



MINUTES
OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MEETING
with the Economic Development Commission
June 9, 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. Wayne McCall, District II

Oconee County Council met for a workshop with the Oconee County Economic Development Commission on Tuesday, June 9, 2009 at 7:30 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members [except Mr. Suarez], Kendra Brown, Interim Administrator 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, Carlos Galarza - Daily Journal and Dick Mangrum – WGOG Radio.

Call to Order:

Mr. Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m.

Workshop Discussion with Economic Development Commission regarding a Spec Building:

Mr. Jim Alexander, Economic Development Director, introduced members of the Commission to include: Mr. Hank Field [Chairman], Mr. Harold Gibson, Ms. Kim Alexander, and Mr. Sammy Dixon. In addition he introduced guests Ms. Jeanne Ward/OMC, Mr. Jim Evers/AT&T and Mr. Les Prichard/Roebuck Buildings.

Mr. Alexander provided the Council members with a copy of a Powerpoint presentation [filed with these minutes]. The presentation covered the Commission's mission and options for a spec building; current building inventory; the first industrial park in the county; review of success for first spec building; current location for new building and options related to size of building and design; and, phase & funding options. Mr. Alexander reviewed grants currently on hand from Blue Ridge Electric [\$240,000 with a commitment for \$600,000 within 5 years] and AT&T [\$130,000]. He stated that the estimated total cost for the project is \$1,800,000. Mr. Alexander outlined three funding options with the recommendation that Council select Option III. He also reviewed current funds available in the Economic Development Infrastructure line item [\$1,430,000] which could be designated for the building of a spec building.

Mr. Alexander asked Mr. Prichard to address Council regarding the design specifics of the building and outlined specifics related to phases II & III in the presentation.

Mr. Alexander also asked Mr. Jim Evers, AT&T to address Council regarding AT&T's utility grants program. Mr. Evers stated that AT&T believes that the I85 corridor and Oconee County in general has great growth potential and that is why the grant was awarded to the County. Lastly he noted that they only grant a total of \$300,000 for the entire state of South Carolina and that Oconee County was granted the largest grant this year.

Lastly, Mr. Alexander asked Mr. Hank Field, Economic Development Commission Chairman, to address Council. Mr. Field stated that he has seen a lot of change in the county and that with the difficult economic times we need to position ourselves to be able to attract businesses when the economy turns around. He stated that we need to continue to plan for the future regardless of the current economic down turn.

Mr. Thrift and Mr. McCall questioned Mr. Alexander and the Commission Chair regarding the loss of industry to the county over the past few months and their ability to be involved to try to save county jobs. Mr. McCall read from an article stating that Johnson Controls was building a Battery Recycling Plant in Florence County, SC – he questioned why the Economic Development Commission/Department had not obtained this plant for Oconee County. Concerns were voiced that we lost valuable real estate with infrastructure in place and that Council members were being told that the County was not involved and showed no interest in these facilities. Mr. Alexander assured the Council that they have been involved in attempting to acquire some the property but that things did not work out. Mr. Dexter questioned if we had any companies at present in jeopardy of loosing employees or shutting their doors. Mr. Alexander stated that some are in jeopardy and the he is working to help them with whatever he can i.e., assistance with regulatory agencies, county delegation, etc.

Lengthy discussion followed.

Mr. Dexter stated that as this was a workshop no action would be taken on matters discussed at this meeting but he instructed the Clerk to Council to place this matter on the July 7, 2009 Council agenda for further discussion and action.

Mr. Dexter thanked Mr. Alexander, the Commission and invited guests for the presentation.

Adjourn:

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 4 – 0 to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council