008 cost benefit analysis indicates that for every government dollar we receive, we return almost \$4 with services and benefits. This means that we are returning at least \$60,000 this year for the \$20,000 received during the current fiscal year. Your packet includes our 2008 annual report; a breakdown of the services we provide; and the 2008 year end review summary. I would like to highlight that during the 2008 calendar year, Keep the Midlands Beautiful volunteers removed more than 16,000 pounds of litter from our roads, waterways and public spaces in the City of Columbia and contributed 1,800 hours of volunteer service worth an estimated \$28,000. This included the clean up of Gills Creek, which helped with the City's storm water efforts and neighborhood clean ups across the City. We coordinate the major litter pick up programs in the City including adopt a street; adopt a waterway; and the great American clean up. Without the services of Keep the Midlands Beautiful, the City would be left to pay its staff to remove unsightly litter from our streets and public spaces. As many of you are aware, Keep the Midlands Beautiful has been cut from the Public Works Department's budget for fiscal year 2009/2010. We understand the challenges that the City is facing, but we sincerely hope that you can find a way to continue to support Keep the Midlands Beautiful and allow us to remain a partner in trying to make our city as beautiful and welcoming as possible.

Councilor Gergel said that she is impressed with all that Keep the Midlands Beautiful is doing and the great partnership wherein you provide a clean city and volunteers. The hours of service are simply incredible. Tell me more about the partnership in terms of the funding the City of Columbia provides? How long have you been funded by the City?

Ms. Heidi Jenkins, Executive Director of Keep the Midlands Beautiful replied 20 years; since its inception. We were founded in 1989 and it came out of the Leadership Columbia Alumni and they determined that a Keep America Beautiful affiliate was the way to tackle the beautification and litter problems in our community. We always had a partnership with the City of Columbia, Richland County, Lexington County and the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce and we continue to be supported by them. We receive a large amount of funding from individual donors, corporate sponsorships, recycling programs and grants. We have one full-time employee.

Councilor Gergel stated that these are recommendations that were made in regards to next year's budget and the budget has not been approved by Council at this point. If we were able to find additional resources, what could you live with?

Ms. Heidi Jenkins, Executive Director of Keep the Midlands Beautiful said that they have been at \$20,000 for several years; I think that \$10,000 would allow us to continue providing services. We are working hard to build up other sources of funding.

Councilor Devine said that she talked with Heidi about this and clearly, we are having a tough year. We have to cut and Public Works gave us some options, but I see the flip side of that is the fact that you all coordinate a lot of efforts so that we don't have to. We need to find a way to work with them. There is a commitment on Council to find a doable situation, because we certainly want to work with you all. It may not be at the same level. As we look at collaborations there may be an opportunity to look at other entities that do the same things in the City to keep this going. Our gateways are beautiful and this is largely contributed to Keep the Midlands Beautiful.

6. Update on EdVenture Children's Museum – Ms. Catherine Horne, President / CEO of EdVenture Children's Museum

Ms. Catherine Horne, President and CEO of EdVenture Children's Museum provided an update on the Museum's activities, exhibits, use of Hospitality Tax funding and plans for expansion of the Museum to include more math, engineering and science activities. She invited Mr. Michael Horton, Chair of the Board of Trustees for EdVenture to join her for this report along with some of the smiling faces that live in District 4. We have volunteers with us that are members of a volunteer guild who have been a major part of the museums success. We brought a special guest from Africa; Curious George is an exciting new exhibit at EdVenture right now; he brings a new dimension to math and engineering and that's what the new exhibit is all about. We are here to give you evidence of the increasing impact of EdVenture. Through the support of the City through the Hospitality Tax Fund, we have been able to make multi-year commitments to major initiatives at the Museum and I want to underscore the importance of that forward planning as one of the keys to our success. It has been an amazing process; we are well aware of the budget challenges that the City has; and we applaud your diligence in trying to sort through all of that. Because of your support, we've added to the economic development activity; the tourism potential and quotient of Columbia; and we've also met high quality of life needs as evidenced by the large number of children here tonight. She reported that nearly 80,000 visitors saw Snowville from 47 states; we doubled the number of out of state visitors during that three month period; and there is also greater local attendance. We are pleased to support this community with efforts such as Together We Can...Read. I want to applaud the partnership we have with the Charles R. Drew Wellness Center in the major health education initiative. We have been under construction for several months on the front side of the museum. The community continues to tell us about the need to add more scientific education. Through that effort, we have planned a series of new major additions to our building in terms of exhibits and programs that will focus on science, math, engineering and technology, because that's the future of the education of our children and it's a drawing card for visitors from across this state and beyond. On May 9, 2009 we will introduce a major new exhibit called Blooming Butterflies featuring 500 butterflies flying outside, but inside an enclosure. It is a magical experience and we are excited to bring this to Columbia. It is because of the work of the volunteers that we have been able to raise the funds necessary to produce this exhibit. It was an expensive construction project and it will be an expensive operational issue, but we believe that it will be a dramatic new, Eddie-size addition to tourism development for this community.

