



MINUTES
OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MEETING with COUNTY DELEGATION
December 14, 2012

MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
Mr. Joel Thrift, District IV, Council Chairman
Mr. Paul Corbeil, District I, Vice Chairman
Mr. Wayne McCall, District II, Chairman Pro Tem
Mr. Archie Barron, District III
Mr. Reg Dexter, District V

Oconee County Council met at 9:00 AM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members [except Mr. McCall], County Administrator Scott Moulder, Assistant Administrator Glenn Breed and Clerk to Council Elizabeth G. Hulse present. County Delegation members present: Senator Thomas Alexander, Representative Bill Sandifer and Representative Bill Whitmire.

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.

Member of the press present: Ray Chandler/Anderson Independent, Dick Mangrum/WGOG Radio & Mike Eads/The Daily Journal.

Call to Order: Mr. Thrift called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Council Workshop Discussion with Local Delegation Representatives to Discuss Various Issues Related to the 2013 Legislative Session

Mr. Thrift welcomed the Delegation members and thanked them for the opportunity to meet and share their perspective regarding the 2013 legislative session and how it will impact Oconee County. Mr. Thrift opened the floor to members of the Delegation.

Senator Alexander thanked Council for the opportunity to meet; noting that budget and ethics reform will be issues taken up in the state early in 2013. Lastly he stated his desire to hear what the county's concerns are and how they can assist.

Representative Sandifer thanked Council for the invitation to meet and exchange ideas. He noted that several issues face the state early in 2013; health care reform as it impacts South Carolina, hacking at the Department of Revenue, ethics and election reform.

Representative Whitmire thanked Council noting he looked forward to the discussion of issues that impact both Oconee County and the state. He reiterated the issues facing the legislature during the next session as outlined by Senator Alexander and Representative Sandifer.

Various council members brought up for discussion the following issues with the Delegation representatives:

Local Government Fund [LGF]

Representative Sandifer noted that based on discussions to date that Council should plan for budgeting purposes to receive the same LGF funding for FY2013-2014 as was received in FY2012-2013. Discussion followed. Senator Alexander referenced a draft report [Fiscal Impact of Selected State Mandates on County Governments – copy filed with these minutes] when discussing the impact over the past 5 years on Oconee County with the reduced Local Government Fund allocations.

State Mandates for County Governments

Council and the Delegation discussed options related to maintaining services in state mandated departments. Council noted that fund balance has been utilized to date to maintain service levels so that Oconee County citizens are not impacted; however, they noted that this option may not be available for FY2013-2014. Discussion followed.

Property Tax Incremental Payments

Representative Sandifer asked Council their opinion regarding the option of allowing taxpayers to pay monthly installment payments toward their property taxes with the final payment due for any balance on or before the regular due date. Discussion followed. Council stated that they would review the subject with the County Treasurer for his input regarding staffing, bookkeeping, etc.

Assessment Ratio Changes

Council and the Delegation discussed the potential change for property assessment ratios from 10% down to 6.5% and from 6% down to 5%. Lengthy discussion followed. Representative Sandifer noted that during meetings in Columbia this week that there is discussion about lowering the 10% ratio over several years down to 6.5%; however, any change would not affect FY2013-2014. Representative Sandifer stated that most business startups in South Carolina are small businesses and not eligible for the FILOT's available to larger companies looking to locate in the state and/or Oconee County.

Ethics Reform

Representative Sandifer stated that one of the issues to first be addressed in the House will be Ethics Reform. Discussion followed. He stated that the proposal will likely include the following:

1. Candidates and Incumbents would file their paperwork with the local Registration & Elections Commission Director within the county they reside.
2. Paperwork would be date and time stamped.
3. Statement of Economic Interest forms would be filed April 15, 2012 for both candidates and incumbents.

Texting Ban

Mr. Thrift questioned if a texting ban would be considered during the next legislative session. Representative Sandifer noted that a "distracted driving" bill will be considered. Both Senator Alexander & Representative Whitmire voiced their support for the bill.

State Roads/Funding & Potential Fuel Tax Increase

Council and the Delegation discussed state roads and road / bridge funding.

Mr. Thrift questioned if the House and/or Senate would consider an increase in the fuel tax to help pay for road and bridge infrastructure maintenance/repair. Discussion followed.

SCAC Lobbying Prohibition

Mr. Corbeil questioned if the Senator and/or Representatives would support a prohibition on the South Carolina Association of Counties lobbying the House and Senate representatives and committees. The Delegation members stated that they welcome talking with all interested groups or parties about issues facing Oconee County.

Public Comment Session *[chair discretion and/or time permitting]:*

The Chair did not open the floor for public comment.

Mr. Thrift thanked Senator Alexander, Representative Sandifer and Representative Whitmire for the opportunity to share concerns for Oconee County with them and stated that he hoped this would be the first of many meetings together to work to move the county forward.

Senator Alexander thanked Council for the invitation noting that it is helpful for the Delegation members to better understand the concerns of the county and that they look forward to working together for the Oconee County citizens. He noted that he was confident that this was the first of many meetings and he appreciated the open dialog at this meeting.

Adjourn

Mr. Thrift adjourned the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council