



MINUTES
LAW ENFORCEMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH &
WELFARE COMMITTEE MEETING
March 12, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. Wayne McCall, Chairman, District II
Mr. Mario Suarez, District III
Mr. Joel Thrift, District IV

The Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health & Welfare Committee met on Thursday, March 12, 2009 at 5:30 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Committee Members present [except Mr. Suarez], County Administrator Dale K. Surrett and Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to Council also present.

Oconee County Staff present: Mr. Lake Julian, Facilities Maintenance; Various Fire Chiefs [listed below], Mr. Phil Shirley, PRT Director and Sean McGuffie, South Cove County Park Superintendent.

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, Dick Mangrum – WGOG, Peter Kent - WSNW Radio & Andrew Moore & Carlos Galarza - Daily Journal.

Call to Order:

Chairman McCall called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCall approved 2 – 0 that the minutes from the January 28, 2009 meeting be adopted as printed.

Discussion of Oconee County/Westminster Joint Fire Station:

Mr. McCall recognized Mr. Julian, Facilities Maintenance, who provided the Committee and public with revised floor plan designs for the pre-engineered metal building that would house the joint fire station. [Copies of the two plans are filed with these minutes and will be provided to all members of County Council.]

Mr. Julian stated that changes to plan #1 included several issues discussed at the last meeting and incorporated here to include: [1] moving the Emergency Operations Center [EOC] to this building, [2] down sizing the building, and [3] housing some equipment under roof in a shed type structure at the end of the building to decrease the bay size. Mr. Surrett noted that there is also a mezzanine area that would be unfinished space for future development and/or functions at the

station. He stated that the EOC area would be ruffed in for both electrical and plumbing so that the areas use could be changed at a later date with expansion of staff as needed.

Mr. Julian also provided plan #2 which was similar with the following exceptions: [1] removing the EOC to a harden facility connected to the station, and [2] converting the EOC space to additional sleeping space for staff. Mr. Surret noted that a grant has been applied for to pay for the hardened EOC portion of the building; that Oconee County was selected by the State for submission for the grant, however a decision has not yet been received if Oconee will receive the grant.

Mr. McCall voiced concerns regarding costs as money will be very tight in the upcoming budget for fiscal year 2009-2010. Discussion followed regarding costs for existing EOC and this joint facility.

Mr. Thrift recommended to the Chairman that plans be brought to full Council for their review and discussion along with the hand drawn plans prepared by the Chief Smith after final estimates and plans are received by this committee. He requested that Mr. Julian provide cost estimates for each structure for Council's review. Mr. Julian stated that he was scheduled to meet with a contractor the week of March 22, 2009 and that he would report back at the next meeting. Mr. Surret noted that the Westminster Fire Station and Rescue personnel were currently working on an equipment inventory and needs list which will also be brought back to this committee. In addition, Mr. Surret noted that any cost estimates will not include furnishings, communications and technology needs.

Discussion with Sheriff's Department / DNR / Rescue Squad / PRT regarding Boat Storage at South Cove Park:

Mr. McCall recognized Mr. Bob Kinder / Rescue, Sheriff Singleton / Sheriff's Dept, and Mr. Phil Shirley & Mr. Sean McGuffie / PRT and asked that they step forward to discuss possibly storing boats at South Cove Park for their various departments. Mr. Kinder provided the Committee with a proposed design and cost estimate [copy filed with these minutes and distributed to all Council members]. Mr. Shirley & Mr. McGuffie stated that they were happy to store the boats at the park but that the location would need to be discussed for several reasons: [1] this area might be developed in the future to gain additional revenue in the future, and [2] this location is a busy intersection that could impede response time. Mr. Shirley suggested an alternate location near the tennis courts. He also outlined the process for submission of the plan to Duke Energy for their approval. Mr. McCall asked that all parties meet and report back to this Committee as soon as possible with costs and specific plans.

Next Meeting:

Mr. McCall scheduled the next Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health & Welfare Committee for Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

Discussion with Fire Services & Station 21:

Mr. McCall stated that he and other Council members have been receiving a lot of phone calls concerning issues related to fire service and Station 21. He stated that he has received calls from volunteers stating that they are going to quit if things don't get better. Mr. McCall opened the floor to the Chief's present for a discussion of their concerns and needs.

Chief Travis Nix, Corinth Shiloh Fire Station, addressed the members regarding concerns in the way the new air packs are being distributed and older packs be removed from stations. The air packs at this station were funded through a FEMA grant and are the property of this station and not

the county. Lt. Nate Carter with the station read from a statement [filed with these minutes] also outlining the air pack situation. Both men stated that communication with Emergency Services and Mr. Rodney Burdette have been a real issue and very poor in the past. Mr. Brandon Bruce, Treasurer, also voiced concerns with the new system stating that their station has actually lost funding due to consolidation. He stated that they previously would raise \$55,000 annually but after the change and the citizens perception that they are being fully funded their fund raising activities are only netting approximately \$30,000 now. Mr. Bruce stated that they don't want money – they want the tools to do their job. Lastly he stated that he has made several requests to receive the ISO study results but that he has been told the report was forwarded to the Administrator who has not distributed it to the fire stations.

Chief Ronnie Williams, Crossroad Fire Station, addressed the members regarding the air pack issues stating that he wishes to keep his older models as backup. He also voiced concerns about getting rid of equipment that was funded through a grant. Chief Williams voiced concerns that disposal of these packs could invalidate the terms of the grants with FEMA.

Chief Larry Wilkerson, Fair Play Station, addressed the members regarding air packs and voicing similar concerns as the other stations that FEMA has specific ownership requirements when receiving grant funds for equipment and his desire to not break the law.

Chief Ritchie Caudill, Keowee Key Station, addressed the members reiterating similar issues with the air packs and the concern that for his station to purchase the air packs back would actually cost the county \$300 more than they are selling the air packs for to Anderson Fire.

Mr. Tom Stoltz, Long Creek Volunteer and member of the Emergency Services Commission, addressed the members asking the members to view the big picture and not focus on one specific issue. He stated that since the changes that Long Creek Fire Station is doing very well. Mr. Stoltz also stated that it would be a loss to the county if Station 21 was to go away as this station is very helpful when negotiating with the local municipalities for coverage in unincorporated areas. He closed by stating that he hoped the committee would maintain Emergency Services as it is now and not take the County back 10 years in just a few months.

Chief Bill Simmons, Mountain Rest Fire Department, addressed the members stating that his station is also better off under Emergency Services with more funding and equipment. He stated that communication has been good in his experience. He voiced the hope that all stations would get together and work out all of these issues together. Chief Simmons voiced concerns regarding the previous Council's discussions about what funding would be coming to the stations.

Mr. McCall asked each speaker if they felt it would be better for the county to go back to the old system of Rural Fire and Rescue being separate entities. Discussion followed with some in agreement and some not.

Mr. Thrift stated that he felt it was time to give back to the people in the stations the responsibility for running the station and to provide proper funding and get the County out of the middle.

Mr. McCall stated that additional input is needed and that this issue will be on the next committee's agenda for further discussion. He stated that this needs to take place as the budget review process is scheduled to begin in April. Lastly, he noted that he appreciated the good turn out and the information received and he noted that everyone needs to find a way to work together on this issue.

Old Business:

No Old Business was discussed at this meeting.

New Business:

No New Business was discussed at this meeting.

Adjourn:

Mr. Thrift made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. McCall, approved unanimously at 7:03 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council