

City of West Columbia, SC

Public Hearing on Budget for Fiscal Year 2011-2012

June 7, 2011 at 6 p.m.

Members Present:

Bobby E. Horton, Mayor
Jack L. Harmon, Mayor Pro-Tem
Eric L. Fowler
L. Dale Harley
Boyd Jones
Marsha Moore
Tommy Parler

Members Absent:

BJ Unthank, out of town on business
Cathy Shannon

Others Present:

Jenny Cunningham, City Administrator
Mardi Valentino, City Clerk
Myron Corley, Deputy City Administrator
Donna Smith, Economic Development Director
Brian Carter, Planning and Zoning Director
Sid Varn, Planning & Engineering Director
Members of the Public and Press

Rick Hodge, City Treasurer
Charles Garren, Public Works Director
Stuart Jones, Building Official
Dennis Tyndall, Police Chief
Joe Owens, Utilities Director
Ken Ebener, Municipal Judge
Wyatt Coleman, Fire Chief

Agenda Item I – Call to Order

Mayor Horton called the public hearing 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 June 3, 2011.

Agenda Item II – Opening Remarks

Mayor Horton recognized City Administrator Jenny Cunningham who gave a brief overview of the budget plan for FY 2011-2012. Mrs. Cunningham said General Fund expenses totaled \$13,000,000, which is a 2.2 percent decrease over last year's budget of \$13,286,700. The proposed millage for FY 2011-2012 is a total of 67.43 mills of which 59.8 mills are for the operating fund and 7.6 mills are for debt service. An owner-occupied home valued at \$100,000 would generate a tax bill of \$269.72 with the proposed millage.

Mrs. Cunningham explained that the primary sources of General Fund revenues included property taxes, business licenses fees, state rebates, hydrant and fire protection fees, police fines and fees, interest, permits and other miscellaneous revenue, transfer from the Water/Sewer Fund and anticipated grant funds. She said the primary expenditures for the General Fund are \$5,026,850 for the Police Department, \$1,924,250 for the Fire Department, and \$2,217,100 for the Sanitation Department.

Mrs. Cunningham stated the proposed budget plan includes funding for a three-percent merit increase for employees with satisfactory performance evaluations to be awarded on the anniversary of employment.

Mrs. Cunningham said the city will change health insurance carriers July 1, 2011, which will result in a savings of approximately \$400,000. She said the Workers Compensation premium will be reduced by \$200,000 due to the city's safety record and good claims experience.

Mrs. Cunningham said a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for employees is not currently in the proposed budget plan. She suggested that revenues from summer and fall months be evaluated at mid-year (December 2011) to explore the possibility of a COLA being granted at that time.

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Agenda Item III – Public Comments on Budget for FY 2011-2012

Mayor Horton asked if any council members had any comments or questions on the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2011-2012. Mayor Horton recognized Council Member Parler who asked Mrs. Cunningham to explain the millage increase of 4.588 mils in the proposed budget over the current 2010-2011 budget. Mrs. Cunningham responded that one mil is an additional mil needed for debt service. She said last year when Lexington County performed its property reassessment it quoted numbers to the city that were under what the city projected and as a result the city did not collect enough money for debt service with the millage that was established for last year's budget. She said the other mils are to raise some revenue to provide services to newly annexed areas. She said the city has annexed about 650 new units in the past year and the millage would be used to reduce the transfer from the Water and Sewer Fund to the General Fund.

Council Member Parler asked how much the millage would increase on a residence. Mrs. Cunningham responded that the millage increase would be approximately \$22 per year on a house valued at \$100,000. Mayor Horton stated that the 7.6 mils for debt service would cease when the property at State and Meeting Street is sold. He said there is a good chance that will occur in the near future due to recent confidential negotiations with several developers. Council Member Parler said he hated to see an increase of any kind right now because a lot of people are hurting because of lack of jobs. He said \$22 a year does not seem like a lot of money, but to some people it is a lot of money.

Mayor Horton noted that Council Member Moore joined the hearing at 6:14 p.m.

Mayor Horton asked if any members of the public had any comments or questions on the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2010-2011 and received no response.

Agenda Item IV – Adjourn

Mayor Horton declared the public hearing on the proposed budget for FY 2011-2012 adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marta M. Valentino, CMC
City Clerk