

A regular meeting of the Beaufort City Council was held on May 25, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, 1901 Boundary Street. In attendance were Mayor Billy Keyserling, Council members Donnie Ann Beer, Gary B. Fordham, Mike Sutton, Mike McFee, and City Manager Scott Dadson. 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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On motion by Councilman Sutton, seconded by Councilman McFee, 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 and discussion of appointments to a public body. The motion was approved unanimously.

Councilman Sutton, seconded by Councilman McFee, made a motion to come out of Executive Session and begin the regular council meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

CALL TO ORDER

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The invocation was given by Reverend Wyatt Minton III of Wesley United Methodist Church. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Mayor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Keyserling recognized former mayor **David Taub** and asked him to address council. Mr. Taub read his letter in which he resigned from his role as Beaufort representative on the board of directors of BJWSA because he has been made a magistrate. He went on to describe achievements in various BJWSA projects.

Carlotta Ungaro, representing the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce, discussed the possibility of F35B planes at MCAS and asked council's financial support of \$10,000 to go toward reopening the \$70,000 contract with the Rhoads Group, which assisted with lobbying and public relations in the past. The Military Enhancement Committee of the Chamber of Commerce would like to demonstrate to Washington that Beaufort is the best location for two F35B training squadrons and three operational squadrons. She said recent developments have made this cooperative effort with the county and others more important.

Eddie Rodgers said she has been having trouble with yard waste pick-up. She described the details of her experience and read from the Waste Pro pamphlet. She said if the policy on pick-up has changed, the city should let the citizens know.

MINUTES

The minutes of the council work session on May 11, 2010 were presented to council for review. Ms. Hughes noted that on page five, a sentence should read "Some of the leftover bond money can be used for repairs/replacement of the fire stations," not for work on drainage projects, as was recorded. On motion by Councilwoman Beer, second by Councilman Fordham, council voted unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

The minutes of the regular council meeting on May 11, 2010 were presented to council for review. Councilman McFee said that on page 3 of the minutes, the reference should be to a "physician's" office, not a "pediatrician's" office. On motion by Councilwoman Beer, second by Councilman Fordham, council voted unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

The minutes of the council work session on May 18, 2010 were presented to council for review. On motion by Councilwoman Beer, second by Councilman Fordham, council voted 4-0 to approve the minutes with Councilman Sutton abstaining because he was not present at the meeting.

ORDINANCE TO ADOPT FY 2011 OPERATING BUDGET

Councilwoman Beer, second by Councilman Fordham, made a motion to adopt the ordinance on second reading. Mayor Keyserling said the millage will probably have to be raised, so he asked staff if it were possible legally to borrow that money from the fund balance to make up the difference rather than raising the millage. Ms. Hughes and Mr. Dadson said they'd have to ask bond counsel. Councilman Sutton asked, in reference to the percentage the city holds of the fund balance, how much funding went into each category in excess of requirement. Ms. Hughes said nothing was added to fund balance, but they're still above. Councilman Sutton asked how much "the 4 months above" is. Mr. Dadson suggested giving more time to see what happens with delinquencies and not adopt the debt mill now. Mayor Keyserling clarified what he'd asked and said he didn't want to "lock himself in." Mr. Dadson said he wouldn't be doing that. He reiterated that they should ask bond counsel, and give themselves breathing room at this time. Mayor Keyserling said he'd like to avoid raising the debt mill because of delinquencies if they need to. Ms. Hughes said they need to pass the budget, and on the tax levy, council can pass now and then later staff will come back and recommend what council should do in time for it to go on the bill in the fall.

Mayor Keyserling said he can see a reason to pass the budget. He asked if there was urgency to passing the tax levy. Mr. Dadson said he would recommend passing the O&M levy, and if they wanted to hold on the debt and see how it goes, that would be fine. Councilwoman Beer said she has serious concerns about raising the millage unnecessarily, given the economy. She's uncomfortable with taking it out of the operating money, but she suggested taking it one day at a time. The motion passed unanimously.