Councilor Cromartie said thank you for collaborating with the Charles R. Drew Wellness Center. Please continue that involvement; part of what you do makes it unique; and thanks for all you do. You did what you said; your board is now diverse; job well done!

Councilor Devine said thank you for your partnership on the family fun Adventure at EdVenture; it was a tremendous event. A lot of us take for granted that EdVenture is right there and we can jump in a car and run down there, but there were a lot of children within Richland District One who had never been to EdVenture before. They had an opportunity to go with the help of the Housing Authority and the School District who provided transportation and the help of you opening it up free of charge. It was an extraordinary event and we really didn't imagine how wonderful it could turn out; part of it was because of your staff and the willingness to make it happen. We thank you for that and the opportunity that you provide our children to have fun and to learn.

Councilor Gergel said that the report was wonderful. I am intrigued with the way you think the Hospitality Tax has enabled EdVenture to plan strategically. We often hear about possible reductions to the tax. Where would EdVenture be if that happened?

Ms. Catherine Horne, President and CEO of EdVenture Children's Museum said that we use our funding for marketing, advertising and public relations; presenting major educational exhibits and programs wherein sponsors are not available; and for maintenance and care for the

building. We want to keep it well-maintained. Our cost to serve every child and visitor is approximately \$18; yet our average admissions cost is \$7.50 and we have to make that gap up. We would have to either dramatically increase attendance or we would have to dramatically increase admissions if we did not have the funding from the City of Columbia.

7. Conceptual Design of the Earlewood Park Administration Building and Community Center - Mr. Damon McDuffie, Parks Planner and Mr. Doug Quackenbush, AIA LEED AP for Quackenbush & Associates

Mr. Damon McDuffie, Parks Planner reported that on August 6, 2008 this Council approved a request from the Department of Parks and Recreation to enter into a contract with Quackenbush Architect and Planners to design a Parks and Recreation Administration Building and Community Center. I am happy to report that after much community/neighborhood input, the participation of multiple City departments and clubs and organizations that call Earlewood Park home, we have reached a stakeholder consensus and we humbly appear before you today to ask you to give this concept design and location your kind consideration and hopefully your approval to move forward to the next phase. In order to bring this concept to life, we will again ask the very knowledgeable and capable Mr. Doug Quackenbush, Principal of Quackenbush Architects and Planners to bring reality to this hopeful concept of ours.

Mr. Doug Quackenbush, Principal of Quackenbush Architects and Planners said that their work began as a master plan looking at the entire Earlewood Park as a blank canvas to determine where best to site this new facility. He said that this site was selected, because there is a lot of very healthy infrastructure like utilities, existing parking and other features we could take advantage of. There is an elevated knoll on a sloped site that provides panoramic views of the rest of the park. The existing parking will be reused so that we don't have to spend precious resources on duplicating parking and we can take advantage of existing underground utilities. Another important feature that emerged in the public input meetings is the notion that we have a lot of mature trees on this site and we were strategic in preserving as many trees as we could. There is an existing park building, a play area and a water play area. According to the community the existing play area and water play area are obsolete and haven't been used much. It's a great opportunity to have an expanded footprint for the new facility. We also had a lot of feedback on the programming of this. Initially, this building was conceived as having more private components like offices as well as more public components like meeting space. The more we analyzed and debated this; it became clear that even though there are some good reasons for co-locating these two functions, they really function best as two separate buildings that are joined together via a plaza. There will be a more private administration building and a more public community building, which has a very large meeting space; a smaller meeting space; public restrooms that can be accessed according to City policy; and adjoined via a connector to the administration building, which is much more private in nature. The organization of the administration building is a very simple and efficient plan; we are ringing a core of restrooms in support with offices; and all of the offices have great views with day lighting. Finally, another feature that is nice is the exterior plaza space that is formed between them, which also serves as an entrance as you are approaching the existing drive; forecourt for the existing tennis courts; and a forecourt for the disc golf course, which is a big deal to the community. He presented the three-dimensional models, noting that there is a great deal of topography on the site that also impacts the character of the building. As it evolved, the manifestation of this program became a simple pavilion in the woods; one that is carefully detailed as a background to the nature that it sits in the middle of. We created a stone plinth as a device to help us mediate the grade. The entrance area is the negative space formed between the two buildings. A vital feature is the glass lobby at the entrance of the administration area that will be fully staffed during the day. He noted that from the glass lobby you can monitor the entrances and exits to the community building. One staff person in that spot can monitor the entire complex, which gives you a great deal more flexibility in how you operate the two buildings. It has been noted both in the community meetings and as the intent of your staff to possibly relocate a fountain that is currently in front of the Township Auditorium back to

Earlewood Park, because its original home was at Earlewood Park; we are putting that infrastructure in place. I don't have a clue as to the legalities and negotiations of this. He presented a bird's eye view of the two (2) buildings. The exterior finishes are a combination of glass, sandal and wood and there is a sloped metal roof for the complex.

Councilor Devine stated that the playground equipment is used, because a lot younger families are moving there and using the equipment. Are there plans to place playground equipment anywhere on the site?

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Assistant City Manager for Community and Neighborhood Services said that they have discussed that as staff, but they haven't made a decision; obviously, funding is important; and moving playground equipment doesn't work oftentimes, because removing it from the concrete can cause something to break. As we are able to, we will look at this item and keep it as a feature.

Councilor Devine said that the equipment is getting older and we need more equipment anyway. With this being one of the larger community parks I would think the playground equipment is essential at this location.

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Assistant City Manager for Community and Neighborhood Services agreed.

Councilor Davis asked Mr. Baker to talk about the impact of egress and ingress with added administrative activities versus traditional park programs.

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Assistant City Manager for Community and Neighborhood Services explained that visitation to the park will increase during the day, because of staff and others coming to our location. The athletic events take place in the evenings and staff will be leaving the park then. I don't think it will be a conflict; however there is a concern that people use the park as a drive thru to get to another location and I would anticipate that to be limited due to staff monitoring activities in the park.

Councilor Davis asked if the primary entrance for administration is the existing one.

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Assistant City Manager for Community and Neighborhood Services said yes sir; off of North Main Street.

Mr. Doug Quackenbush, Principal of Quackenbush Architects and Planners added that they conducted anecdotal surveys during the day to make sure the parking usage was not more than perceived. He reported that every time they were there, there would be one or two cars. It seems to be a slam dunk to save those resources and not take up more green space.

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Assistant City Manager for Community and Neighborhood Services said that they received a \$100,000 grant from the State to do outside work such as trails. He added that Mr. Jeff Rainwater led the effort with help of the community to go after the State money and was successful in doing so.

Mr. Damon McDuffie, Parks Planner asked City Council to accept the concept and allow them to move to the next phase of construction drawings.

Upon motion by Ms. Devine, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to accept the conceptual design of the Earlewood Park Administration Building and Community Center and to authorize staff to proceed to the next phase of construction drawings with the caveat that staff reviews the options for playground equipment at the park.

## **CONSIDERATION OF BIDS, AGREEMENTS and CHANGE ORDERS**

8. Council is asked to approve Project # SS7089; Reimbursement for Off-site Sanitary Sewer Construction to Serve Work Place Solutions: CF #308-09, as requested by Utilities and Engineering. Award to Structioneers Diversified, LLC, in the amount of \$18,994.50. *Funding Source: Sewer Improvement Fund - Approved*

Upon motion by Mr. Finlay, seconded by Mr. Cromartie, Council voted unanimously to approve Project # SS7089; Reimbursement for Off-site Sanitary Sewer Construction to Serve Work Place Solutions: CF #308-09, as requested by Utilities and Engineering. Award to Structioneers Diversified, LLC, in the amount of \$18,994.50.

## **MAP AMENDMENTS (REZONINGS) – SECOND READING**

9. 6808 N. Main Street, TMS# 11716-02-02 (p); rezone property from D-1 (Development District) to C-1 (Office and Institutional). – *First reading approval was given on March 25, 2009. – Approved on second reading.*

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to give second reading approval to 6808 N. Main Street, TMS# 11716-02-02 (p); rezone property from D-1 (Development District) to C-1 (Office and Institutional).

## **TEXT AMENDMENTS –SECOND READING**

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Finlay, Council voted unanimously to give second reading approval to **Items 10.** through **15.** with a single motion.

