

RICHLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

SOUTH CAROLINA



DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES COMMITTEE

April 28, 2015
5:00 PM
County Council Chambers

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the agenda was sent to radio and TV stations, newspapers, persons requesting notification, and was posted on the bulletin board located in the lobby of the County Administration Building

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Dixon called the meeting to order at approximately 5:00 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Session: March 24, 2015 – Mr. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Malinowski, to approve the minutes as distributed.

Mr. Malinowski pointed out that answers to Council member's questions need to be reflected in the minutes.

The vote in favor was unanimous.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Mr. Malinowski moved, seconded by Mr. Jackson, to adopt the agenda as published. The vote in favor was unanimous.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

Solid Waste Service Charge for Vacant Dwelling Units – Mr. McDonald stated this item originated from a motion made by Mr. Jackson. The committee requested that staff recommend ways to address the tracking of vacant dwellings. Staff has proposed proof of the termination of electric service to meet the definition of vacancy in order for the service fee to be waived.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about how many requests are made annually to waive the solid waste fee due to vacancy.

Mr. Curtis responded in the 2 ½ years he's been with the County, there have been approximately 5 requests for waiver of fees.

Mr. Malinowski stated the costs to the County to implement the proposed waiver practice seems to be more than warranted by the small amount of requests.

Council Members Present

Julie-Ann Dixon, Chair
District Nine

Bill Malinowski
District One

Seth Rose
District Five

Norman Jackson
District Eleven

Others Present:

Tony McDonald
Sparty Hammett
Warren Harley
Monique Walters
Brandon Madden
Michelle Onley
Monique McDaniels
Larry Smith
Tracy Hegler
Amelia Linder
Rudy Curtis
Quinton Epps
Nancy Stone-Collum
Kecia Lara
Geo Price
Brad Farrar

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Mr. Malinowski cited the 1984 letter in the agenda packet which states, "The residence is to be charged for the type of service received. Therefore, if a home or mobile home is habitable, it is immaterial as to whether it is occupied. The ordinance was never intended as a recordkeeping device for occupancy of homes."

Mr. Malinowski further stated, he could see this practice being used as a means to escape paying the service fee. Although the utilities could have been turned off, it does not mean there is no one residing there. Also, there could be yard waste since the yards will need to be maintained.

Mr. Jackson stated those individuals who are on fixed incomes and inherit property are the residents that are being penalized by having to pay for services they are not utilizing or receiving.

Ms. Dixon inquired as to what the cost for the solid waste setup fee.

Mr. Curtis stated the setup fee is \$48.00 and the service charge is \$249.00 per year.

Mr. Jackson moved, seconded by Ms. Dixon, to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve the motion not to charge property owners for a service they do not use or receive. This alternative will likely require redevelopment of critical sections of the ordinance. When the house becomes unoccupied, the owner of the property shall (1) be responsible for notifying the County that the house is no longer vacant; (2) pay the solid waste set-up fee; and (3) pay the prorated solid waste service charge to re-establish service. The vote was in favor.

Conservation Department: Endorsement of Cabin Branch Conservation Corridor –

Mr. Epps stated the request is to extend the riparian corridor along Cabin Branch. The riparian areas are defined as areas adjacent to streams where overbank flooding, wetlands and low areas are present.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if all of the easement had been obtained along the corridor.

Mr. Epps stated not all of the easements have been obtained.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if the source of the harmful levels of chemicals, bacteria, and medicine found in the Congaree National Park has been identified. *{No answer was provided at the committee meeting.}*

Mr. Epps stated this item is more of a "Cabin Branch Conservation Corridor Plan". The Conservation Commission has a certain amount of funding to purchase easements, and easements could be donated as well.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if the project would be able to move forward if all of the easements were not obtained.

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Mr. Epps stated he believes the project could move forward and the Conservation Commission would continue to work with the property owners to obtain the remaining easements.

Mr. Malinowski inquired what happens once the easements have been obtained by the County.

