



COLUMBIA CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES TUESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2022

The Columbia City Council conducted a Work Session on Tuesday, August 23, 2022 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, SC. The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann, Mayor called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Howard E. Duvall, Jr., The Honorable Edward H. McDowell, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tempore, The Honorable William Brennan, The Honorable Aditi Bussells, The Honorable Tina N. Herbert, and The Honorable Joe E. Taylor, Jr. Also present were Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Moore Hammond, City Clerk. This meeting was advertised in accordance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

INVOCATION

The Honorable Edward H. McDowell, Jr. offered the invocation.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION

1. Overall Approach to Chronic/Unsheltered Homelessness in Columbia - Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said there is urgency around the discussion regarding the overall approach to chronic unsheltered homelessness in Columbia. Having met with the task force last week, I was very pleased to hear from some of the providers that we have funded over the years. They are doing a yeoman's job in our community to tackle the overall issue of homelessness. What has been directed to me as the city manager and what is the most urgent need is to focus on the chronically unsheltered population in our community. Over the course of the last several weeks, I have been trying to fill in the gaps of what our service providers are doing well and give you a different approach based on the city's capacity from a funding or resource perspective. Dr. Bussells asked providers some questions. Based on what came out of that meeting, I will discuss where city staff can fill in those gaps.

Councilor Bussells said we held the third task force meeting on August 17, 2022. It was an opportunity for our five city funded providers to share their perspectives and ideas around key issues that have risen in our discussions. Our questions were focused on some of the gaps we have identified after the cataloging of services. Our second meeting was on June 29, 2022. Our consultant provided an overview of programs available in greater Richland County. This task force has intentionally focused on the unsheltered homeless. The Columbia Police Department estimates that there are 200 to 250 [unsheltered] people, with about 50 that are more likely to engage in criminal activity. We learned that every organization is focused on a different population. We asked the service providers for recommendations for addressing the unsheltered



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homeless; how to streamline the over 100 programs addressing homelessness in the Midlands; how to get more buy-in from federal, state and neighboring jurisdictions; and the biggest challenges they see in their work. There continues to be a need to provide services after 5:00 p.m. The Crisis Stabilization Unit will be the point of contact after 5 p.m. In addition to the large coalition of 13 counties that the Midlands Area Consortium on Homelessness serves, the continuum of CARE dollars in South Carolina are substantially less than any other state and it is not proportional to our homelessness population. One of the major recommendations that the providers had was leveraging our contacts in Washington to help advocate for more funding. Richland County receives less money than Lexington and other counties, even though we are the only county that has a low barrier shelter. All the providers talked about the success of the city's bus ticket program in reuniting families. There was discussion around the sex offender ban and providers urged us to address this. There was an emphasis on opening the Inclement Weather Center year round, given that Transitions remains the only center that provides housing and has low barriers compared to the other options available. Councilman Brennan asked about the buy-in for neighboring jurisdictions. Richland County reduced Transitions funding by \$100,000 this year. We need our partners at the table assisting with some of these services that are quite expensive. It is important that we pay our fair share and not be burdened with our regional neighbors' support. Everyone acknowledged that there is room for better coordination and alignment. The city will continue to be very clear about our expectations. In the short-term that may mean reorganizing these contracts, looking at best practices, and getting more housing around unsheltered homeless.

Councilor Herbert asked what Richland County's current contribution level is for Transitions.

Councilor Bussells said Richland County contributed \$100,000 and Lexington County contributed \$50,000.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon a motion made by Mr. Duvall and seconded by Mr. Brennan, Council voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 3:16 p.m. for the discussion of **Items 2 and 3**.

2. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(2)

Homeless Services



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3. Discussion of the employment of an employee pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(1)

Benefits

Council adjourned the Executive Session to reconvene the work session at 5:25 p.m.

