

A work session of the Beaufort City Council was held on April 19, 2011 at 5:00 p.m. in the City Hall Planning Conference Room, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Council members Donnie Ann Beer, Mike Sutton, Mike McFee, and City Manager Scott Dadson. Mayor Keyserling and Councilman Gary Fordham were absent.

In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d) as amended, all local media were duly notified of the time, date, place, and agenda of this meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Donnie Beer called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On motion of Councilman McFee, seconded by Councilman Sutton, council voted to move into Executive Session pursuant to Title 30, Chapter 4, Section 70(a) (2) of the South Carolina Code of Laws for receipt of legal advice. The motion was approved unanimously.

Councilman Sutton, seconded by Councilman McFee, made a motion to come out of Executive Session and resume the regular session. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting resumed at 5:18 pm.

Councilwoman Beer explained the work session process to the members of the public present.

DISCUSSION WITH RIVERVIEW BOARD REGARDING RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF DOWNTOWN LOCATION FOR CHARTER SCHOOL

Mr. Dadson reviewed the resolution and explained its action through the council thus far. Councilman Sutton said the absence of any school board members at the work session is “not so significant” because “this is about what we want to see in our city.” He discussed property taxes and how those apply to school funding. He said, “getting the money to do things is on the back of the business community.” He indicated a map of 4% and 6% properties. The 4% properties don’t support the school system in that they don’t pay a county tax bill. The number of those who support school operations throughout the county is exponentially greater than those who don’t. There needs to be an increase in the number of residents to support the businesses, which in turn will support the schools, he said.

Neighborhood schools are part of the comprehensive plan, Councilman Sutton said. Riverview Charter School has an 8-year program and is therefore “an incubator basis for a neighborhood.” Parents choose where to live based on the children they have in school, Councilman Sutton said. The *concept* of the school is what the city council is supporting in the resolution, not necessarily specifically Riverview Charter School itself.

Councilwoman Beer said a constituent had called her, upset because city council is considering this and her child goes to Beaufort Elementary. Councilwoman Beer told the caller that “this is not the only place in the world this school could go.” There’s “so much empty space and that

affects taxes,” she added. The caller said city council didn’t care about scattering the Beaufort Elementary students, but Councilwoman Beer said there are many empty seats in schools in Beaufort County, and there will have to be changes. Councilwoman Beer said the coordination among the Office of Civil Rights, the school board and Riverview Charter School might facilitate the ability for currently zoned Beaufort Elementary students to be given priority enrollment in Riverview Charter School. She reiterated that council is considering the Beaufort Elementary location as *one* of the best possibilities for Riverview Charter School.

Councilman Sutton said city council can do this resolution, but they need “the energy and support of the parents to facilitate the next step in the process.” He asked what council can do next beyond the resolution. The comprehensive plan and neighborhood-by-neighborhood studies position the city uniquely now, and getting Riverview Charter School to stay in the city limits is an important priority. If Beaufort Elementary had stayed an 8-year program, Councilman Sutton feels “it would be a more vibrant place today.” If Beaufort Elementary *became* an 8-year program, the base is not there, so most of the students would have to be bussed in. He called the area “an empty zone.”

Denise Jones said she has a 5-year-old enrolled at Beaufort Elementary. She has concerns similar to those that Councilwoman Beer’s constituent had expressed. She feels this is saying that her child “doesn’t deserve to go to school at Beaufort Elementary.” She is concerned with what’s best for her daughter *and* for the community. She hears that there may be an opportunity for some of the children at Beaufort Elementary to go to Riverview Charter School, but she believed that Riverview Charter School “only had so much room to grow.” She wondered if because her daughter lives in the Northwest Quadrant, she would be among those allowed to go to Riverview Charter School.

Councilman Sutton said he dreams that *all* the children in downtown Beaufort will go to the Beaufort Elementary location. He wants an 8-year program, in a neighborhood, that’s going to stay there. Ms. Jones asked how many spaces there would be for bringing children into the Riverview Charter School program. **Alison Thomas**, Riverview director, said the key word is “coordination.” The charter can be amended, and with the Office of Civil Rights’ support, they have lottery procedures and the agreements are revisited every year. There will be an opportunity to talk about going in and amending those things with the cooperation of the school board and the Office of Civil Rights.

Mr. Dadson said the children in the neighborhood around the school only represent a 1/3 of the capacity that can go in that school. Questioning his figures, **Jennifer Morillo**, school principal at Beaufort Elementary, said that she was “shocked and appalled” to hear that this resolution by the city was being considered. She said Beaufort Elementary has recently moved from below-average to average. They have 600-660 students. No one has asked her *her* plans for Beaufort Elementary. She is concerned that the city is not working with the students and parents already

in Beaufort Elementary on “reinvesting and reinforcing infrastructure,” which is what they say they want to do by locating Riverview at her school.

Councilman McFee said they have neighborhood action teams that have worked in every neighborhood in the city. The communications with the school board and the residents is the greater problem, he thinks. Ms. Morillo asked if any member of city council had visited Beaufort Elementary or Riverview Charter School. No one on city council had, nor, they agreed, do any have a vested interest in either school.

Ms. Morillo said she feels council is positioning the argument as “us against them,” that being the city vs. the school board. She said she had read about the resolution in the previous week’s newspaper and was not aware of the work session until a reporter called her to see if she’d be there. Councilman McFee said this is not about Beaufort Elementary specifically, and wherever Riverview Charter School moves, the city council resolution is that community schools are important. If they could adapt the location so that Riverview Charter School could be in the city, too, that would be excellent. He stated that there are weaknesses on both sides in terms of communication. Ms. Morillo said she “wants due diligence done for Beaufort Elementary.” She feels the existing school could be the community school city council is saying it wants.

Councilman Sutton asked if she can create an 8-year program as the principal and Ms. Morillo replied “absolutely.” Councilman Sutton said his concern is “a depleted neighborhood around that school,” and the city hasn’t focused on building the neighborhood, and neither has Beaufort Elementary. Councilman Sutton said in the Northwest Quadrant, he wants “a vibrant walking community” with students who can come into the school. Ms. Morillo said that Councilman Sutton had not approached her to collaborate with him in order to revive the dying neighborhood, but they seem to have come to Riverview Charter School and suggested that the city partner with them. She said the paper had said this idea was “city-led.”

Councilman Sutton said Riverview Charter School is “moving somewhere” because they’re at capacity and they came to the city. They had considered moving to Habersham. As a city council, they want school in the city. Councilman Sutton said Beaufort Elementary has grown, “but how?” He asked “who shares the school.” Ms. Morillo said there are 496 “community kids,” 120 AMES students, some of whom were originally zoned for her school, and 90 special needs students, most of whom were zoned for Beaufort Elementary. In addition, next year they’ll have a Montessori program with 40 students, many of whom will be zoned for Beaufort Elementary. She emphasized that these are “programs within a school, not schools within a school.” They are all Beaufort Elementary students, and she is their principal. The idea that they are schools within a school is inaccurate. Councilman Sutton said that cleared up a misperception for him. Councilman Sutton said he supports the concept of an 8-year program “or any program that will help us build our city in the downtown core.”

Robert White, chairman of Riverview Charter School, said “there’s no effort to push anyone out of Beaufort Elementary”; they are looking for a place to build their school, which is also a public school. They’re all part of the same school system, just with different charters. Finding a location in the city that’s affordable is a challenge, he said, and the help of city staff was needed to find ideas of where to go. They are passionate about what they want for their school and its students, as Ms. Morillo is about Beaufort Elementary, he said.

Councilman Sutton said the resolution does not say that Beaufort Elementary is THE site. There is “a whole docket of other sites.” Councilman Sutton personally prefers that site, where “there’s a great school now,” and if they can keep that going, they want that school at capacity with parents who want to have their kids in the city limits of Beaufort. There’s been no consideration of city-building in decisions about where schools are built. It’s been solely a financial decision. Ms. Morillo asked what the plan is for parents to move into the neighborhoods’ empty houses, if Riverview Charter School uses Beaufort Elementary for their school. Councilman Sutton said 40% of the lots in the neighborhood are currently without houses on them. She said she wants to know how moving Riverview into Beaufort Elementary would make the city “more vibrant.” Councilman Sutton said great schools will make parents want to live there. The hope is that they will buy, rent, or build in the area.

Ms. Morillo said 40% of the community that Beaufort Elementary is meant to serve is empty. By putting Riverview Charter School at Beaufort Elementary, the hope seems to be that people will move there. She said the city has said this proposal would cause reinvestment, and she doesn’t understand how that will happen. Councilman Sutton said it’s already starting. “The positive PR that goes with a school like Riverview Charter School helps us to build a city,” he said. The comprehensive plan and the neighborhood-by-neighborhood studies are all part of the city’s pro-active approach to determine what Beaufort is and how it can grow and what’s not working; one of those things that’s not working is the dead neighborhood around the school system.

