

Regular Council Meeting

July 10, 2012 at 6 p.m.

Members Present:

Joe Owens, Mayor
Boyd Jones, Mayor Pro-Tem
Abbott L. Bray, Jr.
Eric L. Fowler
L. Dale Harley
Tommy Parler
B.J. Unthank
Teddy Wingard

Members Absent:

Casey Jordan Hallman, out of town

Others Present:

Jenny Cunningham, City Administrator
Myron Corley, Deputy City Administrator
Mardi Valentino, City Clerk
Donna Smith, Director of Economic Development
Sid Varn, Director of Planning and Engineering
Dennis Tyndall, Police Chief
Members of the Public and Press

Rick Hodge, City Treasurer
Stuart Jones, Building Official
Brian Carter, Director of Planning and Zoning
Charles Garren, Public Works Director
Ken Ebener, Municipal Judge
Matt Edwards, Police Major

Agenda Item I – Call to Order

Mayor Owens called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. and noted a quorum was present. *The State, Free Times, Lexington County Chronicle, Cayce-West Columbia News, and The Columbia Star* were notified of the public hearing by e-mail on July 6, 2012.

Agenda Item II – Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Reverend Lonnie Shull, Pastor Emeritus of the First Baptist Church of West Columbia, gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item III – Announcements by Mayor

- A. Mayor Owens recognized Fire Captain George Norris, who retired in June 2012 after 35 years of service to the city. Mayor Owens presented Mr. Norris with a service pin and a certificate. Mayor Owens thanked Captain Norris for his dedication to protecting the safety of the citizens of West Columbia for 35 years.

- B. Mayor Owens recognized State Senator Nikki Setzler and Representative Kenny Bingham, SC House Majority Leader, who presented Council Member Eric Fowler with the Order of the Silver Crescent, the state of South Carolina’s highest honor for community and volunteer service. Senator Setzler read a twin resolution from the House and Senate commending Council Member Fowler for unselfish service to First Baptist Church of West Columbia as a deacon and Sunday School teacher, his involvement in American Legion Post 79 of West Columbia and especially for his dedication to the citizens City of West Columbia for twenty years of perfect attendance at all regular council meetings.

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Agenda Item IV – Requests for Appearance

- A. Mayor Owens recognized Reverend Scooter Scott, Director of the Nehemiah Project, a program designed to assist people with attaining their General Equivalent Diploma (GED). Rev. Scott stated that Christ Central Ministries, Inc., the parent organization of the Nehemiah Project wanted to enter into a partnership with the City of West Columbia to offer the FREE and Fast Track GED program to residents of West Columbia. Rev. Scott said the Nehemiah Project would work with volunteers from schools, businesses, churches and civic organizations to provide tutoring and resources for people who want to earn their GEDs in order to qualify for employment opportunities. He explained that elevating the education level of city residents would enhance their employability and improve the overall quality of their lives. The City would assist the Nehemiah Project by communicating the availability of the FREE and Fast Track GED program to residents through public endorsements, information on the city's website, messages on water bills and other means of communication. The city also would provide facilities for testing, qualifying, and tutoring applicants. Rev. Scott explained that the Nehemiah Project is a national pilot project which targets students 17 years or older at risk of dropping out of school and older adults who already dropped out of school. He asked council to approve a partnership with the Nehemiah Project. Mayor Owens thanked Rev. Scott for his presentation. Council agreed to partner with Christ Central Ministries and the Nehemiah Project to offer the innovative program. Mayor Owens said the FREE and Fast Track GED program would be of great benefit to residents in West Columbia.
- B. Mayor Owens recognized Mr. William "Tony" Seyfer, who stated he owns Tom Corley's Towing and Recovery. He distributed a letter dated June 8, 2012 that he received from Police Major Matt Edwards regarding his company's status on the city's towing rotation schedule. Major Edwards informed him that Corley's Towing would be taken off the rotation schedule since A-1 Wrecker Service, which is located at 1113 Hall Street, also tows for Corley's Towing. Mr. Seyfer said he has provided wrecker service in West Columbia since 1997. He purchased Corley's Towing in 2001 and was authorized to continue using that business name by the former owner. He said A-1 Wrecker Service is owned by Mr. Carl Sherwood, who has a business license and carries separate liability and Workers' Compensation insurance. He explained that approximately three months ago one of his trucks was badly disabled in a wreck leaving him with only one truck he could operate. A-1 Wrecker Service helped with his towing until he could get the wrecked truck repaired and operational. Mr. Seyfer said he is in the process of dividing the property at 1113 Hall Street into two properties with storage yards separated by fencing so both companies would operate completely independent of each other.

