



MINUTES
OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING
Special Meeting
December 21, 2010

MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

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

Oconee County Council met on Tuesday, December 21, 2010 at 6:00 PM at Walhalla High School Auditorium, Walhalla, SC with Council Members Mr. Reg Dexter; Mr. Joel Thrift; and Mr. Paul Corbeil, Thomas L. Martin County Attorney, County Administrator Scott Moulder, Sr. Executive Assistant Amanda Brock and Clerk to Council, Elizabeth G. Hulse 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 [upon request] to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Member of the press present: Ray Chandler – Anderson Independent, Dick Mangrum – WGOG Radio, Jessica Nelms and Brett McLaughlin - Daily Journal.

Call to Order:

Mr. Dexter called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Administrator's Presentation of Proposed Fire Plan:

Mr. Moulder presented the Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan utilizing a PowerPoint presentation [copy filed with these minutes].

In the proposal, the following were outlined: Overview; Method; Demographics; Existing System; Goal (Unified System); Notable Challenges; Plan Objective; Plan Requirements; and Recommendations.

Overview: By County Council objective, Mr. Moulder was to develop a County-wide Fire Plan by the end of the year.

Method: Met with each fire station, rescue squad, commission, staff member, municipal agency and citizens to develop plan.

Demographics: 625 square miles; Population est. 71,514; 7% growth rate; 39,114 housing units; 12,000 industrial manufacturing jobs; 71,514 citizens total – 14,442 in municipalities - 57,072 in rural areas

Existing System: County is Volunteer System; 13 rural fire districts; 4 municipal departments; 1 special tax district; HAZMAT volunteers; 7 rescue squads; 2 special rescue units specialize in dive, swift water, vertical, and other rescue services.

Goal (Unified System): Unified County Emergency Services Department; Respond as County body with separate districts; Rural Districts exist within system .

Plan Objective: Protect and serve the citizens of Oconee County and maintain focus to improve organization and operations in an effort to guarantee the advancement of the volunteer districts within the Emergency Services Department.

Plan Requirements: Current issues addressed; Plan to improve support of volunteer stations; Build a unified, responsive team.

Notable Challenges: Four key areas of improvement are: Organizational Management; Volunteer Station Assistance; Training; Equipment & Vehicles and Miscellaneous Items.

Recommendations: Management Restructure; Emergency Service Commission Structure; County Coverage; Station 21; ISO Assistance and Improvement; Proper Funding / Municipal Contracts.

County Council Questions and Comments:

Chairman Dexter commented that the Council will evaluate the budget aspect of the plan closely. He commended Mr. Moulder on the Proposed Plan.

Mr. Thrift commended Mr. Moulder on the Proposed Plan, and stated that the Council members would need time to review and evaluate the Proposed Plan. He also stated a separate meeting specifically for questions and answers should be considered.

Mr. Corbeil stated he would like further information regarding the Proposed Commission restructure, and an overall timeline for implementation of the Proposed Plan. Mr. Corbeil also commended Mr. Moulder on the thorough job he had done. He said that Fire Protection and Rescue Services are a critical part of Oconee County government.

Public Comments and Questions:

Mr. C.W. Richards inquired if the Proposed Plan recommended ending the current Municipal Contracts, and if County taxes would be increased if the Proposed Plan is adopted.

Ms. Suzie Cornelius stated she appreciated the concern given to potential funding sources. She also commented that an additional meeting for public input would be appreciated. Ms. Cornelius also shared concerns relating to funding equity for individual districts, municipal third-party billings, and Station 21 staff and performance and the need for a water-supply coordinator in the County.

Mr. Jess Neville, West Union Fire Chief, stated that a Fire Plan was presented several years ago, and nothing had ever been decided by the County regarding that plan. He also stated his concern for increasing challenges all fire departments face, and urged the Council's support the Proposed Plan.

Mr. Ronnie Williams, Crossroads Fire Department and Emergency Services Commission Member expressed his support of the Proposed Plan's recommendation to restructure the Emergency Services Commission.

Mr. Travis Collins, Cleveland Fire Department, expressed his appreciation of the Proposed Plan, and of his support of Station 21 staff members.

Mr. Brandon Shirley, Keowee Key Fire Department, also expressed his appreciation of Station 21 staff, and his support of the Proposed Plan.

Mr. Tom McAlister, Keowee Ebenezer Fire Department, commented on the Municipal Contracts and the cost associated with calls within the municipalities.

Mr. Roger Glenn, South Union Fire Department, expressed his support of the Proposed Plan, and commended Station 21 staff. He also commended all County Volunteers for the service they provide.

Mr. Jeff Bates, Walhalla Rescue Squad, stated Rescue Squads throughout the County need additional funding as outlined in the Proposed Plan.

Ms. Kelly Armenta, Salem Rescue, Special Rescue and Dive Team volunteer, expressed her appreciation for the Proposed Plan, specifically the recommendation for additional volunteer training. She also commended Station 21 staff.

Mr. Bob Kinder, Assistant Chief of Special Rescue and Dive Team volunteer, commended the Emergency Services staff, and expressed support of the Proposed Plan.

Mr. Tom Stoltz, Long Creek Fire Department and Emergency Services Commission member, inquired if funding for the Proposed Substations was included in the budget presented. He stated his concern regarding any potential tax consequences for fire departments related funding and grants. He also expressed his appreciation of Station 21 staff.

Mr. Tom Markovich expressed his support of Mr. Moulder's approach to developing the Proposed Plan, and stated that a slight increase in millage shouldn't detract from the overall solidity of the Proposed Plan.

Additional Administrator / County Council Comments:

Mr. Moulder stated this meeting was County Council's first glimpse of the Proposed Plan, and asked that consideration be extended to Council for their review of the Proposed Plan.

Chairman Dexter expressed his appreciation for all of the comments and input from the audience members. He also stated that as Budget and Finance Committee Chairman for the past two years, all County Council Budget workshops have been and are open to the public. He invited personnel from the all fire departments and rescue squads to attend and offer input to Council during the upcoming budget process.

Other Business: None at this meeting.

Adjourn:

Mr. Thrift made a motion at 8:12 p.m. to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted:

Amanda Brock
Sr. Executive Assistant