

**CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MINUTES
NOVEMBER 1, 2011 – 2:00 P.M.
CITY HALL - 1737 MAIN STREET**



The Columbia City Council met for a Work Session on Tuesday, November 1, 2011 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Belinda F. Gergel, The Honorable Leona K. Plough and The Honorable Brian DeQuincey Newman. The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann arrived at 2:39 p.m. Also present were Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Moore, City Clerk.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

**Councilor Devine introduced Mr. Franklin Lee, Esq. as the City's consultant that is working to develop policies to assist small/minority/women owned businesses in the City of Columbia. Along with Mrs. Helen Grant, Esq. they are meeting with City staff to evaluate and tweak current policies. They conducted a focus group with protégés and a luncheon with small/minority/women owned businesses. They will conduct a focus group with mentors, also.

Mr. Franklin Lee, Esq., reported that he has heard a lot from the small business community. I met with staff from the Engineering Department and the Office of Business Opportunities to review the Mentor Protégé Program and the Local Business Preference Policy. There are areas that must be addressed. We will revise our proposed deliverables schedule; prioritize the deliverables; share those with City Council by the end of the year in hopes of a response in January 2012; and draft revised policies for consideration in February 2012. We will also draft policies related to the procurement of goods and services based on the 2006 Disparity Study.

1. Transitions Board of Directors – The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine

Upon a motion made by Mrs. Devine and seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to approve the reappointment of The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann (At-Large Representative) and Mr. Rick Rowe (Coalition of Downtown Neighborhoods Representative) to the Transitions Board of Directors for a second and final one-year term.

2. City Sponsorships – Ms. Teresa Wilson, Assistant City Manager

There was a consensus of Council to defer consideration of the recommendation to sponsor high profile events on an annual basis and to ensure a commitment from senior staff and City Council to attend these events. Staff was asked to provide additional information on the requests received; to consider organizations that may have not submitted requests; and to provide a list of organizations that provide complimentary tables for the City of Columbia. Members of Council will forward additional events to Ms. Teresa Wilson, Assistant City Manager for consideration on November 15, 2011.

3. Economic Development Budget – Ms. Teresa Wilson, Assistant City Manager
 - Economic Development Toolbox

Mr. Jim Gambrell, Director of Economic Development recalled that at the recent City Council retreat they discussed incentives that are currently being offered to entice businesses to locate in Columbia and recommendations for additional tools that could be used to improve our competitive position in the marketplace. He presented six (6) recommendations that will help grow the business community and make it easier for them to increase the number of jobs in the City of Columbia.

- **Mr. Rickenmann joined the meeting at 2:39 p.m.**

There was an in-depth discussion on the recommendations presented by Mr. Gambrell.

- **Mrs. Devine left the meeting at 3:15 p.m.**
 - Special Projects
 - Central SC Alliance Funding Request

Mr. Jim Gambrell, Director of Economic Development presented the Economic Development Special Projects Budget, which is used to partially support our economic development partners. He stated that the amount of the budget has been the same for three (3) years. He provided a summary of each agency's activities and the recommendation for continued support for fiscal year 2011/2012. It was recommended that several agencies be brought under certain departmental budgets during fiscal year 2012/2013 in order for them to be more closely measured and evaluated by the departments they primarily support. These recommendations are based on the City's goals and objectives.

- **Mrs. Devine returned at 3:40 p.m.**

There was an in-depth discussion on the recommendations presented by Mr. Gambrell.

Upon a motion made by Mayor Benjamin and seconded by Dr. Gergel, Council voted six (6) to one (1) to approve the Economic Development Special Projects Budget and Funding as recommended by staff for fiscal year 2011/2012, with the following amendments. Voting aye were Mr. Davis, Mrs. Devine, Mr. Rickenmann, Dr. Gergel, Mr. Newman and Mayor Benjamin. Mrs. Plough voted nay. – Economic Development Special Projects Budget and Funding Memo

- Funding for the Central SC Alliance will be increased from \$72,000 to \$122,000 with \$72,000 from the Economic Development Budget and \$50,000 from the Economic Development Special Projects Account.
- Funding for the River Alliance will be split with \$25,000 from the Economic Development Special Projects Account and \$25,000 from the Hospitality Tax Fund for a total amount of \$50,000.
- Funding for the Black Expo in the total amount of \$50,000 from the Hospitality Tax Fund.
- Funding for the Palmetto Open Source Software Conference (POSSCON) will be split with \$5,000 from the Economic Development Special Projects Account and \$5,000 from the Hospitality Tax Fund for a total amount of \$10,000.
- All agencies funded from the Hospitality Tax Fund will be asked to provide proof of all expenditures for reimbursement.
- Staff is directed to articulate an agreement with each agency based on the deliverables recommended by staff and those suggested by the members of City Council.
- Staff is directed to clarify to all agencies that this is a one-year commitment and that future funding is not guaranteed.

