



MINUTES
OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING
Regular Meeting
March 17, 2009

MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr. Reg Dexter, District V, Council Chairman
Mr. Joel Thrift, District IV, Vice Chairman
Mr. Mario Suarez, District III, Chairman Pro Tem
Mr. George Blanchard District I
Mr. Wayne McCall, District II

Oconee County Council met on Tuesday, March 17, 2009 at 7:00 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members, County Administrator Dale K. Surrent, Thomas L. Martin County Attorney and Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to Council present.

Press:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [www.oconeese.com/council]. In addition it was made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Member of the press present: Ray Chandler – Anderson Independent, Chad Dorsett – WSNW Radio & Carlos Galarza - Daily Journal.

Call to Order:

Mr. Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Mr. Dexter also noted that the Executive Session scheduled for the end of the meeting is cancelled.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Mr. Suarez led the pledge of allegiance to the United States Flag.

Minutes:

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 that the minutes from the March 3, 2009 regular meeting be adopted as printed.

Public Comment Session:

Mr. Barry Nichols addressed Council regarding his concerns about agenda items #8-1 and #10-2.

Ms. Susie Cornelius addressed Council regarding agenda item #10-4. Ms. Cornelius provided Council with the Seneca Zoning Map showing the Utica area. Ms. Cornelius states that there is a problem with the recent SWAG Agreement that was signed extending over \$600,000 in payments to 2042. Ms. Cornelius states that with this new agreement, the County doesn't have a vote or voice as to how that money is spent. Ms. Cornelius urges the Council to take time to get a full understanding of the agreement and their options.

Mr. Tony Tecson stated that he wished to address Council in reference to Item #8-3. His main topic however centered on concerns from Lake Yonah residents.

Extended Public Comment Session:

No citizens spoke at this meeting.

Consideration of the following Ordinances:

Ordinance 2009-04:

Mr. Thrift opens discussion by asking if the trucks have been inspected and ready to go. Mr. Surret replied that trucks are replaced on a set schedule [copy provided and filed with these minutes] Mr. Thrift asks the cost of fully equipping the truck. Mr. Surret states from \$50K-\$75K. Mr. Surret also states that the county is going to try and utilize the bid process used with the Fairplay and Mountain Rest fire truck purchases.

Mr. Dexter questioned if using funds on hand would ultimately save the tax payers money versus doing a bond. Mr. McCall stated his concern about borrowing money and asked that Council look at the budget first before committing to this purchase. Mr. Blanchard stated that maintaining a minimum fund balance is important. Discussion followed.

Mr. Blanchard made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 5 – 0 to approve Ordinance **2009-04** “AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF AN EQUIPMENT LEASE-PURCHASE AGREEMENT IN THE AMOUNT OF NOT EXCEEDING \$800,000 TO DEFRAY THE COST OF ACQUIRING THREE FIRE TRUCKS; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING THERETO” on second reading.

Consideration of the following Resolutions:

Resolution #2009-04:

Mr. Blanchard made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to approve on first and final reading **Resolution #2009-04** “A RESOLUTION CELEBRATING NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS WEEK, APRIL 12-18, 2009”.

Resolution #2009-05:

Mr. Thrift opened with comments that the “I-3” highway would not be of any benefit to Oconee County.

Council requested that the Administrator and/or the Clerk provide copies of this approved Resolution to the following groups: Chattooga Conservancy, South Carolina Department of Transportation, SC Delegation, Federal Highway Commission and the South Carolina Highway Commission.

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 5 – 0 to approve on first and final reading **Resolution #2009-05** “A RESOLUTION OPPOSING INTERSTATE 3 IN OCONEE COUNTY”.

Resolution #2009-06:

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, approved 5 – 0 to approve on first and final reading **Resolution #2009-06** “RELATING TO THE DECLARATION OF INTENT BY OCONEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, TO REIMBURSE CERTAIN EXPENDITURES PRIOR TO THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY BY THE COUNTY OF AN EQUIPMENT LEASE PURCHASE AGREEMENT”.

Items for Consideration by Council:

ATAX / \$7,453.45 / Devils Fork State Park / Lantern Holders for Campsites

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, approved 5 – 0 to approve on an ATAX grant request of \$7,453.45 to the Devil’s Fork State Park for lantern holders for campsites.

ATAX / \$10,000 / Greater Oconee Chamber of Commerce / Tourism Video

Mr. Thrift questioned if the video has been created yet. Mr. Surret replied no; stating that the video is intended to be made as widely available as soon as possible.

Discussion followed regarding ATAX funds, the current balance and how often payments are received.

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, approved 5 – 0 for the approval of the ATAX grant for \$10,000 to the Greater Oconee Chamber of Commerce to assist with the production of an Oconee County tourism video.

Rock Quarry / \$116,923 / 2002 Terex 40 Ton Rigid Frame Back-Dump Haul Truck & Request for Travel

Mr. Rick Martin, Rock Quarry Plant Manager addressed Council regarding his request for a new dump truck. He showed a short video of a Back-Dump Haul Truck in action providing a visual of its physical characteristics and capabilities.

Mr. Blanchard asks how many miles does the truck have. Mr. Martin replied over 10,000 hours. Mr. Blanchard compliments Mr. Martin on how well the Agenda Item Summary was prepared. Mr. Martin stated that if during the inspection that a decision is made to not take the truck that the county will be responsible for his travel to Texas for the inspection.

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, approved 5 – 0 to award the

purchase in the amount of \$116,923.00 for one used 2002 Terex 40 ton rigid frame back-dump haul truck model TR-40 from Interstate Equipment Company, Columbia, SC. In addition, Council approved travel to Texas for inspection with the understanding that if the truck is not purchased that \$3,000 will be spent to reimburse Interstate for Mr. Martin's travel expenses.

City of Seneca / Request that the County be the Applicant for the Utica Mill Village Sewer Community Development Block Grant [CDBG] Funded Project / No Cost to County

Mr. Bob Faires, Director of Utilities-Seneca Light and Water addressed Council giving an overview of what they have been doing pertaining to the improvement of water and sewer in the Utica Mill Village area in Seneca. Mr. Faires informs Council that HUD has changed the rules on how to apply for CDBG funds and as a result of the rule change; the City of Seneca cannot apply for funds to continue its improvement in the Utica area. The City of Seneca is requesting that Oconee County be the applicant. Mr. Faires states that the grant will allow them to take over 3 more streets in Utica covering half of the entire area. Mr. Blanchard asks how long will it take to complete the entire area. Mr. Faires replies approximately 5 years.

Mr. Dexter address Mr. Martin asking him to clarify memorandum of understanding. Mr. Martin stated that the County would act as the recipient of the grant and pass the money onto the City; therefore, a formal agreement would need to be executed. Mr. Faires addresses Council stating that should the project be funded, Oconee County would be the sub-recipient. Discussion follows.

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 - 0 that Oconee County be the applicant for the proposed CDBG project for the Utica Mill Village Sewer Community Development Block Grant.

Sheriff's Office / Request to Apply for the FY 2009 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance [EBMJA] Grant / No Local Match Required

Mr. Surrett wanted Council to have some background information on Mr. Edward Byrne, 22 year old New York police officer killed in the line of duty in order to understand where this Grant originated and the circumstances of this officer's death.

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, approved 5 – 0 to allow the Oconee County Sheriff's office to apply for the FY 2009 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant.

Point of Order:

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCall, approved 5 – 0 to amend the agenda to include the Request from the Sheriff's Department for approval to apply for the FY 09 JAG program.

Request to Apply for FY 09 JAG Program:

Mr. Dexter explained that the reason for inclusion on this agenda was that the information related to this grant was received after the council deadline for this meeting's agenda and action is required prior to the next Council meeting in April.

Mr. Surrett informed Council that this is only a request to apply for the grant with no guarantee that they will receive it. Mr. Surrett states that funds could also be used to purchase equipment, etc.

Mr. Blanchard states that he sees a need for the request because of the problems with Methamphetamines in Oconee County. Discussion followed.

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCall, approved 5 – 0 to approve the request to apply for the FY 09 JAG Program.

Council Committee Reports:

Budget, Finance & Administration / Mr. Blanchard

Mr. Blanchard announced the Budget Workshop Schedule to include two new meeting dates / times and reminded those present of the first meeting with Tri County Technical College to be held on Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 12:00 noon at the Hamilton Career Center.

Commission / Board Reports to Council:

No Reports were made to Council at this meeting.

Board & Commission Appointments

Library Board

No appointments or reappointments were made at this meeting for this board.

Emergency Services Commission

District IV:

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, approved 5 – 0 to appoint Mr. Nick Williams to the District IV seat on the Emergency Services Commission.

District V:

Mr. Dexter made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to appoint Mr. Ronnie A. Williams to the District V seat on the Emergency Services Commission.

Mr. Blanchard questioned if an existing Chief can serve on this commission – his concern centered on dual office. Mr. Surrett stated he would follow-up and report back on this issue. It was agreed to not notify Mr. Williams until this question is resolved.

Planning Commission

District V:

Mr. Dexter made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCall, approved 5 – 0 to re-appoint Mr. Ryan Honea to the District V seat on the Planning Commission.

Administrator's Report:

Request for Budget priorities/ Goals for FY 2009-2010:

Mr. Surrett addressed Council asking for their input regarding the budget. Mr. Blanchard addressed Council urging them to give Mr. Surrett some feedback/data regarding the FY 2009-2010 budget.

Old Business:

Follow-up to Mr. Thrift's request for Council Discussion re: Roles & Responsibilities of 5 Council Committees & Proposed Council Committee Meeting Schedule:

Mr. Dexter noted that each Council member received a listing prepared by the Clerk outlining areas of responsibility for each council committee and a proposed committee meeting schedule. No action was taken on this matter at this meeting.

New Business:

Council Meeting Change

Discussion occurred regarding Mr. Dexter and Mr. Thrift's absence from next Council meeting. Mr. Dexter announced the following changes for the Council meeting schedule:

- April 7, 2009 – Cancelled
- April, 14, 2009 – 7:00 p.m. - Re-Scheduled from April 7th
 - ~ At this meeting second reading of Ordinance #2009-03 is scheduled
- April 21, 2009 – 5:00 p.m. – Public Hearing for Ordinance 2009-03
- April 21, 2009 – 7:00 p.m. - Previously Scheduled
- May 5, 2009 – 7:00 p.m. – 3rd and Final Reading of Ordinance #2009-03

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCall, approved 5 – 0 to approve the meeting schedule as noted above.

Executive Session:

As noted above, Executive Session is cancelled at this meeting.

Adjourn:

Mr. Blanchard made a motion at 8:39 p.m., seconded by Mr. Suarez that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted:

Stacy Crosby
Sr. Administrative Assistant