

**CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MINUTES
NOVEMBER 15, 2011 – 3:00 P.M.
CITY HALL - 1737 MAIN STREET**



The Columbia City Council met for a Work Session on Tuesday, November 15, 2011 in the City Council Conference Room at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 3:08 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 was absent. Also present were Mr. Steven A. Gantt, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Moore, City Clerk.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

1. Confirmation of Hospitality Tax Funding

Upon a motion made by Ms. Plough and seconded by Mr. Newman, Council voted unanimously to confirm funding previously allocated in the amount of \$7,500 from the Hospitality Tax Fund for the Auntie Karen Foundation to act as the fiscal agent for the Terrence Young Foundation.

2. Winter Shelter Update – Ms. Teresa Wilson, Assistant City Manager and Mr. Jeff Rainwater, Community Liaison

Mr. Jeff Rainwater, Community Liaison for the Community Development Department reported that the Winter Overflow Shelter has been operating for two (2) weeks. We have served between 102-204 individuals nightly. Things are going fairly well. At our last weekly committee meeting, concerns were voiced by Veolia regarding problems at the CMRTA Transit Station, which is the drop-off and pick-up site established for patrons of the Winter Overflow Shelter. He said that off-duty Police Officers work at the Transit Center along with the City Center Partnership's Hospitality Team. He distributed a written weekly report, detailing opening procedures and pros and cons of utilizing alternative sites.

Mr. Larry Livingston, Operations Manager for Veolia Transportation reported that there is limited space at the loading zone for buses to pick up passengers. During our peak time, vans are parked where the buses need to be. There is a lot of cursing and bad behavior within the facility. He suggested that the drop-off/pick-up location be moved from the Transit Center to Blanding Street. He further suggested that the site be moved to the corner of Assembly Street between Taylor and Blanding Streets. This is a bus stop area that is not highly utilized by riders.

There was an in-depth discussion among Mr. Livingston, Mr. Rainwater and City Council.

Mayor Benjamin said that we must consider the significant impact on neighborhoods. I support staying with the CMRTA Transit Center and implementing the proper security. The Transit Center was designed to move people. Let's use the space for that purpose. We've made strides, but we have more to do. It's a transit center; ensure that is properly fortified. Look at traffic patterns, don't drop people off before the buses arrive, better coordinate the drop off/pick up times and get the City Center Partnership's Hospitality Team more involved.

Councilor Gergel asked that we make sure that we are providing security. The CMRTA is providing security in the morning. We should not be letting people out if there is no security down there.

Councilor Newman confirmed that Chief Scott is involved.

Councilor Devine asked that all behavioral issues be addressed.

3. Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority Report – Mr. Michael Townes, Vice President / National Transit Services Leader for Wilbur Smith Associates

Mr. Michael Townes, Vice President / National Transit Services Leader reported that Wilbur Smith Associates conducted a small, but focused engagement to help the City of Columbia in its role as one of the lead agents guiding the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority (CMRTA). In doing so, we reviewed documents that were prepared by other entities and we talked with significant stakeholders in the community. We were asked to evaluate how the CMRTA is perceived, how it's running its services, how its contractor Veolia is performing and how the contract is structured. Most importantly, we were asked to look to see if there were untapped sources of funds that might be made available to address the CMRTA's funding needs over the short-term. We did not find any silver bullet funds. The CMRTA has sought and received special grant funds over the years. The CMRTA is in need of as much local support as it can get; not only to run the operation, but to allow it to access special grant funds as they become necessary. The community recognizes that the economic and social well-being of the community is dependent upon public transit and there is a desire to find a stable, dedicated and reliable source of funds. A contract management structure is being utilized and it is common for a contract manager to provide executive services. He urged City Council to impose upon the Board of Directors to interview and select a candidate among at least two individuals that will provide executive leadership for the CMRTA. He commended the effort to reform the Board and further suggested that the Board seek advice and training since they are all new members. Agencies such as The Eno Transportation Foundation and other professionals will provide training. He suggested that the Board review the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan drafted by the Central Midlands Council of Governments and use it for the basis of devising a detailed transit vision for the Central Midlands Region. This plan should be adopted by the Board and presented to other significant entities within the region in order to gain consensus on a vision for public transportation. The CMRTA's current ridership is almost 100% transit dependent. You need

to reform the CMRTA in order to attract a larger market share and different demographics. You will not diminish the service to those who need it the most, but you will find ways to configure the service so that it is attractive to white collar and commuter markets. You can improve the contract as you re-procure services from Veolia. We recommend that you insist that the CMRTA develop a formal marketing and public information plan (3%-4% of the budget should go toward marketing); establish monthly planning meetings with the CMRTA, CMCOG and Veolia; and increase oversight of paratransit services. Mr. Townes asked the Council to review the operational recommendations and consider implementing the majority of those recommendations. In closing, he said that it is a good operation that needs tweaking. He noted that the funding lapse is prevalent, even if \$3 million in service reductions are implemented. Many opportunities exist by tapping into student ridership. The CMRTA through Veolia must look at innovative techniques to serve this market.

4. Strategic Plan – Mrs. Colleen Bozard, CCBozard Consulting

Mrs. Colleen Bozard, CCBozard Consulting recalled that City Council conducted a Retreat in September. At that Retreat, City Council created the following vision statement: “We are Columbia...together we build a world class city. The following mission statement was created: “The City of Columbia’s mission is to provide leadership and exemplary services to advance the quality of life for everyone.” The Council also drafted potential value statements and overarching goals. Your request was for Department Heads to work with me to develop the strategies and the measurements for how those goals were going to be achieved. Each goal team was asked to review the goal; create measurable outcomes; develop 3-4 overarching citywide strategies that would be used to achieve the goals; and develop objectives.

There was a consensus of Council to express to staff that their work was good. Council will further review the Strategic Plan and submit their ideas to the consultant by Friday, December 2, 2011.

5. GASB45 Actuary Report – Towers Watson

Mr. Michael Jones, Senior Consulting Actuary and Ms. Sharon Cunningham presented the City’s 2011 GASB 45 cost implications related to retiree health benefits. They reviewed the current post-retirement healthcare benefits, alternatives and administration of the defined benefit approach.

There was an in-depth discussion among the consultants and City Council. This report was received as information and for consideration. Staff is seeking direction from City Council in terms of reducing the City’s GASB 45 liability prior to the 2012/2013 budget process.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon a motion made by Ms. Devine and seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 5:44 p.m. for the discussion of **Items 6** through **8**.

6. Receipt of legal advice which relates to pending, threatened or potential claim – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 7. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
 8. Discussion of employment of employee – *This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.*
- **Council adjourned the Work Session at 6:10 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore
City Clerk