ORDINANCE TO SET THE TAX LEVY FOR THE FY 2011 OPERATING BUDGET

Councilwoman Beer, second by Councilman Fordham, made a motion to adopt the ordinance on second reading. Mr. Dadson suggested amending the motion to reflect removing the debt millage. Councilman McFee amended the motion to approval on second reading with the removal of Item 2, the debt mill. Councilwoman Beer seconded the motion to amend. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSIDERATION OF AMENDING THE 1997 UTILITY TREE PRUNING AGREEMENT BETWEEN CITY OF BEAUFORT AND SCE&G

Councilwoman Beer, second by Councilman McFee, made a motion to consider amendment. Mayor Keyserling offered background on the last meeting's approval of the Tree Board's suggestions for amendment. Mr. Harvey has met with SCE&G and the city asked him to look at the city's rights. Mr. Harvey said the city is restricted by the PSC on what SCE&G can do re: power lines and limbs for the safety of its employees. There is also a question of the city's rights to deal with trees on private property. SCE&G has easement agreements re: trees on private property, and they have the right to trim trees on private land within their standards. Mr. Harvey said there is ongoing work on an agreement, some aspects need to be addressed.

Mayor Keyserling said that there are short- and long-term solutions. Councilman Sutton said there need to be amendments to the Tree Board recommendation to reflect the distance and frequency of trimming that were agreed to at the last meeting. He suggested a motion to amend the Tree Board agreement to reflect those two points. Mayor Keyserling suggested saying that council will direct the city attorney to complete drafting the agreement. Mr. Dadson said he recommends getting Councilwoman Beer's original motion off the table. Councilwoman Beer withdrew her motion.

Councilman Sutton made a motion to rescind acceptance of the previous recommendation and accept instead the amended recommendation with corrections by SCE&G and to direct that the short-term pruning be done in accordance with that agreement. Councilwoman Beer seconded. Councilman Sutton clarified the reasoning behind his motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Councilman Sutton made a motion, second by Councilwoman Beer, to direct the city attorney to take the Tree Board recommendations and incorporate them into the 1997 plan, then bring it back to council for approval. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Keyserling said there's been discussion about mobilizing the Tree Board to lead neighborhood associations and other interested parties to make sure this doesn't happen again by tailoring some strategies and using available tools for the long-term. Councilman Fordham pointed out that this is a good short-term solution. Councilwoman Beer said SCE&G has worked with the city as much as possible, and she appreciates it.

LETTER OF REQUESTS FOR CONSIDERATION AND PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ANNUAL PARADE FROM THE WATER FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

Councilwoman Beer, second by Councilman Fordham, made a motion to consider the letter of requests and the parade for the festival, slated for July 16 thru July 25, 2010. The parade is July 24. Mr. Dadson said what council has to approve in the letter was the parade, exclusive use of the park, etc. and there is nothing in that letter that they haven't approved in the past. The motion passed unanimously.

REQUEST FOR EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE DOWNTOWN MARINA BOAT RAMP

Councilwoman Beer, second by Councilman Fordham, made a motion to consider **Pete Palmer's** request to use the marina boat ramp for a YMCA learn-to-swim program from Port Royal Landing to Beaufort Marina on June 19, 2010. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF BUS TOURS IN THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Councilwoman Beer, second by Councilman Fordham, made a motion to approve the tour. **Evelene Stevenson**, from Spirit of Old Beaufort, said she would like to do downtown tours during the summer for seniors unable to walk and who don't want to go on a carriage. She has two 11-passenger vans and knows and has met the requirements in the tour coordinator books. Ms. Stevenson said she might eventually get a handicap-accessible 14-passenger bus to replace one of them. Mr. Dadson said there's no staff recommendation at this time.

DeWitt Helm, 406 New Street, said the Point Association just learned of the request today and asked for more time to study it before action is taken; they don't know if they are opposed to or in favor of it. He said the Point is already busy with many tours already taking place among the 120 families who live there. Mayor Keyserling said there's an ordinance in place, so this is not something new, just someone applying for a slot that has existed for 6 or more years. There's an approved position for 2 slots. Councilman Sutton said there are none running at this time, an assertion verified by Officer Carter, the tour coordinator. Councilman Sutton said the license isn't valid after a certain time, and when Mr. Gay stopped running his bus, the other spot came open. Councilwoman Beer said the number of people on tours likely won't change; they'll be people who would have been walking on tours. She agreed with Mayor Keyserling that it was already on the books.

David Easton from the Northwest Quadrant asked if there were restrictions on the bus size and Councilwoman Beer said yes, it's 25 feet. Councilman McFee asked Ms. Stevenson about her plan for tour times, etc. Ms. Stevenson said the times in the tour coordinator book are slotted like the carriages. She would run from 9:30 – 5:30 approximately. Councilman McFee said she has basically 8 hourly slots, so she would plan to do 4 tours per day. Ms. Stevenson said she might not go that much, but she definitely wouldn't exceed the regulations of 4 per day. She expects to do two. Councilman Sutton said he would expect another bus operator in the other slot soon. The buses take somewhat different routes than the buggies. Councilman Sutton asked that word be passed to the Point Association about what was discussed at council: that there has been a lack of bus operators and Ms. Stevenson is filling an approved slot.

Councilman Sutton said there are other steps in the process Ms. Stevenson still needs to do to apply for business licensing. The motion passed unanimously.

APPOINTMENTS TO VARIOUS BOARDS/COMMISSIONS

Mayor Keyserling informed the public that there are a number of openings. A press release will be issued about positions available on the Zoning Board of Appeals, Redevelopment Commission, and Planning Commission.

Councilman Sutton made a motion, second by Councilwoman Beer, to appoint David Lott to replace Mr. Taub as the Beaufort representative to the BJWSA board. Mayor Keyserling described Mr. Lott's skills and qualifications. The motion passed unanimously.

The Historic Review Board vacancy has been open for several months. Two more positions will be opening up in the summer. Councilman Sutton made a motion, second by Councilwoman Beer, to appoint Michael Rainey to represent the Historic Beaufort Foundation on the Historic Review Board. The motion passed unanimously.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Keyserling said after innumerable years, the Public Facilities committee of county council recommended to county council the re-designation of Highway 280/802 as Highway 21. Mayor Keyserling said the goal is to draw more people to Beaufort.

Mayor Keyserling said he met with Colonel Snyder, who is eager for participation in the review of the environmental impact statement on the strike fighter. Though the chamber is spearheading the effort, Mayor Keyserling advised that citizens and public officials take a close, look at the process.

REPORTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Councilwoman Beer asked who on council would be in the Memorial Day parade on May 31 at 10 am. Mayor Keyserling said he'd attend.

Councilman Sutton said he'd reviewed the city's health care benefits and asked staff to give more information on the changes in the costs of insurance rates for city employees. He asked what the rates meant to retired city employees. He's alarmed that the cost increase will be almost 150% while active employees' costs would rise 23%. He wants to look at other options and a future discussion on the rise in costs. Mayor Keyserling said he agrees with Councilman Sutton. He knows the city has a contract with the insurer. He said he understands that younger retirees have been segregated into a separate pool and because their claims are greater in number and higher than active employees, the current employees have been subsidizing the cost of retirees' insurance. He said "that's not fair, either." Possibly other systems could be fairer. This insurance has a wellness component and certain discounts as well as penalties for

those who abuse themselves. It's more tailor-made and advanced than what is offered by others.

Councilman Sutton said they need more information because he didn't know about this disparity in costs. Those who have served the city long-term are undergoing a big change, and the trade-off needs to be examined. Councilwoman Beer enumerated some of the things other programs don't pay for, many of which are for women. She agreed that the discussion should happen. Councilman McFee said the decision to separate was made by the Municipal Association, not the city. Councilwoman Beer said she can't get her head around the figures. Councilman Sutton said those who use city health insurance and plan to retire should know what they are facing after retirement. Mayor Keyserling asked Ms. Hughes if there was any option, other than subsidizing, for relief or advocacy. Ms. Hughes said if the rate hadn't gone up for that group, they would see an additional 8% increase on the active employees, putting those employees at a 35% increase in costs. Councilman Sutton said he doesn't feel that this is the right way to get a handle on costs. Ms. Hughes said what they're seeing is what is happening nationally. Mr. Dadson agreed and said the majority of insurers are pricing in future costs. Mr. Dadson said he'd be happy to provide more data.

Councilman Sutton he'd like recommendations to come back to council about Ms. Ungaro's request for funding for lobbying for the planes.

Councilman Sutton said he was absent from the meeting about the parks and would like information on park fees. Ms. Hughes said June 1, the policy about how it will be handled is coming to council.

Councilman Sutton said he's been invited to work in the Gulf as a project manager for the oil spill. He will continue to attend council meetings.

Councilman McFee said the Beaufort 300 / Tricentennial Commission logo has been selected and will be released in a week and a half. The group is moving forward with programming.

Councilwoman Beer asked Mack Cook how much trash was picked up recently in Mossy Oaks. He responded with the figure of 36 tons. Councilwoman Beer added that there's another section of Mossy Oaks to be cleaned up.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before City Council, Councilwoman Beer made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Fordham. The motion was approved unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
IVETTE BURGESS, CITY CLERK