10. Amend §17-55 and §17-258 regarding the regulation of microbreweries.

Ordinance No.: 2009-023 - Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 17, Planning, Development and Zoning, Article III, Zoning, Division I, Generally, Sec. 17-55, Definitions to add Microbrewery; and Division 8, District Descriptions; Use and Dimensional Regulations, Sec. 17-258, Table of permitted uses, Division D, Manufacturing to add SIC 206; and to add Sec. 17-290 Microbrewery– *First reading approval was given on March 25, 2009. – Approved on second reading.*

11. Amend §17-258 the regulation of food crops and aquaponics.

Ordinance No.: 2009-024 - Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 17, Planning, Land Development and Zoning, Article III, Zoning, Division 7, General Regulations, Sec. 17-258 Table of permitted uses, Division A, Agricultural, Forestry and Fishing, 1 Agricultural production - Crops, 18 Horticultural Specialties, to add SIC 182 Food crops grown within an enclosure, SEC 183 Aquaponics and to delete SEC 189 Horticultural specialties not elsewhere classified– *First reading approval was given on March 25, 2009. – Approved on second reading.*

## ORDINANCES – SECOND READING

12. Mid-block pad near 1333 Main Street

Ordinance No.: 2009-021 – Granting a Franchise to Regina Doster and Kylin Doster d/b/a Carolina Dawgs for operation of a stationary sidewalk vending cart within the mid-block pad near 1333 Main Street – **Note:** *This is a renewal– First reading approval was given on March 25, 2009. – Approved on second reading.*

13. Mid-block pad, end of College Street, east side of Sumter Street (USC Horseshoe).

Ordinance No.: 2009-022 – Granting a Franchise to Tiffany Rockholz d/b/a Be Cool for operation of a stationary sidewalk vending cart within the mid-block pad end of College Street, E/S of Sumter Street at the USC Horseshoe – **Note:** *This is a new application – First reading approval was given on March 25, 2009. – Approved on second reading.*

14. Ordinance No.: 2009-004 – Granting an encroachment to Norman V. Clark for installation and maintenance of fencing and columns at 420 Edisto Avenue (*Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner: Recommends approval*) – *First reading approval was given on March 25, 2009. – Approved on second reading.*

15. Ordinance No.: 2009-027 – Granting an encroachment to City Center Partnership for placement and maintenance of two (2) cigarette butt receptacle in front of 1508 Main Street and one (1) cigarette butt receptacles in front of 1649 Main Street (*Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner: Recommends approval*) – *First reading approval was given on March 25, 2009. – Approved on second reading.*

## ORDINANCES – FIRST READING

16. Ordinance No.: 2009-026 – Granting an encroachment to Linda Hiltner for installation and maintenance of a brick wall, brick pavers, two brick columns, two brick steps and landscaping within the right of way area adjacent to 517 Congaree Avenue (*Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner: Recommends approval*) – *Approved on first reading.*

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Dr. Gergel, Council voted unanimously to give first reading approval to Ordinance No.: 2009-026 – Granting an encroachment to Linda Hiltner for installation and maintenance of a brick wall, brick pavers, two brick columns, two brick steps and landscaping within the right of way area adjacent to 517 Congaree Avenue.

17. Ordinance No.: 2009-029 – Granting encroachment to UCI Medical for installation and maintenance of an irrigation system and landscaping at 1818 Henderson Street (*Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner: Recommends approval*) – *Approved on first reading.*

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to give first reading approval to Ordinance No.: 2009-029 – Granting encroachment to UCI Medical for installation and maintenance of an irrigation system and landscaping at 1818 Henderson Street.

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to give first reading approval to **Item 18.** and to approve **Items 19.** and **20.** with a single motion.

18. Ordinance No.: 2009-033 - Granting an easement to South Carolina Electric & Gas Company (“SCE&G”) for the installation of utilities along a portion of City property for the Hydrogen Fueling Station; Richland County TMS #09006-08-03 (portion); CF #310-22A – *Approved on first reading.*

## **RESOLUTIONS**

19. Resolution No.: R-2009-011 - Authorizing consumption of beer and wine at the Urban Tour and Awareness Campaign of Main Street - *Approved*
20. Resolution No.: R-2009-014 - Authorizing consumption of beer and wine at the Chords for Kids/Charity Fundraiser for the Nurturing Center in the Amphitheater Area of Finlay Park - *Approved*

## **APPOINTMENTS**

21. Board of Zoning Appeals

Upon motion by Mr. Davis, seconded by Mr. Rickenmann, Council voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Tony Thompson to the Board of Zoning Appeals for a five (5) year term.

22. Columbia Music Festival Association

Upon motion by Dr. Gergel, seconded by Mayor Coble, Council voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Martha Fowler to the Columbia Music Festival Association for a four (4) year term ending on April 1, 2013.

23. Complete Count Committee / Census 2010

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Alicia Smith, Kambrell Garvin, Cynthia Hardy and Mike Miller to the Complete Count Committee.