Councilor Brennan left the meeting at 5:25 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The Honorable Barry Walker, Sr., Mayor of Irmo said we have some of the same issues around homelessness, especially in Harbison. The Harbison Gardens apartment complex is having issues with uncontrolled kids and people doing violent stuff in the surrounding neighborhoods and it is morphing over to the Town of Irmo. We put together programs to work with the residents, management, and Irmo Police Department to get the kids under control. The program provides the kids with mentoring, meals, and after school activities. These kids still need more intervention. The town of Irmo has put \$100,000 into this education/reclamation program. We need the City of Columbia to help us with this because I am getting push back from my citizens in regards to spending this money outside of our limits when it is in the City of Columbia limits. I reached out to merchants in the Harbison business community. I received a commitment for \$50,000 to fund some of the programs with a caveat that the city match the amount of money that we put forward. We need the city to help us with this issue because it is not something that is going away. We need to work on this together so we don't have kids going into neighborhoods to do criminal activities because they have nothing to do. There are a myriad of things that we can avoid if we work together, but it is going to take some financial support.

Councilor Herbert asked what was the source of funding.

The Honorable Barry Walker, Sr., Mayor of Irmo said we used \$100,000 of the ARPA money. We have also pulled from the accommodations tax.

Mayor Rickenmann asked for the overall proposal to include how many kids were served from the program. We have not voted on our ARPA money. It will be beneficial for us to look at what resources we have and understand what the true effect is. Share all of that information for us to discuss as a Council so we can see what could be the options to form a partnership to address the issue.



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The Honorable Barry Walker, Sr., Mayor of Irmo said Harbison has a large business community, they contribute millions to your hospitality and accommodation taxes. I personally do not see a lot of stuff coming back to the Harbison area directly from you all.

Mayor Rickenmann said we take a lot of the load for the Midlands. We can see what we have available but we need the information to figure out what our funding options could be.

The Honorable Walker, Sr., Mayor of Irmo said the Harbison Garden community has over 150 families; about 200-300 kids from 2 year old to teenagers. Right now we can only serve 80 kids. I can get Dr. Ross, the Superintendent for the community, to send you all this information.

4. Recap of City Manager's Revised Funding Recommendations - Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget, Program Management and Grants Director

Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget, Program Management and Grants Director said many of the allocations are coming from fund balance from various sources. We made a few changes to the capital projects schedule. We made additional changes from previous discussions regarding our general capital projects. The most significant change is adding \$2 million from our general fund allocations to the Finlay Park program. The Assembly Street Grade Separation and Quiet Zone is listed because we need to know the allocation is coming from the general fund. We have made recommendations for the Congaree Vista funds, hospitality tax, and accommodations tax allocations. There is a recommendation from the ARPA fund towards two specific projects for city fire stations and police facilities. The next step is for City Council to act on these funds by adopting a budget amendment that will include these allocations. We are targeting the September 6, 2022 City Council meeting.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said we will push this information out to the public. I am sure they will be thankful we are moving Finlay Park forward.

Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget, Program Management and Grants Director said the remaining allocations are programmatic allocations based on prior conversations. I split Municipal Court from the facility renovations and the additional for the judicial restructure. We reflected an allocation for the homeless coordinator but we are leaving some to be determined allocations for grants.

Councilor Duvall said we have not had any discussion on the Office of Gun Violence Prevention.



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Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said because of the urgency around the homelessness discussion, the discussions of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and Amplify Columbia will need to be discussed next Tuesday.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager for Economic and Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer said in our last discussion regarding Finlay Park, we were asked to come back utilizing cash up front and issuing a bond to get this done on a short term loan. The total cost of the project is \$21.5 million. We spent \$1.5 million this past fiscal year out of hospitality tax. The state allocated \$1 million towards the project. We are recommending that we spend \$2 million out of the general fund, \$3 million from the Congaree Vista project account, and \$3.5 million from the hospitality tax cash. That will leave a balance of \$10.5 million. We will issue a bond in the spring for the remaining balance. This does not mean we will be holding up the project. The project can start as soon as you give the word for us to move forward. When we issue the bond we are looking at a five year loan.

Councilor Duvall asked what kind of debt will be issued.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager for Economic and Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer said we are looking at an installment purchase revenue bond. That gives us the ability to use multiple funding sources for repayment over the next five years. It also gives us a better interest rate. The interest should be under 3%.

5. Upcoming Meeting Schedule - Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said the list below is what is left to discuss. Council decided to meet on August 30, 2022 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. to finish the conversations. Mr. Brennan asked to add the fire services contract.

Remaining Discussion Items:

Office of Gun Violence Prevention

Fire Services Contract

Amplify Columbia

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Update

Community Promotions Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability

Hospitality Tax & Accommodations Tax Allocations

Previously Funded and/or Proposed City Council Special Events



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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk