



MINUTES
REAL ESTATE, FACILITIES & LAND MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING
February 27, 2009
8:00 a.m.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. Mario Suarez, Chairman, District III
Mr. George Blanchard District I
Mr. Joel Thrift, District IV

The Real Estate, Facilities & Land Management Committee met Thursday, February 27, 2008 at 8:00 AM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all members present [Mr. Blanchard was absent], County Administrator Dale K. Surrett & 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.

Members of the press present: Dick Mangrum – WGOG Radio

Call to Order:

Chairman Suarez called the meeting to order at 7:58 a.m.

Moment of Silence:

Chairman Suarez asked those present to take a silent moment to reflect on what we need to do in this County to work for the future.

Minutes:

Mr. Suarez noted that two of the members of this committee are new as of January 2009 and Mr. Blanchard was absent therefore the minutes from the July 8, 2008 meeting will be accepted as information as printed.

Discussion regarding Interstate 3:

Mr. Suarez asked Mr. Surrett to summarize the current route plan for Interstate 3. Mr. Surrett noted that present plans have the highway run up to Hartwell on I85 and north to end in Knoxville, TN. Mr. Suarez noted that he received a letter from Mr. Buzz Williams with the Chattooga Conservancy asking the County Council to take action and pass a resolution in opposition to any route for Interstate 3 that would go through Oconee County. Mr. Williams addressed the Committee and outlined his groups research into this subject noting that Georgia citizens were opposed to having the highway go through their mountains that that the next most logical route would take it through National Forests north of Traveler's Rest. This would likely mean they would try to utilize Highway 11 in Oconee County to connect Savannah and Knoxville. Discussion followed.

It was agreed that this Committee will recommend to full Council that a resolution be drafted and passed to state the counties opposition to this highway running through any portion of Oconee County. Mr. Suarez instructed the Clerk to Council to contact the County Attorney to draft a formal resolution for presentation at the March 17, 2009 Council meeting.

Discussion regarding the Building Codes Department:

Mr. Suarez asked Mr. Art Holbrooks, Planning Director, and Mr. Channon Chambers, Building Codes Director, to address Council regarding the Building Codes Department. Mr. Chambers read briefly from a handout [filed with these minutes] outlining the history of the department, its roles and responsibilities and applicable codes and ordinances.

Mr. Thrift stated that most of the calls received from citizens related to this department and he voiced concerns that the public is unclear what is needed and how to meet statutory rules and ordinances. He suggested that a pre-building conference might be of benefit for small builders and owner builders. Discussion followed.

Mr. Chambers ensured the Committee that the goal for his department is to be user friendly and that he has worked during his tenure to improve relationships with DHEC, the Road Department and other regulatory agencies in an effort to streamline the process for citizens. Mr. Thrift noted that the mayor of Westminster, Mr. Derrick Hodgins, has offered to allow use of the old high school so that the County could offer informative seminars related to building in the county. Discussion followed regarding several specific issues related to citizen concerns.

Mr. Rocky Anderson, Builder, addressed the Committee with recommendations regarding designating specific inspectors to projects at their inception and breaking out similar types of building projects [i.e., residential, commercial, owner builder] in an effort to have specialization.

Mr. Chambers noted that he is working toward a “one stop stop” for citizens where they could have access to pull permits for all needed utilities, state agencies and county departments. The goal is to streamline the process for citizens and hopefully allow multiple agencies to review applications/permits simultaneously to speed the process. Discussion followed. It was agreed that this Committee will recommend to full Council that the Building Codes Department continue working toward meeting a “one stop shop”.

Discussion re: Use of County Property for Proposed “Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair:

Mr. Tim Donald and Mr. Stanley Gibson, Fair Committee representatives, addressed the Committee and presented information related to obtaining approval to use property at the Golden Corner Industrial Park for a fair in October 2009. They provided handouts with photographs [filed with these minutes] for each member and agreed to provide additional copies for full council. Various road options were discussed along with cost estimates. Mr. Suarez and Mr. Thrift asked the representatives to report back with specific figures related to what the County is being asked to furnish.

Planning for Future Meetings / Review of Issues:

The Clerk reported two outstanding issues for discussion at the next meeting [Mr. Hackley / Dock Issues and Canoe Club Request]. Mr. Suarez authorized the Clerk to place these two issues on the next agenda for discussion.

Mr. Surrent noted that the Native American Monument is still outstanding but on hold due to ongoing ADA issues at the Courthouse. Discussion followed. Mr. Suarez stated that he would update Mr. Luther Lyle regarding this issue and the need to wait until all Courthouse issues are resolved before the monument can be erected. .

Adjourn:

Mr. Suarez having not other business adjourned the meeting at 9:23 AM

Respectfully Submitted:

Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to Council