



MINUTES
OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

5:30 p.m.

Immediately following Planning & Economic Development Committee Meeting

MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr. Paul Cain, District III

Mr. Wayne McCall, District II

Ms. Edda Cammick, Chairwoman, District I

Mr. Julian Davis III, Vice Chair, District IV

Mr. Glenn Hart, Chair Pro Tem, District V

Oconee County Council met at 5:30 P.M. [immediately following Planning & Economic Development Committee meeting] in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members, County Administrator Scott Moulder, County Attorney David Root, and Amanda F. Brock, Public Information Officer, 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.

Members of the press present: Ray Chandler / Anderson Independent & Stephen Bradley / Daily Journal.

Call to Order

Ms. Cammick called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Discussion Regarding proposed Pioneer Rural Water District Water Treatment Plant

The Special Meeting was called for the purpose of discussing the current issues surrounding the building of the water treatment plant at the Golden Corner Commerce Park for Pioneer Water. This project will lead to sharp increases in water rates for residential and commercial customers.

Mr. Cain made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 – 0, to open the floor for discussion.

Discussion followed to include but not limited to:

- Pioneer Water Audit report and it's availability to be viewed online
- Water price increase in Westminster
- Inability to get amount of water needed from municipalities
- How many customers Pioneer Rural Water Authority currently, and projected customer growth in the future
- Population growth

Council's meetings shall be conducted pursuant to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, Council's Rules and the Model Rules of Parliamentary Procedure for South Carolina Counties, latest edition. This agenda may not be inclusive of all issues which Council may bring up for discussion at this meeting. Items are listed on Council's agenda to give public notice of the subjects and issues to be discussed, acted upon, received as information and/or disposed of during the meeting. Items listed on Council's agenda may be taken up, tabled, postponed, reconsidered, removed or otherwise disposed of as provided for under Council's Rules, and Model Rules of Parliamentary Procedure for South Carolina Counties, latest edition, if not specified under Council's rules.

Discussion followed per Mr. Davis' request of Mr. Richard Blackwell regarding the following:

- Appalachian Council of Governments
- Census data and projected population growth trends
- 6% growth population from 2016 to 2021
- 6% growth in households
- Total population trends of Oconee County

Mr. Moulder addressed Council regarding the following:

- An in-depth and lengthy discussion and analysis regarding Pioneer's financial documents
- Annual average increase of the water usage over that time period, it is 1.35% increase on average

Discussion following per Mr. Davis' request of Mayor Brian Ramey regarding the following:

- He did not have discussions with Pioneer Water of a 4.55% rate increase per year
- Called for a special meeting when they found out the plant was being built
- Has not had negotiations with a contract
- Last contract was in 2010

Lengthy discussion followed per Mr. Davis' request of Mr. Pruitt regarding the following:

- Infrastructure improvements, line upgrades, etc.
- Rate schedule
- Expansion of the plant
- Costs / Numbers
- Board of Directors
- Construction of water treatment plant vs. continuing to purchase water from Seneca and Westminster
- Amortization rate schedule
- Existing loans with the State revolving fund

Ms. Cammick would like the following:

- Results from negotiations from Seneca and Westminster
- Updated Attorney General opinion the Legislative Delegation has requested
- Need to support Westminster, Seneca and Legislative Delegation
- Direction or decision as Council
- Document that has specifics of the rate that customers will be paying

Independent audit or an additional audit on the numbers to produce a second opinion.

Discussion followed per Mr. Davis' request of Mr. Bob Farris, Director of Utilities in Seneca, regarding the following:

- The City's proposed increase of only one (1) percent for the sale of water to Pioneer
- This minor increase was the city's way of offering an incentive to Pioneer to prevent the building of a water treatment facility
- Negotiations seemed to just cease between the City and Pioneer
- The City presented a renewal contract to Pioneer, but it was never signed by Pioneer

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Lengthy discussion followed to include but not limited to:

- Existing Rates
- Sell water across lines to Atlanta
- Economic feasibility
- Requested 5 million gallons a day from the Army Corp of Engineers
- Building permit

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cain, to delay the issuing of the building permit.

Mr. Davis then made a motion to amend the original motion, seconded by Mr. Cain, approved 5 – 0, to direct Administrator and staff with assistance of County Attorney to investigate all means to lawfully and temporarily prevent construction of the water treatment facility structure to include the non-issuance of the permit if lawful and any other means to include discussions with the Public service commission, the office of regulatory staff or otherwise.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cain to approve the motion as amended, and this motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Pruitt stated that Pioneer would have to schedule a special meeting to discuss moving forward.

Adjourn

Mr. Davis made a motion, approved unanimously, to adjourn at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Katie D. Smith
Clerk to Council