24. Richland County Board of Assessment Appeals - *This appointment was deferred until April 15, 2009.*

## **OTHER MATTERS**

25. \*\*Employee Health Care Plan Options – The Honorable E.W. Cromartie, II

Councilor Cromartie explained that several weeks ago the Columbia City Council voted to have a variation of medical premiums for healthcare insurance.

Mayor Coble clarified that this discussion is about active employees and not retirees.

Councilor Cromartie said that it was the bands they passed based upon income variations. We have heard from our employees and there are concerns. They wanted a single based premium medical insurance benefit.

Mayor Coble explained that the idea was to have different levels of contribution and with the feedback we received this did not appear to be fair or reasonable.

Councilor Cromartie further explained that he made the initial motion based on the premise that the healthcare cost would be a substantial portion of the total amount of income for individuals making \$30,000 or less; this would allow those individuals to pay less. We heard from the employees and they felt that it wasn't fair to those that made more money and had worked longer. They felt it would be best if all employees had a single based insurance payment regardless of income.

Upon motion by Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted six (6) to one (1) to rescind the previous vote to base employees' medical insurance contributions on their income. Voting aye were Mr. Cromartie, Mr. Davis, Ms. Devine, Mr. Rickenmann, Dr. Gergel and Mayor Coble. Mr. Finlay voted nay.

Mr. Cromartie made a motion to adopt single standard base medical insurance premiums for all active City of Columbia employees.

Councilor Rickenmann said that we have to vote on retirees and he would like to take the healthcare vote all at once. There are questions about caps and other things that have been brought up and it makes sense to do it all in one swoop. We are scheduled to discuss pre-65 and post-65 retirees during next week and then vote on it on April 15, 2009.

Councilor Cromartie questioned how this motion would affect the April 15, 2009 vote.

Councilor Rickenmann said that there are opportunities there that haven't been discussed.

Councilor Cromartie withdrew a motion to adopt single standard base medical insurance premiums for all City of Columbia employees.

Mayor Coble said that we are in the process of completing information in terms of retiree benefits and how that affects GASB 45.

Mr. Steve Gantt, Interim City Manager said that we are working with the Municipal Association and should have that information by next week.

### **APPEARANCE OF PUBLIC HAVING BUSINESS WITH CITY COUNCIL**

Mr. Marquis Solomon, Local 793 Columbia Firefighters Association appeared before the Council to thank Councilman Rickenmann and Councilman Cromartie for working with them to find a solution to their insurance issues and benefit packages. He thanked Councilman Cromartie for his solution albeit had to be rescinded. He reminded the Council and citizens that they will continue to remain good stewards of the community. We are very understanding of the financial situation we are under, but we would like to work closely with you all to find a solution to the issues and to ensure that the retirees and current employees will receive the benefits they rightfully deserve.

Mr. Michael "Jehu" Reeves, 103 Menlo Drive said that he appreciates Ms. Devine talking about Earlewood Park and things for the kids. He appeared before the Council to announce that he is going to the Supreme Court in the morning to file a suit to get alcohol and tobacco licenses revoked immediately. These things are destroying the black community; our kids are suffering tremendously; no one is there to take care of them; they cannot help them with their homework; they can't raise them; it's causing families to break up; parents are coming home intoxicated; there is violence; they are causing many problems for the police; they are homeless; there are thefts and other crimes across the board; and all of this stuff is caused by alcohol, tobacco and drugs. My intention is to get licenses revoked right away and then we will let the Supreme Court decide later on what the issue is. It's a health issue involved and it's destroying the American people. Your job, with all due respect, is to govern for the people. These things are damaging and I don't understand why these things are allowed to get to the public. I understand the tax base, but there is good money and bad money; we should not fund our programs with money that's coming from sources that are destructive to the community. If you are prepared to tell me that these people do not count then I will understand where you all stand. I would love to see a minister or preacher serve on this board to balance the left side and bring this back to the middle. I am concerned with items on the agenda such as the Chords for Kids Charity event being funded by alcohol; those two do not correlate in my mind.

Mr. Temple Ligon, The Columbia Star invited everyone to attend a lecture on Friday, April 10, 2009 at 6 p.m. at the Columbia Museum of Art.

**OTHER MATTERS**

26.     \*\*City Manager's Retirement

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Mr. Cromarie, Council voted unanimously to formally accept the retirement of Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr. from the Office of City Manager as offered and to authorize Mr. Steve Gantt, the Interim City Manager to employ Mr. Austin as a consultant to assist with the transition of the Interim City Manager for a period of three (3) months from April 1, 2009 through June 30, 2009.

- **Council adjourned the meeting at 7:19 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Salley  
City Clerk