



**MINUTES**  
**OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING**  
**With Representative from the**  
**South Carolina Department of Corrections**  
**October 7, 2008**

**MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Mr. George Blanchard District I, Chairman  
Mr. Thomas S. Crumpton, Jr., District II  
Mr. Mario Suarez, District III  
Mr. Marion E. Lyles, District IV  
Mr. H. Frank Ables, Jr., District V

Oconee County Council met for a workshop meeting on Tuesday, October 7, 2008 at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members [except Mr. Ables & Mr. Suarez], County Administrator Dale K. Surrett, Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to Council & Mr. Bradley A. Norton, County Attorney present.

**Press:**

Members of the press notified (via mail): Keowee Courier, Westminster News, Daily Journal, Anderson Independent, WGOG Radio, WYFF TV, WLOS TV WSPA TV & WSNW Radio.

Member of the press present: Ray Chandler–Anderson Independent & Brett McLaughlin & Carlos Galarza-Daily Journal.

**Discussion South Carolina Department of Corrections [SCDOC] representative regarding regulations and facility guidelines for the Oconee County Jail:**

Chairman Blanchard notified all present at 6:10 p.m. that Mr. Blake Taylor, SCDOC, Office of Compliance, Standards & Inspection, had contacted the Administrator that he was having car trouble and would appear before Council at approximately 6:30 p.m.

Chairman Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and welcomed Mr. Blake Taylor and thanked him for attending this workshop.

Mr. Taylor discussed several factors that have led to overcrowding in our jail to include an increase in the number of female and sentenced inmates. He noted that our female numbers are small but growing more rapidly than any other segment of our inmate population and that Oconee is significantly overcrowded with almost double what we have space to provide for. Mr. Taylor noted that Oconee has faced overcrowding for several years.

Mr. Taylor stated that Oconee County has two options; 1] add on to the existing facility, or 2] build a new jail. Mr. Blanchard noted that Council has reviewed funding options for the jail during the last two budget cycles. Both options are expensive. In addition, an appropriate way to fund any building project needs to be identified. Mr. Blanchard put forth the option of building an annex to our existing facility which would focus on one segment of our inmate population. An annex would be potentially less expensive and would address overcrowding issues faster. Discussion followed.

Mr. Blanchard recognized Major Steve Pruitt and Captain Terry Wilson with the Sheriff's Department. He questioned Major Pruitt regarding the effectiveness and participation in the county's work release program and home detention program. Major Pruitt noted that on average we have 10 inmates participating in the work release program. He noted that these inmates leave the facility after breakfast and return for dinner and to sleep. The County is still responsible to provide sleeping space for these individuals. Major Pruitt stated that the home detention program has very few enrolled due to the operating & equipment costs for the program being incurred by the inmate.

Mr. Crumpton asked Mr. Taylor to provide specific minimum specifications for our jail. Mr. Taylor stated that his office would be happy to work with the County to identify key factors such as; square foot requirements based on population growth estimates, security measures, fire code issues, ADA compliance issues, segregation of female inmates, etc. Mr. Taylor suggested that the County work with a consultant and architect to develop alternatives based on standards for both options discussed. He stated that there are pros and cons to keeping the jail and building an annex. Operation costs need to also be identified in both plans as conversions of older facilities sometimes have higher operation costs over the long term.

Mr. Surrent noted that Council during the previous budget cycle did allocate funds for consulting to begin work on this issue. Mr. Blanchard also questioned if a regional approach had been successful for other counties in similar situations. Mr. Taylor stated that there is varied success with this approach.

Mr. Blanchard thanked Mr. Taylor for attending the workshop and the information that he provided for councils consideration.

**Adjourn:**

Mr. Blanchard adjourned the workshop at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Elizabeth G. Hulse  
Clerk to Council