



**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2022**

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The Columbia Economic and Community Development Committee met on Tuesday, September 13, 2022 at City Hall (Mayor's Conference Room), 1737 Main Street, Columbia, SC. The Honorable Joe E. Taylor, Jr., Chair called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and The Honorable Will Brennan and The Honorable Tina N. Herbert were present.

**COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

1. Columbia Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (CDBE) Enhancement Program Report - Ms. Diane Sumpter, Founder, President and Chief Executive Officer of DESA, Inc.

Ms. Diane Sumpter, Founder, President and Chief Executive Officer of DESA, Inc. said we have been working on the CDBE Enhancement Program Project for a long time. We have Todd Corley, Diane Rushing and Mary Bell here. They are CDBE firms, licensed by LLR and ready to go. The Mayor called us together to see how we can move this forward. It was determined that the City of Columbia has a CDBE Program. There is a list of tap providers but there is no diversity. We were charged with getting CDBE firms ready to lay taps. We used Mr. Ferguson's facility to demonstrate how to lay a tap. It is extremely costly to get insurance under the city's requirements. Clint and I met to see how we could get insured and licensed contractors to partner with CDBE contractors. The city's Engineering Department has sent several projects that are ready to go. DESA was asked to put a program together and we worked with the Office of Business Opportunities, the Engineering Department, and Clint Shealy. Today, we have three projects and three diverse CDBE firms that are ready to go.

Councilor Herbert asked about the significance of being on the tap list.

Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water said we are very particular about making live taps on our water system. We are protecting public health. We have a set of qualifications and criteria. We have some folks who are well positioned to do that. We were not realizing the opportunity for folks to demonstrate that they can purchase the equipment and that they had the capabilities. This opens up a window of opportunity for folks to demonstrate that capability then get on the tap list. Once they do, it is an entry to bid on any of our work and be successful in pursuing that. I am excited about how we might move forward.

Councilor Brennan said this is wonderful for the taps. Will this same format overlay projects for patching roads, water main leaks and other processes? I know we have subcontractors in place. Can we use this same approach with that opportunity?



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Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water said yes, we can. In order to make main line repairs and fix our leaks, you need to be on that approved list because you may have to do some wet work. Getting on the tap list is the first step then firms can become part of our indefinite delivery contracting program. This expands our opportunities, as well.

Ms. Diane Sumpter, Founder, President and Chief Executive Officer of DESA, Inc. added that the city will send inspectors to inspect five projects in order to know that it is done well. We have businesses ready to go. There may be a quicker path forward to what you are talking about. Corley did taps with Trussell Brothers ten years ago. The contract will be awarded to the prime with a large CDBE requirement. Corley is already on a project with a prime and the city will be sending out an inspector. Give us three months, and you will see a complete and diverse tap list.

Councilor Taylor said I hope we build on the success of the tap program with some of the easier things we do. The more of this we can subcontract to small, minority and startup businesses, the better. The money was approved for Finlay Park and Mr. Simons is here. I hope we are able to showcase our small and minority businesses throughout the City of Columbia and downtown.

2. Mobile Food Market - Ms. Ashley Page Bookhart, MSW, Food Policy Committee

Councilor Herbert said the city's Food Policy Committee has been meeting for several years. They recently rolled out the Food Service GIS map. It is time for the mobile food market project to come to fruition. Ms. Page will give an overview of where they are currently. I recommend that we send this to the Office of Business Opportunities or the Community Development Department to come back with the best model for moving forward with this.

Ms. Ashley Page Bookhart, MSW, Food Policy Committee said we have seen a lot of grocery store closures all over the United States. We want to bring in permanent grocery stores, but that can take a while. This concept is in addition to recruiting and retaining more prominent grocery store options across the city. A mobile food market is like a grocery store on wheels that can bring fruit, vegetables, dairy, and other staple items to neighborhoods. We are hoping to have meat, as well. We need to prioritize communities that don't have access to healthy goods and have lost grocery stores over the past few years. We have worked on this project for three years. We drafted a business plan last year. The budgetary numbers are outdated and can be reduced to make it more affordable. There are other funding sources available. We are hoping to work with city staff to move forward. This ties in with our policy recommendations. People care about healthy food access and entrepreneurship activities related to food. We want to work with a non-profit or small business to move the mobile market forward.



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Councilor Taylor asked the committee to consider the business friendly initiatives City Council recently passed. These could help if people wanted to open neighborhood stores. We have made it more economical. Look at recreating mom and pop type food stores in some of the areas.

Councilor Herbert said we are working with the HBCU technology challenge. We are trying to see what certain communities need to do to become competitive for chain grocery stores with respect to census numbers and per capita income.

Councilor Taylor said as a new process, we are going to vote on referrals for the record.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Herbert and seconded by Mr. Brennan, committee members voted unanimously to refer the Mobile Food Market concept to the Office of Business Opportunities for review. Recommendations on a path forward will be presented to the Economic and Community Development Committee.

