

**MINUTES
OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING
AUGUST 15, 2007**

MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr. George Blanchard District I
Mr. Thomas S. Crumpton, Jr., District II
Mr. Mario Suarez, District III
Mr. Marion E. Lyles, District IV, Chairman
Mr. H. Frank Ables, Jr., District V

The Oconee County Council held a Public Hearing on Wednesday, August 15, 2007 at 5:00 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members, County Administrator Dale K. Surrett, Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to Council & Mr. Bradley A. Norton, County Attorney present.

The purpose of the Public Hearing was to discuss a potential agreement between Oconee County and a private utility to provide sewer service.

Press:

Members of the press notified (via facsimile): Keowee Courier, Westminster News and the Daily Journal.

Members of the press present: Carlos Garza – Daily Journal, Dick Mangrum – WGOG and David Williams – Anderson Independent

Call to Order:

Chairman Lyles called the Public Hearing to order at 5:00 p.m.

Written Comment Session:

Chairman Lyles opened the floor for submission of written comments.
No written comments were presented to Council.

Oral Comment Session:

Chairman Lyles opened the floor for oral comments.

Mr. Thurmond Coward, Jr., Salem Mayor, addressed Council regarding concerns that this project will not benefit Salem residents. In addition Mr. Coward addressed Council regarding obtaining grading for a youth athletic field in Salem. Mr. Blanchard requested Mr. Coward to contact him prior to the next scheduled Council meeting to address this issue.

Mr. Duboise Blackston addressed Council regarding his support for the project.

Ms. Becky Ballenger addressed Council regarding her concern about the type of businesses that might be developed near I85.

Mr. David Bassett addressed Council regarding his concerns that the contract with Jacabb is “lopsided” with Jacabb having little or no risk but having great earning potential, flow capacity of the system and disposal of waste water.

Mr. Tom Marcovich addressed Council regarding his approval of the contract noting that it will provide taxes to the County and job to the residents.

Mr. Bo Horne addressed Council questioning whether the funds for this project have been budgeted. Mr. Ables stated that the funds were budgeted and set aside from last year.

Mr. Paul Record addressed Council requesting Council not take action to quickly as sufficient time has not been set aside for public input.

Mr. Bob Winchester, Chairman, Oconee County Sewer Commission, addressed Council from written notes regarding some of the Commission’s concerns [document attached to minutes].

Mr. Ron K. Norr, Oconee County Sewer Commission member, addressed Council regarding concerns that the County is moving too quickly, capacity, hooking up to the system and the wording of the SCDOT contract.

Ms. Susie Cornelius addressed Council regarding concerns that the County will be using tax payer money for this project, that Jacabb will be holding the money [not in escrow], qualifications of Jacabb and their financial stability and the disposal of solids from the plant.

Mr. Rhett Smith, Oconee County Sewer Commission, City of Westminster representative, addressed Council questioning if the “SWAG” agreement will remain in place. Mr. Norton stated that the SWAG agreement will have to be redone to reflect the new entity but the essence of the agreement will remain the same.

Chairman Lyles asked Mr. Norton to address some of the concerns/questions voiced by the public. Mr. Norton addressed Council and stated that Jacabb has designed the system to be modular to allow for additional capacity in the future when needed. This system would be a public utility owned by a private company. Jacabb would be required to report to all regulatory agencies to ensure that they are compliant with all laws and safety standards. The \$1.2 million that the County would spend could be recouped as the County sold capacity to industries. Mr. Surret noted that rates would also be strictly monitored and would have to be approved by a regulatory agency prior to imposition.

Chairman Lyles asked Mr. Paul Lewis, Engineer, Goldie & Associates, to step forward and give a brief presentation utilizing an aerial map, discussing the plans for a treatment plant and force main system. Mr. Lewis addressed Council and addressed some questions raised. Goldie

Mr. Jim Alexander, Economic Development, addressed council regarding the impact this sewer project would have on the County's ability to attract business and industry, provide jobs for County citizens and increase the County's tax base. Mr. Alexander noted that the County has lost industry/business because we do not offer sewer on I85. Walgreen chose to build their distribution center in Anderson. Mr. Alexander estimated lost investments in the amount of \$144 million.

Adjourn:

The Public Hearing adjourned at 6:40 PM

Respectfully Submitted:

Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council