Ms. Morillo said she wanted to know where the data is to support this idea. Councilman Sutton said he is using common sense and what he knows is wrong from his experience, which is that the vibrancy of the city is based on a school system where the parents want to be involved. When they do, they “invite the elected officials to events and engage the community.” They also “don’t stand for the poverty around the schools.” There has been no indication from the school board that they care about Beaufort, Councilman Sutton added, or what this community needs; he hasn’t seen that communication, only that they say repeatedly what the county school system needs.

Councilman Sutton said he believes that a vibrant community can support a school. Ms. Jones said the children in the “dead community” will have to be bussed out because the charter school will move in, and not everyone will be able to go to Riverview Charter School if it’s at Beaufort Elementary. Many people don’t want to live in the area because of the costs, she

added. Councilman Sutton said “the neighborhoods are blighted and there’s no silver bullet.” The land is there, there are services, and there’s a school there, but he sees no return on the investment. The city needs to be rebuilt.

Ms. Jones asked where the money would come from if Ms. Morillo were to run an 8-year school and where the money comes from for Riverview Charter School to run their “exciting school.” Councilman McFee and Councilman Sutton agreed that Beaufort Elementary should be supported, and, Councilman McFee said, “It should have been all along.”

Ms. Thomas said she doesn’t think this is a matter of “this school vs. that school.” They are a “school of choice,” so they’re separate from the others in the district as a charter school. The school board has effectively stated that they want Riverview Charter School downtown, but there are only limited opportunities downtown. She has no interest in “poaching.” Riverview Charter School wasn’t interested in Shell Point when it might have been closed because that’s “not their MO.” She said they bring a lot to the table and went on to detail some of the programs at Riverview Charter School such as a community food bank and the farm-to-table program. These programs are critical to the Riverview Charter School’s educational program, she said. Wherever they locate, they feel strongly that “it will make a strong positive impact on the community.”

Ms. Thomas said they are not going to *not* consider and discuss sensitive opportunities that could help everyone involved; if they find them, they shouldn’t turn away from them. Mr. White said in a perfect world, both schools should be revitalizing the community they’re in.

Ms. Morillo asked what happens to the students who are at Beaufort Elementary currently if Riverview Charter School moves there. Councilwoman Beer said if the neighborhoods continue to flounder, there may not be a Beaufort Elementary at all. With 5000 empty seats in schools throughout the county, the school board may decide to close Beaufort Elementary. There was a plan if Shell Point had closed, Ms. Morillo said. She understands that the city is only doing a resolution. Councilwoman Beer said that because of where the school is located, this is the PREFERRED location. That’s the city’s opinion, Councilwoman Beer said. Ms. Morillo asked what the long-range plan is for the students who are at Beaufort Elementary now. Councilwoman Beer said she doesn’t know what the school board has in mind. The Office of Civil Rights will dictate what can or can’t be done; they may not approve it.

Councilwoman Beer said the Mossy Oaks neighborhood is so large because of the schools there, and the city wants the same thing for the downtown area. She went on to explain the city’s perspective on bringing in residents and property owners to keep the city growing through reinvestment.

Ms. Morillo asked that the city work with the *existing* programs at Beaufort Elementary because she believes “that folks would reinvest based on what’s there now.” She’s surprised no

one has ever considered working with Beaufort Elementary on this effort. Ms. Morillo said she believes in choice schools and choice programs. She said she's "opening the door to collaboration" with the city. She is growing and making Beaufort Elementary the vibrant place the city is saying they want a community school to be. She and the stakeholders in the building have a long-range plan and they'd be glad to share it. Councilman Sutton said learning these things is the reason for work sessions.

If they could have two schools with the same mission, and they "helped the city to wake up and grow itself, that would be great," Councilman Sutton feels. It would be great if *all* the Beaufort County schools were above average, he said. Ms. Morillo said it takes leadership, transparent communication, and a willingness to collaborate. Councilwoman Beer encouraged Ms. Morillo to encourage the parents to get involved. Ms. Morillo said her population of parents is diverse. 73% of her students are on free and reduced lunch; to see the parents of her students, city council would need to come to them. They won't be coming to city council. Councilwoman Beer said she hopes it works out to everyone's benefit. Councilman Sutton said he hopes the school board members who represent Ms. Morillo's district will help her to create an 8-year program there.