Upon a motion made by Mrs. Plough and seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to conceptually endorse the Economic Development Toolbox as recommended by staff with the following comments from City Council. Mr. Rickenmann was not present for the vote. – Economic Development Toolkit Memo

Recommendation 1 – Support in concept, recognizing that the City’s business practices are currently being reviewed by the Business Friendly Taskforce.

Recommendation 2 – Research and identify other funding sources for an Economic Development Closing Fund in order to close the financial gap on significant projects that will result in major investment and meaningful job creation.

Recommendation 3 – We want to attract retail operations at target locations. Continue to explore the possibility of reducing or rebating all or a portion of business license fees to retailers who locate in targeted areas around the City and not just downtown.

Recommendation 4 – Conduct additional research on the property tax abatement ordinance for manufacturers and consider expanding the base, realizing that we are not a primary location for manufacturers.

Recommendation 5 – We endorse the establishment of an array of marketing and promotional materials. Staff should present a budget and the concepts back to City Council with the understanding that the City will work with the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce Good to Great Foundation.

Recommendation 6 – A Business Facilitator/Ombudsman is necessary and we defer to the City Manager to find an existing Full Time Employee (FTE) that understands real estate in order to work directly with individual business owners and managers as they interface with the City and its rules, regulations and resources.

4. Columbia Empowerment Zone, Inc. (CEZ, Inc.) – The Honorable Leona K. Plough

Councilor Plough presented a letter that was drafted by the Legal Department per Council’s request. The letter is in response to the HUD Compliance Monitoring Review of the Sumter-Columbia Empowerment Zone during April 18-25, 2011. She noted that only \$50,000 needed to be addressed. She spoke with the Chair of the CEZ, Inc. and they discussed the need to not have an Eau Claire Development Corporation and the CEZ, Inc.; there is a lot of overlap. Judge McDuffie is supportive of working through how the two organizations could be folded together. We want to work through a way to have an effective organization. I also shared with her my long-term hope for us to be able to blend all of these Corporations together. It’s a way to reduce the administrative demands on staff and still keep staff in place to work with the various groups across the City. For now, the point I wanted to share with Council is that I’d like to add a section in this letter that would address this.

Mr. Kenneth E. Gaines, City Attorney stated that the letter had already been sent.

Councilor Davis told Mrs. Plough that her recommendation is premature. There is a board. I understand why you are doing this, but my point to you is that we’re not going to punish the Eau Claire Board because of the CEZ, Inc. The CEZ, Inc. has a citywide responsibility. My suggestion is that we table this discussion until later.

Councilor Devine noted that both boards are scheduled to conduct retreats and this issue should be discussed at that time.

Councilor Plough attempted to clarify her statement. She said that the conversation was broadened to deal with all Corporations. The specific issue is the idea of folding CEZ, Inc. into the Eau Claire Development Corporation.

Councilor Davis stated that he doesn’t know if they want to do that. I am not going to have this

discussion here without having a discussion with the people in the area that are impacted. Mayor Benjamin said that a separate discussion that is important to our Community Development staff and relevant to Council is the legal arms length relationship between us and the various entities. We need to understand that if we are going to be held responsible for their actions or shortcomings prospectively then we certainly have the authority to deal with them in some way. I am committed to the continuation of the Eau Claire Development Corporation and reconstituting it. As we move forward, it's important to figure out a way to get our arms around these disparate entities.

Councilor Gergel said that she would like to have a discussion about the future of the Development Corporations. We need to look at the merits of continuing the way we are or making some modifications. I continue to think that are merits to having one Development Corporation, but we've never talked about that. The South Columbia Development Corporation was rolled into the Columbia Development Corporation, prior to my coming on board. We may want to resurrect the South Columbia Development Corporation.

Councilor Plaugh stated that a Development Corporation may need to be formed for District Four.

Councilor Devine suggested that they not focus on the entities, but instead focus on the needs within each District that aren't currently being met and how to meet those needs.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon a motion made by Mayor Benjamin and seconded by Dr. Gergel, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 4:52 p.m. for the discussion of **Items 5** through **9** as presented.

5. Receipt of legal advice which relates to pending, threatened or potential claim – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 6. Receipt of legal advice which relates to a matter covered by attorney-client privilege – *Items were discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 7. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements – *Items were discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 8. Discussion of negotiations incident to the proposed sale of property – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 9. Discussion of employment of employee – *This item was not discussed.*
- **Council adjourned the Executive Session at 6:05 p.m. to convene the regular meeting.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore
City Clerk