

**CITY OF COLUMBIA
WORK SESSION MINUTES
JUNE 10, 2009 – 9:00AM
CITY HALL - 1737 MAIN STREET
2nd Floor – Conference Room**



The Columbia City Council met for a Work Session on Wednesday, June 10, 2009 in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mayor Robert D. Coble called the meeting to order at 9:14 a.m. The following members of Council were present: The Honorable E.W. Cromartie, II, The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann and The Honorable Belinda F. Gergel. The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine and The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III were absent. Also present were Mr. Steven A. Gantt, Interim City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk.

BUDGET WORKSESSION

A. Skate Park Funding Allocation

Upon motion by Mr. Rickenmann, seconded by Mr. Cromartie, Council voted unanimously to affirm a \$500,000 funding commitment from the 2008 Hospitality Tax Surplus Fund for the reconstruction of the Owens Field Skate Park.

- B. Council is asked to Award a Contract to Construct an Amphitheater at Emily Douglas Park, as requested by the Parks and Recreation Department. Award to the local firm AOS Specialty Contractors, Incorporated in the amount of \$122,855.50. *Funding Source: PK008301-636600 (Reference Memorandum of Agreement by and Between the City of Columbia and Hand Educational Foundation signed 11/19/2007 and Resolution No.: R-2007-063) - Approved*

Upon motion by Dr. Gergel, seconded by Mayor Coble, Council voted unanimously to approve a Contract to Construct an Amphitheater at Emily Douglas Park, as requested by the Parks and Recreation Department. Award to the local firm AOS Specialty Contractors, Incorporated in the amount of \$122,855.50.

C. Fiscal Year 2009 / 2010 General Fund Budget

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, Interim City Manager explained that today's discussion of the fiscal year 2009/2010 General Fund Budget is a continuation from Monday, June 8, 2009. The savings will come from eliminated and/ or vacant positions/functions; monthly payments from Richland School District One for the repayment of the School Resource Officer (SRO) contract in the amount of \$10,000 per month from 2006/2007, 2007/2008 and 2008/2009; and we will be paid \$200,000 for the SRO contract in 2009/2010.

Councilor Davis asked if Mr. Gantt factored in the overall vacancies.

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, Interim City Manager stated that all vacant positions are already frozen and were not included in the departmental budgets. Effective July 1, 2009, we will allow some vacancies to be filled in the Finance Department and other areas upon approval by the Assistant City Manager in charge of that area. Our hope is that during the course of fiscal year 2009/2010 we can move vacancies around within the General Fund in order to have the right number of employees in the right places.

Councilor Rickenmann said that there is no cost savings, because those positions were always used to fill the gaps in the budget.

Councilor Davis said that the sooner we complete the assessment in terms of the essential impact of a position, the sooner we can lighten the budget.

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, Interim City Manager said that if we have the assessment done, it will also take the burden off of the executive staff to make that determination; it will help us guide through that. He added that Mr. Baker is establishing a committee; six (6) to seven (7) responses to the Request for Qualifications have come in; the top three (3) firms will make a presentation to Council; Council will make a selection; and then we will negotiate the price of the assessment. I would anticipate that it will take at least ninety (90) days to complete the assessment.

Mr. Bill Manley asked if Public Safety will have to worry about their vacancies.

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, Interim City Manager said that we are still filling vacancies within Public Safety departments. There is approximately \$900,000 in our Land Acquisition Fund that we can use for a one-time expense in 2009/2010, but it cannot be a reoccurring situation. I don't want to use anymore of it than absolutely necessary.

Councilor Gergel suggested that they review the use of the Hospitality Tax money in the General Fund. She asked Mr. Gaines to remind them of the appropriate use of those funds.

Mr. Ken E. Gaines, City Attorney respectfully requested to provide legal advice to the Council in Executive Session.

Councilor Gergel inquired about the \$838,000 in service recommendations.

Mr. Steven A. Gantt, Interim City Manager said that it affects personnel to include attrition from employee's retiring during the course of the year; as people retire or leave the City, we will evaluate that position to determine if it needs to be filled. If not, there will be some savings and if so, it would be filled at the entry level salary, which would be less than what the retiree was making. It doesn't have an affect on anyone's annual leave or sick leave.

Councilor Rickenmann said that he is confused about the numbers; he thought the shortfall was \$2.3 million, but it's listed at \$1.7 million today.

Mayor Coble said that we started with \$2.3 million; we came up with \$635,000 worth of cuts as follows: \$200,000 from attrition; \$125,000 reduction for the external/internal auditor; \$100,000 for the Community Safety Officers that should be attributed to the Water & Sewer Fund; we will receive \$200,000 for the SRO contract; and we saved \$10,000 from the elimination of the employee picnic. We also asked Mr. Gantt to review all of the other suggestions that totaled \$800,000 in cuts. We still need the cuts in order to get to where we need to be unless you can find it somewhere else.

Councilor Rickenmann outlined a total of \$1.3 million in cuts to include the elimination of positions; reduction in contractual services; reduction of in-kind services; and the use of other funding sources.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Dr. Gergel, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 10:21 a.m. for the receipt of legal advice as it relates to matters covered by attorney-client privilege.

- D. Receipt of legal advice, which 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 and reconvened the meeting at 11:28 a.m.**

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

- E. Fiscal Year 2009 / 2010 General Fund Budget

The members of Council discussed reducing funding allocations for organizations that are funded through the Community Promotions Fund.

There was a consensus of Council to direct staff to update the General Fund Summary based on the reductions and additions discussed today. A Budget Work Session is scheduled for Monday, June 15, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.

- **Council recessed at 12:21 p.m.**
- **Council reconvened at 12:30 p.m.**

- F. Executive Search for a City Manager – Mr. James Mercer, CMC / President of the Mercer Group, Inc.

Mr. James Mercer, CMC / President of the Mercer Group, Inc. briefed the members of Council on his firm's experience with executive searches for City Managers.

There was a consensus of Council to invite Mr. Mercer back on June 17, 2009 to meet with the full Council at 8:00 a.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 1:24 p.m. for the receipt of legal advice as it relates to a matter covered by attorney-client privilege.

- G. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements
 - Mercer Group, Inc.
This item was not discussed in Executive Session. Please refer to Item F.
 - Canal Hydroelectric Plant
This item was not discussed in Executive Session.
- H. Receipt of legal advice, which relates to a matter covered by attorney-client privilege
This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.
- **Council adjourned the meeting at 4:10 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Salley
City Clerk