



MINUTES
OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
Regular Meeting
September 15, 2009

MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr. Reg Dexter, District V, Council Chairman
Mr. Joel Thrift, District IV, Vice Chairman
Mr. Mario Suarez, District III, Chairman Pro Tem
Mr. Paul Corbeil, District I
Mr. Wayne McCall, District II

Oconee County Council met on Tuesday, September 15, 2009 at 7:00 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members, Kendra Brown, Interim Administrator, Thomas L. Martin County Attorney and Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to Council present.

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 to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Members of the press present: Ray Chandler – Anderson Independent, Dick Mangrum – WGOG Radio & Carlos Galarza - Daily Journal.

Call to Order:

Mr. Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Mr. McCall led the pledge of allegiance to the United States Flag.

Minutes:

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Corbeil, approved 4 – 0 [Mr. Suarez had not yet arrived] that the minutes from the September 1, 2009 regular meeting be adopted as printed.

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Corbeil, approved 4 – 0 [Mr. Suarez had not yet arrived] that the minutes from the September 8, 2009 special meeting be adopted as printed.

Mr. Dexter noted that the September 9, 2009 meeting had been cancelled.

Mr. Corbeil made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 4 – 0 [Mr. Suarez had not yet arrived] that the minutes from the September 10, 2009 special meeting be adopted as printed.

ACOG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Oconee County for 2009 / Mr. Chip Bently:

Mr. Bently reviewed with Council the Appalachian Regional Comprehensive Economic Strategy / Oconee County Element. He noted that this plan is a compilation of the many economic development efforts going on in the region and should be considered one tool of many to be used for economic development purposes. For the 2009 report, project updates and new

initiatives were identified through a survey of local governments, special purpose districts, economic development agencies and human service agencies. Discussion followed.

Mr. Bentley addressed citizen concerns and verified for Council that all appropriate entities had been contacted in the compilation of this report and that any omissions were clerical in nature.

Mr. Corbeil made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 5 – 0 to accept the report subject to receipt of an updated list of contacts. [NOTE: This vote was taken after public comment which fell later in the meeting.]

Introduction of new Information Technology Director:

Ms. Brown introduced Mr. Mike Powell to Council and those present. She noted that Mr. Powell is a resident of Seneca and a graduate of Clemson University. Additionally, he has 18 years experience in IT management and had worked for GE since 1998.

CAFR Award Presentation to Finance Department from the GFO:

Ms. Karen Wicker, National Government Financial Office representative, presented to several members of the Finance Department the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for its comprehensive annual financial report [CAFR]. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

The CAFR has been judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program including demonstrating a constructive “spirit of full disclosure” to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the CAFR.

Ms. Brown commended the entire department for their dedication and hard work.

Council also commended Ms. Brown, the department and the previous Director, Ms. Phyllis Lombard, for a job well done on not only this report but all financial matters.

Public Comment Session:

Ms. Susie Cornelius addressed Council regarding concerns with the ACOG report and the Duke leases. Ms. Cornelius voiced concerns that all municipalities had not been included in the report. Additionally, she had concerns regarding lake access for citizens as it relates to the new leases.

Mr. John Little addressed Council reading from a written statement [filed with these minutes] requesting millage to be lowered for FY 2009-2010.

Mr. Berry Nichols addressed Council regarding the lowering of millage and his opposition to borrowing money and or issuing bonds when funds are on hand.

Mr. C. W. Richards addressed Council regarding his concerns based on information gathered from his participation in the citizen committee regarding the selection of a new county administrator from the existing pool of candidates.

Extended Public Comment Session:

There was no Extended Public Comment at this meeting.

Consideration of the following Ordinances:

Ordinance 2009-20:

Ms. Brown stated that this budget amendment ordinance was in title only and asked for Council's direction regarding projects to be included for funding. Discussion followed.

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 5 – 0 to approve on first reading [in title only] **Ordinance 2009-20** "AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE FISCAL YEAR 2009-2010 BUDGET APPROPRIATES ORDINANCE FOR OCONEE COUNTY IN CERTAIN LIMITED REGARDS AND PARTICULARS, ONLY; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO" and to authorize the County Administrator to include funding for the fire trucks, \$60,000 for CAT Bus and up to \$45,000 for the equipment for the sixth radio tower.

Items for Consideration by Council:

FY 2009-2010 Oconee County Millage Presentation:

Mr. Ken Nix, Auditor, and Ms. Christy Porter, Chief Deputy Auditor, addressed Council utilizing a PowerPoint presentation [filed with these minutes] reviewing the process for calculating and setting millage. As part of the presentation, Mr. Nix stated that mill values are as follow:

- Oconee County Mill = \$481,048
- School District of Oconee County Mill = \$522,098

Mr. Nix noted that he was requesting Council to approve the following millage:

- 212.4 mills for the incorporated areas of the county
- 215.3 mills for the unincorporated areas.

The difference of 2.9 mills is based on funds collected for fire protection in the unincorporated area. The millage rate will fund the county's \$43.3 million operations budget, its bond payments and the approximately \$56.4 million of the School District of Oconee County's budget. Mr. Nix noted that the rate represents a cut of 1.4 mills compared with the funding of the 2008-2009 county budget.

Mr. McCall and made a statement in opposition to this millage; asking that it be reduced by a minimum of 10-15 mills. Mr. Corbeil's read from a prepared statement which will be filed with these minutes. Lengthy discussion followed.

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Corbeil, approved 4 – 1 [Mr. McCall opposed] to approve the millage as presented by County Auditor Ken Nix as outlined above.

Motion to Amend Agenda:

Mr. Dexter asked for a motion to amend the agenda in order to have the scheduled Executive Session at this time for the purpose of discussing a personnel and contractual matter.

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 5 – 0 to amend the agenda as stated above.

Executive Session:

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Corbeil, approved 5 – 0 to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing a personnel and contractual matter.

Council entered Executive Session at 8:39 p.m.

Council returned from Executive Session at 8:54 p.m. on a motion by Mr. Corbeil, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 5 – 0.

Mr. Dexter stated that no action was taken in Executive Session.

Mr. Corbeil made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to announce the names of the four candidates still under consideration for the open County Administrator position.

Prior to announcing the four candidates [worksheet with career highlights filed with these minutes], Mr. Dexter addressed inaccurate information reported in the media recently that put into question the qualifications/character of the four candidates. Mr. Dexter stated emphatically that the issues in the media were not associated with the four candidates and he stated clearly that their resumes and applications were of the highest quality. Mr. McCall confirmed that Mr. Dexter's statements were 100% true and not related to the four candidates.

Mr. Dexter stated that the process was on track and that input had been received and reviewed by Council from both citizens and department heads regarding important qualifications / characteristics in a good administrator. He stated the next step is to complete the background checks and schedule face to face interviews.

The four candidates are: Mr. Walter Munchheimer, West Palm Beach Fl.; Mr. Hal Mason, Garner NC; Mr. Leonard Sossamon, Concord, NC; and Mr. Mark Watson, Waxhaw NC.

Items for Consideration by Council [continued]:

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS: ATAX:

LOCAL ATAX:

- a. Oconee Magazine Advertising
- b. PRT Brochure re-order
- c. Southern Women's Show-Savannah, GA

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to approve the three Local ATAX requests above as outlined on the agenda item summaries.

STATE ATAX:

- a. Blue Ridge Arts Center
 - ~ POP Open Studio Tour-advertising
 - ~ Two Fine Folk and Energy advertising
- b. West Oak Young Farmers & Agribusiness Association advertising
- c. Oconee Community Theater Advertising
- d. Walhalla Merchants Association – Oktoberfest Advertising

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 5 – 0 to approve the four State ATAX requests above as outlined on the agenda item summaries.

30% ATAX fund distributed to the Oconee Tourism Commission / \$10,600:

Mr. Corbeil made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 5 – 0 to authorize disburse \$10,600 to the Oconee Tourism Commission as outlined in the agenda item summary.

PRT Commission / Duke Energy Lease Extension / South Cove & High Falls County Parks:

Mr. Phil Shirley, PRT Director, addressed the Council outlining the need to extend existing leases for South Cove and High Falls County Parks with Duke Energy.

Mr. McCall made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to approve extension of the leases with each lease term ending September 1, 2038 as outlined in the agenda item summary.

BVB 08-04 / 2 Pierce Contender Commercial Pumper Trucks / \$612,340:

Mr. McCall made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to approve [1] the purchase of two commercial pumper trucks from Spartan Fire & Emergency Apparatus of Roebuck, SC in the amount of \$612,340, and [2] to approve using the balance of funding in the line item in the amount of \$87,660 to be used for the purchase of “loose equipment” necessary to make the new trucks fully operational as outlined in the agenda item summary.

Sole Source / Firehouse Software / \$50,124.75:

Mr. McCall made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to award as a sole source provided for the Firehouse Software [to include support contract and enterprise system] to ASC Government Systems, Inc. of Urbandale, IA in the amount of \$50,124.75 as out lined in the agenda item summary.

Bid 09-05 / Physicals for Firefighters / Upstate Medical Associates, PA / \$84,930:

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCall, approved 5 – 0 to award Bid 09-05 to Upstate medical Associates, PA of Seneca, SC in the amount of \$84,930 for a period of one year with the option to renew for four additional one year periods and to authorize the County Administrator to renew the contracts for up to four one year periods provided their work is satisfactory as outlined in the agenda item summary.

RFQ 09-01 / Pre-Qualification of Firms to Provide Legal Services:

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to pre-quality the Allmon Law Firm, PC, of Seneca, the Clauer Law Firm LLC of Salem SC and Stephanie M. Corley, PC of Walhalla SC to assist the County with future legal issues including but not limited to real estate acquisition and disposition, magistrate court actions, road closure matters and delinquent tax enforcement as outlined in the agenda item summary.

Human Resources / ACOG Department Head Training / \$300:

Mr. McCall made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to authorize Human Resources to have ACOG provided Department Head Training in the amount of \$300 to be paid from Human Resource’s contingency account as outlined in the agenda item summary.

Board & Commission Appointments:

There we no Board or Commission appointments at this meeting.

Commission / Board Reports to Council:

Library Board:

Mr. John Adams, Board Chairman, introduced Ms. Sue Baldwin, Library Director, Mr. Biff Kennedy, incoming Board Chair, and Mr. Larry Michalec, VC3 who all addressed Council in detail regarding the Library’s accomplishments and goals. Handouts were provided and are filed with these minutes.

Council Committee Reports:

Budget, Finance & Administration:
regarding activities of the committee.

Mr. Dexter read from a prepared statement

Transportation Committee: Mr. Thrift read from a prepared statement regarding activities of the committee. Additionally, Mr. Thrift noted the next committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 22, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. in Chambers.

Additionally, Mr. Dexter announced that the Budget, Finance & Administration and Planning & Economic Development Committee meetings scheduled for Thursday, October 15, 2009 will be cancelled and rescheduled.

Administrator's Report:

H1N1 / Swine Flu County Website:

Ms. Brown notified Council that the new H1N1 Swine Flu Website <http://www.ocflu.com> is up and running and accessible to all county citizens providing helpful information and preventative measures during the flu season.

Old Business:

Finance Department / Media Statements:

Mr. Dexter again addressed statements made in the media regarding the County's Finance Department and staff. He clearly stated that the department and staff are all highly trained valuable employees. Mr. Dexter noted that Ms. Brown has been a CPA for the past 18 years. He stated on behalf the Council their support for the good work being done by the Finance Department and commended all for a job well done.

New Business:

No New Business was addressed at this meeting.

Adjourn:

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council