



MINUTES
LAW ENFORCEMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH &
WELFARE COMMITTEE MEETING
March 19, 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 19, 2009 at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Committee Members present [except Mr. Suarez], Mr. George Blanchard on behalf of Mr. Suarez, County Administrator Dale K. Surratt and Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to Council also present.

Oconee County Staff present: Mr. Lake Julian, Facilities Maintenance; Chief Chris Smith, Westminster Fire and Chief Larry Wilkerson, Fair Play Fire.

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.

Call to Order:

Chairman McCall called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCall approved 2 – 0 that the minutes from the March 12, 2009 meeting be adopted as printed.

Presentation regarding Fire, Safety & Rescue: Water Availability, Control & Use by Ms. Susie Cornelius:

Ms. Cornelius spoke to the Committee reading from a PowerPoint presentation [filed with these minutes and provided to all Council members] outlining her concerns about fire services in Oconee County. Her presentation highlighted key areas to include: [1] current issues, [2] ISO, [3] water issues, and [4] funding options and suggestions.

Discussion regarding Boat Storage at South Cove Park:

Mr. McCall asked Mr. Bob Kinder / Rescue to step forward and discuss his meeting with PRT staff regarding an appropriate location for boat storage at South Cove Park. He presented two handout [filed with these minutes and distributed to all Council members] showing an aerial

photograph and one showing a scale drawing for the building configuration. He noted that the new location would require the removal of approximately 50-60 pine trees. In addition, he stated that these plans have been sent to Duke Energy for approval and he informed the committee that a response is likely within one week. Mr. Kinder stated that the total cost of the project is estimated not to exceed \$54,100. This estimate includes everything except grading and tree harvesting. Mr. Surrett noted that he has contacted DNR to identify if funds are available; he stated he would report back at a future meeting.

Mr. Surrett asked Mr. Kinder to discuss the type of rescues that have been done in the last year. Mr. Kinder stated that six victims were removed from the lake with a pulse; five with spontaneous respiration, however, none of these victims survived to be discharged from the hospital.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Blanchard suggested that this issue be addressed during the FY 09-10 budget discussions as funding is not available in the current budget for this project. The committee concurred that this should be discussed at budget time.

Discussion of Oconee County Fire & Westminster Fire Station:

Mr. McCall recognized Chief Smith, Westminster Fire and Mr. Julian, Facilities Maintenance, who provided the Committee with an update of discussions held with the architect and the builder [Joel Davis]. Mr. Julian noted that if some of the boats and equipment are approved for storage at South Cove Park that some under roof space could be saved on this project. Discussion followed.

Mr. Thrift made a proposal, agreed to by Mr. McCall & Mr. Blanchard [appearing on behalf of Mr. Suarez who was unable to attend but supports the proposal], that the committee direct Mr. Julian and Chief Smith to draw up plans for a turn key facility for a maximum cost of \$2.2 million dollars. Mr. Thrift asked that they meet and identify needs and wants and that they put together a plan [to include electrical, communications, IT, etc] and bring it back to the Committee for review. Mr. Surrett noted that a fair estimate for the building would then be approximately \$1.5 million.

Mr. McCall made a proposal, agreed to by Mr. Thrift and Mr. Blanchard, that Mr. Julian look also at the cost to move the Emergency Operations Center [EOC] to this facility versus keeping it at the LEC thereby causing jail expansion outside of the current facility.

Old Business:

Fire Contract with the City of Seneca for Unincorporated Areas of County:

Mr. Surrett recognized Mayor Dan Alexander and City Administrator Greg Dietterick and asked that they assist in the discussion of the contract that is scheduled to expire in June 2009. Mr. Surrett noted that the contracts with Walhalla and Westminster have three more years before they expire. It was suggested to alter the term to make this contract co-terminus with the other municipalities. The City stated that they were agreeable to a longer term. Mr. Surrett asked for guidance from the committee if they wished to review the contract, change terms, alter the period, etc. He noted that both the County and the City are beginning their budget process and need to resolve this matter for budgeting purposes. Discussion followed.

Mr. Thrift suggested that Mr. Surrett meet with the mayor and administrator to work out the details and agree on terms and to then bring this agreement to the full Council for a vote. Mr. McCall and Mr. Blanchard concurred with this suggestion.

New Business:

County Fire Organizational Structure Proposal:

Mr. McCall presented for review by the committee and those present a proposed County Fire Organization Structure flowchart. A Fire Board would be created made up of five volunteer chiefs who would be elected by their peers. This Board would have authority granted by Council to govern the county's fire service. It is the intent with this proposed reorganization to eliminate some of the squabbling about who gets what and how much money each station gets. The Chiefs would decide these issues.

There was also discussion regarding expansion of exiting mutual aid agreements with the four municipalities.

Mr. Mike Wilson, Duke Energy District Manager for Government and Community Relations, addressed the Committee asking that Duke be present for any discussions involving a change of structure and Duke routinely interacts with our fire and rescue.

Chief Larry Wilkerson, Chief Fair Play Fire Department, stated that the chiefs have a meeting scheduled for Monday March 23rd and that he will ask that this flowchart be added for discussion at that meeting. He agreed to report back at a future meeting.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Blanchard suggested, and both Mr. McCall and Mr. Thrift concurred, that this issue be scheduled for a future meeting so that everyone has time to review the plan and formulate questions. He asked that the Clerk to Council distribute this chart to all Chiefs and to make it available on line on the Council website.

Next Meeting:

No announcement was made regarding the next meeting date/time.

Adjourn:

Mr. Thrift made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, approved unanimously at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council