DISCUSSION OF THE REVIEW OF THE MARINA CONTRACT

Mr. Dadson said this is yearly conversation with **Rick Griffin**, harbor master, on how things are going with the marina lease and operation agreement. Staff has no specific comments, though they "should probably be more specific about wear and tear issues in the contract." Councilman Sutton said they had a contract and ideas about where they go, and he wanted to have regular conversations of this sort. Little has been done, other than putting up security gates, Councilman Sutton said, and Mr. Griffin agreed. Councilman Sutton asked Mr. Griffin to tell what has been done in terms of infrastructure since the renewal.

Mr. Griffin said they renovated the showers and laundry, put a new roof on the store, and made other repairs and maintenance that cost \$70,000 in 2009; the average spent on maintenance is in the \$30,000 - \$40,000 range, he said. Councilman Sutton said there was a long discussion about a day dock and that didn't happen for many reasons, but at the same time, it's Mr. Griffin's responsibility as part of the lease. There are no issues with it, Mr. Griffin said, that he is aware of. Councilman Sutton asked "the terms of anything to do with the day dock." Mr. Griffin said regulation has stepped up, and there's a new registration form for boats docked there. They're not all registered yet, but they have a good base now.

Mr. Dadson said the city paid for the cost of the gates' as a capital improvement. Councilman Sutton asked what the hold-up was on a mooring field program. There needs to be a physical feasibility study done, Mr. Griffin said. He said he has a permit request and got a partial bid, and it looks like \$10,000 for the permit. The high-end bid was \$5000 to run through the paperwork and forms; there are engineering drawings, charts, etc. that have to be done before a permit can be obtained. Mr. Griffin said he knew the city wanted a mooring field, and cash flow is what

is keeping it from happening. Mr. Griffin said his revenues and the number of boats docked at the Marina are way down. Councilman Sutton considered how much of that is caused by free mooring opportunities. Mr. Griffin said the reason for the mooring field is to control the boats docking at the Marina. Councilman Sutton asked how the city council can help him get a mooring field. Mr. Griffin said funding is all that is stopping one from happening. There is a possible grant opportunity, Mr. Griffin has heard, and he could use collaboration with the city on funding opportunities.

Councilman Sutton said transient boats are a problem, as are sunken boat issues, and local boaters would love a mooring field. Mr. Dadson said the operating costs are to be borne by the operator; Mr. Griffin has to have the ability to pay money back. There is a revenue stream in a mooring field, Councilman Sutton said, and Mr. Griffin agreed. He needs the city's help with finding funding for the permitting process. He said the general fund should be spent to capitalize projects. Mr. Dadson said capitalization "would be based on the pro forma Mr. Griffin would create, based on what he thinks he can get back from it." Mr. Dadson said if they have a mooring field, then boats that are not in it can be controlled. The city understood that with a mooring field, they have more control of the bridge-to-bridge area, Councilman Sutton said. There was some discussion of how the mooring fields would operate and the authority that comes with them.

Chief Matt Clancy said, "If you have a designated mooring field, you control that field." Councilman Sutton said they have many indications that they need a mooring field. The sunken boat and other nuisances also need to be taken care of. There was discussion of the sunken boat problems and how no one would take care of it, though it is "a stone's throw from the day dock." Enough sunken boats, etc., Councilman Sutton said, and at some point they lose control of the whole thing. Mr. Griffin said he feels supported by the police and council. The vigilance he has shown is the minimal level they expect from a harbor master, Councilman Sutton said.

Chief Clancy and Councilman Sutton discussed a problematic "day dock guy" who presents "a chronic issue," Chief Clancy said; the man doesn't respond to the citations he's been given, and it's not addressed as to where the police should go from there, when the usual remedies don't work. Councilman Sutton said that needs to be addressed, even if the man leaves, to make use of the enforcement opportunity. The mooring field is the first step, Councilman Sutton feels. With a court summons, it is up to the judge to do something. Chief Clancy didn't know the amount of the fine. Councilman Sutton said he'd like to be in court, if the man shows up, to see what the judge does. Mr. Dadson said council can change the rules on the day dock, and staff can investigate what the rules are and more clearly define them. Chief Clancy said it's clear that they aren't supposed to be there on the day dock, and Mr. Griffin agreed. Councilman McFee said they "need to create time restrictions with more bite." Mr. Dadson said staff can look at the rules and come up with ideas for better tools for the police, for Mr. Griffin, and for council to consider. Chief Clancy said when a summons is left for someone, it's not warrantable. If it's

handed to someone, and they don't show up in court, it's warrantable. Councilman Sutton said "that's the teeth in the rules."

Mr. Griffin said he's not seeing any economic improvement and went on to cite some examples. Councilman Sutton said an audit process is part of the contract. Mr. Dadson said Mr. Griffin has always turned over paperwork when the city has asked for it. Councilman Sutton said all city business needs to have audits done. Mr. Dadson said staff can look at the permitting paperwork for the mooring field "and see whether it's worth doing." There was further discussion of particulars of the mooring field and how it would be accomplished. Councilman Sutton said he wants "to start the process."

Councilman McFee asked if there's to be a capital reserve account from the lease payments. Mr. Griffin said the money goes to the general fund. Councilman McFee said they should have a reserve fund so it doesn't all go into the general fund. Mr. Dadson said as a practical matter, there isn't revenue coming in to pay for capitalization.

Mr. Griffin described the boating infrastructure grant and its purpose. He or the city would pay the match. US Fish and Wildlife gives millions to the state each year for programs like this one, Mr. Griffin said. Federal money is distributed to the states, but it hasn't been available because, Mr. Griffin said, they can't apply until the entity in DNR managing it in the state applies for the money, which he doesn't want to do.

Mr. Griffin has concerns about the condition of the main dock, built in 1994 with an expansion in 1995. It's "the economy model," he said. The decking was set down in sections to save money, and the nails are almost all out. They have screwed down every board. They're turning the boards over for appearances' sake. "Tired docks" and 280 v electricity are the main complaints he gets. The bolts that hold the pontoons to the wood are all rusted and it's not feasible to replace them. The dock, he said, is nearing the end of its lifespan, probably sooner rather than later and especially if there's a big storm. Councilman Sutton said that's capitalization and that has to be budgeted for. Mr. Griffin said when there's been a bad storm, insurance replaces what's damaged. Councilman McFee said if they do what Mr. Griffin thinks are the most necessary improvements, he needs to tell the city how they can be phased to be able to do them.

Councilman McFee said that Mr. Griffin is to have "a comprehensive marketing plan," and he has to generate activity with marketing in the down economy. He thinks it would be appropriate to maximize on the marketing "so people know we're here." There may be shared opportunities with the Chamber, for example, for marketing.

DISCUSSION REGARDING FY 2011 BUDGET AMENDMENT FOR THE PURCHASE OF POLICE VEHICLES

Mr. Dadson asked if city council found this self-explanatory. It's upgrading and putting the city in a better fiscal position with current dollars, he said. Mr. Dadson said they're "moving money around." The overall number of old Crown Victorias in the fleet has been reduced, Chief Clancy said. Mr. Dadson said city council has charged staff with finding assets to sell; this gets them back in line with the scheduled replacement of capital.

Councilman McFee asked about the end-budgeted carriage tour revenues. **Shirley Hughes** said there was discussion of Lanier taking over the carriage tours; it's "unrealized revenue," and therefore the adjustment. The insurance reimbursement was for "the 2 totaled vehicles." Ms. Hughes said the police department had appropriations in the budget, there is some left over, and they are using other vehicle sales, insurance reimbursement, etc.

Of the vehicles parked on Palmetto Street, Chief Clancy said the officers who will be driving them are in training. Mr. Dadson said this was a responsible way to view their resources. There was further explanation and discussion of the two pick-up trucks in inventory. Mr. Dadson said this was city council's direction – to view capital in this way – and staff supports it.

DISCUSSION OF THE BEAUFORT COUNTY EMS / FIRE CRA STUDY

Chief Sammy Negron described how the group was put together. The fire chiefs met with William Winn and each department let them know their concerns and expectations with their study. For the Beaufort and Town of Port Royal fire departments, many of these came from the ICMA study.

According to Chief Negron and his power point presentation, these were the "items of interest" from the study:

- **Call processing:**
 - Times need improvement - CRA said 2 dispatchers could work on it at the same time and can immediately initiate response.
 - CAD data entry results in inaccurate recorded times –human error
 - The lack of a quality assurance program in the dispatch center – Chief Negron said someone needs to be looking over the dispatchers' shoulders to ensure they're accurate.
 - Additional personnel are needed in the dispatch center – Mr. Winn said they are being trained. There are too few allocated.

- **First responder program:** through all the districts, there are differences and inconsistencies among the fire department, EMS, or in combination. Chief Negron described 9 issues:
 - EMS certification is not consistent among fire departments
 - All fire departments should follow the same protocols
 - Assign Advance Life Support (ALS) fire service personnel to staff reserve ambulances "mainly in Bluffton"

- Call prioritization for first responders
- EMS should provide first responder training
- Training beyond first responder is optional for all fire departments
- One medical direction for fire and EMS
- Fire service should not transport but should respond to medical calls, according to CRA. Councilman Sutton asked why they would say this. Chief Negron said he was disappointed by the report because it failed to address the costs associated and the fact that because they respond to medical calls, there's no urgency on the part of Beaufort County to provide the same level of service Beaufort can provide.
- EMS service is supplemented by fire service.

Councilman Sutton asked if the county did a press release on the CRA report. Chief Negron said yes. Mr. Dadson said the city was asked to participate in the selection of the group. Chief Negron said the report says there's no national standard for the EMS to go by, so it's acceptable to have an 8 minute response time for EMS. Chief Negron said "for us, that's unacceptable," because they have a 5 minute standard (or less). Councilman Sutton asked hypothetically what the impact would be if city council were to tell them not to do any more medical responses; would the county be able to make up for that? Chief Negron said his people can provide a level of service that can be life-saving, and they have a moral duty to continue serving. Mr. Dadson said they don't have a *legal* duty, though. What's being asked is what the county would do if they didn't respond, Mr. Dadson said. The county can cover the city of Beaufort and Town of Port Royal without the municipalities' departments, Chief Negron said, within the 8 minute response time. Councilman Sutton said the taxpayer is paying for EMS twice, to get the difference between a 5-minute and an 8-minute response time.

- Issues not addressed by CRA:
 - Cost of providing emergency medical response by the fire departments not addressed in the study.
 - No additional EMS or quick response vehicle units recommended for Beaufort or the Town of Port Royal
 - Service delivery based on the joint municipal agreement between the city, Town of Port Royal, and Beaufort County.

Councilman Sutton suggested considering the costs and sending the bill to Beaufort County.

- Our recommendations
 - Continue providing first responder service pending implementation of recommendations by CRA
 - Respond only to high priority medical calls
 - Consider billing for first response EMS service – Chief Negron asked to whom they would send a bill. CRA recommended that Beaufort County EMS not bill if

the patient is helped with oxygen, etc., but isn't transported. Mr. Dadson said the county bills insurance and the city cannot.

- Maximize use of new quick response vehicles for all first responder medical calls
- Ensure minimum staffing levels to allow use of the new QRVs at all times or at least during peak times
- Continue to pursue assignment of a Beaufort County EMS QRV to the Town of Port Royal. Chief Negrón feels they shouldn't give up on it just because the report didn't recommend it.

- Consider in the future if the need arises to staff Beaufort County EMS reserve ambulances in Beaufort / Town of Port Royal stations with fire/medics operating under the Beaufort county license.
- Persuade Beaufort County EMS to initiate a fire/medic program and the Beaufort county paramedics would be assigned to city/town fire stations. This doesn't solve the transport problem, Councilman Sutton said, and the county still isn't providing the level of service the citizens deserve.

Mr. Dadson asked if there weren't private transportation providers; the hospital is owned by the county. He asked if doing transport wasn't in their best interest. Chief Negrón agreed that "that's their money maker." Councilman Sutton said "there's no paradigm shift going on." Mr. Dadson said if the issue is transport, the hospital or private transportation would want to figure out how to do proper transport. Chief Negrón said this wasn't examined at all in the CRA study. He felt the study was protective of the way Beaufort County EMS is doing business.

Discussion continued about "how to figure out the commonalities of the money issue between the two," as Mr. Dadson put it. Chief Negrón said the study recommended having one fire chief and one county fire department with EMS but geographically, it can't be done. Mr. Dadson said the political practicality is "nil." Councilman Sutton asked hypothetically what the savings would be to the taxpayer if the city got out of the EMS business. He reiterated his stance that the taxpayers are being double-charged. Redistribution per capita would be the most practical way to do this, Mr. Dadson said.

Chief Negrón said bottom line, they will continue to respond and in a more efficient manner. He also thinks they should continue to hold the county accountable for what the city and town are doing for them in getting there first. They have relied on the city responding first for years, he said.

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL RENTAL INSPECTION PROGRAM

Libby Anderson said this proposal addresses long-term rental of residential properties. This issue has arisen because of the discussion of short-term rentals. Staff is developing an inspection program for rental units; about 50% of the units will likely turn out to be rental, Ms.

Anderson said. They have analyzed code issues, and city council received a handout about these. Many of the violations are in rental properties. Addressing the code violations would increase the quality of rental housing.

This would occur in the time between tenants, as one is moving out and another is moving in. A checklist was provided in the city council's packet. They suggest going citywide and England Enterprises would inspect for \$100 to be charged to owners, and then \$50 for a re-inspection if it were necessary. This would be part of the city code, Ms. Anderson said. Staff would work with the county to get the 6% property owners' list.

A drawback of this is that the rental owners should be paying for a business license; this will start "catching" them if they don't have one, which means more revenue, but there may also be some push-back from those who didn't know they needed a business license. Councilwoman Beer said they could give everyone a grace period to comply. Councilman McFee said the inspection program shouldn't be the way to discover that people aren't paying for their business license, and the additional fee "may be onerous" for the owners.

The business license in the first year would be \$77, Ms. Anderson said. Councilman McFee said they "can't set down a standard"; if the city inspects the unit and something happens, he wondered if the city is liable. Ms. Anderson said they can verify that at the date of the inspection it was one way: a snapshot of how it was when inspected. Councilman McFee said an inspection won't reduce the number of cooking fires.

This is an idea, Ms. Anderson said. Staff can explore further with neighborhood associations. Or if it's too much government intervention, that's fine, too. There's been a lot of discussion of rentals lately and this seemed like a good idea. This brings up the quality of the rental unit, Councilwoman Beer said. Councilman Sutton said the inspection process would be "obviously positive," but he's not comfortable with a company doing it for a fee. 40-50% of the homes in Beaufort are rentals. Like Councilman McFee, he said, the business license component concerns him; he's unclear about how one drives the other and a private company doing the enforcement is problematic. He doesn't feel it's right "to go after an annual fee." No one in Codes can know when one tenant leaves and a new one starts, Councilman Sutton added. Councilwoman Beer said they could make it a yearly inspection. Councilman Sutton said maybe if it were tied into the annual business license renewal it could work. If half the properties are rentals, they "need some eyes on the houses," Councilman Sutton said. Mr. Dadson and Ms. Anderson said city council can decide if they want staff to look at this further or not.

Ms. Anderson said commercial rentals do not have an annual inspection, just the initial smoke and fire alarm inspection. Councilman McFee said he knows there are issues in this area, as a real estate professional. He thinks they can get good feedback from the neighborhood associations. Councilman McFee feels the business licenses are more important than inspections. "There's some subjectivity to all of this," he said. Councilman Sutton agreed that

inspection has to be tied to the business licenses and therefore annual. Councilman Sutton said “it would need to be city-wide, or it’s not going to happen.” Mr. Dadson recommended city council ask their constituents if they think there’s a problem. Councilman McFee said he talked to 2 property management companies, and they do a better job of inspecting their properties when renters leave than the city would. He said others he knows would fail miserably, though, in an inspection.

Mr. Dadson said business licensing, codes, and zoning are interconnected, which is why they’re all housed together in City Hall. He would like “more integration for the customer and for the city.” Ms. Anderson said people are beginning to understand that Beaufort is a rental community; they may not know the extent of it, but they know it’s out there. A discussion ensued about abandoned properties that have been defaulted on. Mr. Dadson said it needs to get in the code enforcement “hopper” so that something will happen.

DISCUSSION REGARDING COUNTY PARTICIPATION IN FUNDING TRANSPORTATION MODEL

Ms. Anderson said the county is asking local governments for \$2000 each to fund a regional transportation model. This has been discussed since 2008 and will use the current census data. This is just one tool, Ms. Anderson said and will help them make the decisions that need to be made. Staff recommends doing it, Mr. Dadson said. Ms. Anderson said this gives the city “a seat at the table.”

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
IVETTE BURGESS, CITY CLERK