Mr. Epps stated the property owner will still retain ownership. The easement guarantees that property will be maintained (i.e. trees will not be taken down, the land will not be developed, etc.)

In response to Mr. Washington's inquiry regarding the process of obtaining easement, Mr. Epps stated the Conservation Commission typically has citizens that donate or request the County purchase easements. This request is a change wherein the Conservation Commission has decided to focus on a particular corridor, predominantly owned by Richland County, and approach the property owners to obtain the necessary easements.

Mr. Epps responded to Mr. Malinowski's inquiry regarding the costs of the remaining easement by stating, it would be difficult to determine since easements may be donated to the County. Although, the purchase of easements would be limited to the amount of funding the Conservation Commission has available.

Mr. Jackson moved, seconded by Ms. Dixon, to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve the request to endorse the creation of a Cabin Creek Conservation Corridor to provide for an organized effort to acquire easements along the creek. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Hosting the 2017 Neighborhoods USA Conference – Mr. McDonald stated the County has been requested to partner with the City of Columbia to host the 2017 Neighborhoods USA Conference, which is a nationwide conference dedicated and related to neighborhoods and neighborhood improvement programs. Staff would recommend moving forward with the partnership because the conference would be a great asset to County.

Ms. Dixon moved, seconded by Mr. Jackson, to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve the partnership with the City of Columbia, and provide details on how much time it would like staff to commit to co-host the 2017 Neighborhood USA conference.

Mr. Malinowski stated the comments by the Planning Director, Ms. Hegler, and Assistant Administrator, Sparty Hammett, led him to believe there would be a significant amount of Neighborhood Improvement staff time involved, would reduce the amount of time available for neighborhood projects and staff was not aware if many of the neighborhoods are members of the NUSA. Since the estimated conference cost is

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\$231,000 and would attract about 700 people to the conference, it does not seem very practical use of County resources.

Mr. McDonald stated the amount of County staff time requested is to be minimal and there has not been a request for funding at this time.

Ms. Hegler stated since drafting the ROA she has had an opportunity to review the bid application and the County is not listed as a 50/50 partner in the event.

The City of Columbia has put forth \$30,000 and it is likely they will approach the County for a match. At this time, the request is for staff assistance, which Ms. Hegler equates to time. The City is dedicating one full-time employee and 13 part-time employees before, during and after the event.

Ms. Hegler stated the County has attended conference and won awards, but the City and City neighborhoods are much more involved with NUSA than the County.

Ms. Dixon expressed the desire to see the County be an equal partner in the event.

Mr. Malinowski made a substitute motion, seconded by Mr. Jackson, to hold this item in committee to receive feedback on the benefits to County, the costs to the County, the level of partnership required, and time and/or salary required for County staff to assist with the event. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Removal of Lien off of Property – Mr. McDonald stated the request was for the removal of a lien on property located at 2045 Smith Street. The lien was placed on the property due to the building having been demolished by the County under the Unsafe Building Program. Upon removal of the lien, the property is to be turned over to a neighborhood group.

Mr. Malinowski inquired of the property value and if any restrictions will be placed on the particular use. *{Staff was not able to answer the questions at this time.}*

Mr. McDonald emphasized the point that the County will not be donating the land to the neighborhood association, but the property owner. The only involvement the County has is the removal of the lien.

Mr. Livingston stated he would suggest a policy when handling these requests in the future.

Mr. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Malinowski, to forward to Council with a recommendation to have Richland County remove the lien off of the property located at 2045 Smith St., (Parcel # 13516-03-21) contingent on the property owner donating the land to the Atlas Road Community Organization. The vote in favor was unanimous.

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ITEMS PENDING ANALYSIS

Fund and/or seek a partnership with SCE&G to plant indigenous flowers and plants along transmission line corridors in Richland County – Held in committee.

Comprehensive Youth Program – Held in committee.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:46 PM.

The Minutes were transcribed by Michelle M. Onley, Deputy Clerk of Council