Mayor Owens recognized Major Edwards who stated that the Police Department has the responsibility to maintain an impartial on-call rotation schedule. A complaint was filed with the Police Department alleging that A-1 Wrecker Service and Corley's Towing were operating out of the same location, which gave one service twice as many weeks on the rotation schedule as other towing services. Major Edwards said for a wrecker service to be placed on the rotation schedule it must have two tow trucks in operation. An investigation showed that Corley's Towing had only one truck in operation which worked out of the 1113 Hall Street location. He said there is no record of a city business license for Corley's Towing at 900 William Street and no sign of towing activity at that address. Major Edwards said phone calls to Corley's Towing are referred to A-1 Wrecker Service and both companies use the same post office box address.

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Agenda Item IV – Requests for Appearance (continued)

Major Edwards said apparently Mr. Seyfer moved Corley's Towing from 900 Williams Street to 1113 Hall Street where he operates A-1 Wrecker Service. Major Edwards stated it was obvious that Corley's Towing exists in name only to keep two weeks of towing rotation. He said based upon the results of his investigation he sent a letter notifying Mr. Seyfer that Corley's Towing would be terminated from the towing service schedule.

Mayor Owens said the Police Department currently is the arbitrator of which companies are accepted on the towing rotation schedule. He expressed reluctance to change the current wrecker and towing ordinance to take away the responsibility of the towing rotation schedule from the Police Department. Mr. Seyfer said the companies have separate business licenses and insurance coverage and he is in the process of registering the trucks separately to each company. He indicated plans to separate phones, business entrances and storage areas. Mayor Owens entertained a motion to discuss the issue more thoroughly at the next council work session. Council Member Parler so moved and Council Member Fowler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item V – Approval of Minutes

Mayor Owens entertained a motion to approval the minutes for the following meetings: the Public Hearing on the Budget for FY 2012-2013 held June 5, 2012, the Regular Council Meeting held June 5, 2012, the Special Council Meeting held June 18, 2012 and the Special Council Meeting held June 26, 2012. Council Member Fowler moved and Council Member Harley seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item VI – New Business

- A. Mayor Owens recognized City Attorneys Nikki Setzler and Michelle Dickerson who presented information on a proposed ordinance to adopt a special property tax assessment for rehabilitated historic property. Mr. Setzler stated that the State Street business area and the city's Mill Village are designated as a national historic district and the city can encourage the rehabilitation and preservation of historic properties by offering a tax incentive for developers. Mayor Owens entertained a motion for first reading consideration of an ordinance to establish a special property tax assessment for rehabilitated historic properties. Council Member Harley so moved and Council Member Unthank seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Mayor Owens asked City Administrator Jenny Cunningham how many historic buildings would be affected by the ordinance. Mrs. Cunningham responded that approximately 15 commercial buildings designated on the National Historic Register in West Columbia would qualify for a special tax assessment. She noted that residential structures would not be eligible for the special tax assessment.
- B. Mayor Owens entertained a motion for first reading consideration of the Planning Commission's recommendation for a map amendment to establish the zoning classification for 2.86 acres of property located at 846 Chris Drive (TMS# 004599-10-006) as LM (light manufacturing). Council Member Parler so moved and Mayor Pro-Tem Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- C. Mayor Owens entertained a motion for first reading consideration of the Planning Commission's recommendation for a map amendment to establish the zoning classification for 1.53 acres of property located at 832 Chris Drive (TMS# 004599-10-042) as LM (light manufacturing). Council Member Unthank so moved and Council Member Parler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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Agenda Item VI – New Business (continued)

- D. Mayor Owens entertained a motion for first reading consideration of the Planning Commission's recommendation for a map amendment to establish the zoning classification of one acre of property located at 176 McSwain Drive (TMS# 004597-01-002) as C3 (restricted commercial). Mayor Pro-Tem Jones so moved and Council Member Bray seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- E. Mayor Owens entertained a motion for first reading consideration of the Planning Commission's recommendation for a map amendment to establish the zoning classification for 3.44 acres of property located at 1809 Augusta Road (TMS# 004630-01-002) as C2 (general commercial). Council Member Wingard so moved and Council Member Unthank seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- F. Mayor Owens entertained a motion for consideration of a resolution to authorize the sale and consumption of beer and wine at the "Wine on the River" fundraiser for cancer patients sponsored by the Lexington Medical Center Foundation's Women of Hope. Council Member Unthank so moved and Mayor Pro-Tem Jones seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Mayor Owens stated that the "Wine on the River" fundraiser would take place on Saturday, August 25, 2012 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the West Columbia Riverwalk Amphitheater.

Agenda Item VII – Adjourn

Mayor Owens entertained a motion to adjourn. Council Member Fowler so moved and Council Member Parler seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Council adjourned at 7 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marta M. Valentino, CMC
City Clerk