3. Grease Trap Rebate Program - Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer and Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer said we had discussions in previous meetings on the Fats Oils and Grease (FOG) Forgivable Loan Program. Based on those discussions, I met with staff in various departments to review improvements to the program. The current program is a forgivable loan that covers half the cost at a maximum of \$5,000. It is funded through an allocation from the water and sewer fund. The new program will require City Council's authorization through a resolution. It will still be for all food providers in the city. This will be a rebate to cover the full cost at a maximum of \$10,000. Funding will come from hospitality tax collections from that particular food service provider. We will utilize half of their actual monthly collections. For example, if they collected \$1,000, the rebate to the provider is \$500 until we cover the full cost or the maximum amount of \$10,000.

Councilor Brennan asked for the average amount a restaurant pays in hospitality taxes.

Councilor Taylor said more than \$1,000 is collected in hospitality taxes in a year.

Councilor Brennan asked if this is for new systems.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer said yes.



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Councilor Herbert asked if we will set a maximum number that will be allowed since we will be pulling from the hospitality tax budget. There will be a budgetary impact because we won't be collecting what we were collecting.

Councilor Taylor said the plan is to make this available to anybody that starts up. It has no negative fiscal impact to the city. If it wasn't there; we wouldn't be collecting money. In the past, we were taking money out of water and sewer and loaning it. It is a better program for our small businesses. A grease trap can be the toughest thing to do. Today, it is difficult for a grocery operator to not have some type of prepared food outlet. This will impact our ability to recruit those small businesses, too.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer said if you are good with moving this program forward from the committee to Council, we will bring back a resolution to City Council. Staff will complete the process and program changes and begin marketing the new program. We will need direction from Council on how to utilize the remaining funds whether it goes back into the water and sewer fund or utilized for this program. We anticipate full implementation by January 1, 2023.

Councilor Herbert asked how many businesses have utilized the current program.

Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water said around eight. We rolled it out during the pandemic and it wasn't highly utilized. The original program was not for new establishments; it was for remodels and that limited penetration. There's over \$70,000 remaining from the original \$100,000 in seed money.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer suggested that we review the current program with City Council, outline the advantages of the new program, and then bring back a resolution for approval.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Taylor and seconded by Mr. Brennan, committee members voted unanimously to refer a presentation of the Grease Trap Rebate Program to City Council for review and consideration with the recommendation to return unused funds from the current program back to the water and sewer fund.



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4. City Council Proposed Zoning Public Hearing Schedule - Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said in discussing our business friendly efforts, the issue of streamlining zoning public hearings came up. We only hold the hearings every other month. Our ordinance requires us to advertise zoning public hearings for 30 days in advance of the meeting. The Planning Commission hears the matter that comes to your zoning public hearing first and then it comes to City Council. Currently, if you come to the Planning Commission in November, you have to wait until January to go to a zoning public hearing. The idea is to hold a zoning public hearing every month. You will potentially get projects through faster. Largely, they are rezonings and text amendments.

Councilor Brennan asked how that affects public notice signs on properties. What is the change in time frame for that?

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said we need to make sure there are no conflicts between the Planning Commission, the notice and City Council. State law requires 15-days' notice and the city does 30 days. We are not proposing to change that unless we need to make minor adjustments.

Councilor Brennan said we hear 12 cases on average and this would streamline it to six.

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said while there is more work each month, it is less of that work.

Councilor Herbert asked if this is easier for staff.

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said it will be more work, but it is not appreciable. Getting things done quicker offsets that greatly. We will draft a calendar and bring it back to Council. We recommend that the hearing remain on the second meeting of the month.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager asked if Mr. Taylor is going to refer this out as part of his report to City Council.

Councilor Taylor said we will allow the City Manager to determine if she wants to discuss matters at a work session or take it straight to a meeting.



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Upon a motion made by Mr. Taylor and seconded by Mr. Brennan, committee members voted unanimously to refer the proposed Zoning Public Hearing Schedule to Council for consideration.

5. Columbia Economic Development Department Action Plan Update - Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director

Councilor Taylor said at our last meeting we reviewed the city's reorganization plan for the Office of Economic Development. You are going to review what came out of the meeting as the revised final recommendations on how we will operate next year and going forward.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said this is not a significant deviation from the last review. The plan outlines the strategic outcomes and Council's statement for economic growth.

Councilor Taylor said a lot of this came from the retreat where all of Council participated with senior staff.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director reviewed the updated action plan which focuses on the business friendly improvements that are underway; recruitment; marketing; entrepreneurship; existing business retention/expansion; and continued support for City Council in the process of working on tax modernization efforts and helping reduce the burden of commercial taxes. Measures of success include tracking business license growth; new jobs and capital investment; city center population growth year over year; and city revenue streams such as property taxes, accommodations tax, hospitality tax, and water and sewer increases.

Councilor Herbert said Mr. Taylor was right, there is such a thing as a food store. She asked if we could resume the business spotlights. Those businesses become ambassadors for the city. This is very good and I look forward to the implementation.

Councilor Brennan said I want to see us be proactive by going out and creating the vision for owners of neglected properties. I talked to you about the empty Family Dollar on Rosewood, where the owner is not engaged. I would encourage you to pursue that with your new staff throughout all of our corridors. This is a wonderful and well thought out plan. I can't wait to see the milestones come together.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said it would be great to have endorsement from the full Council. I can bring it forth at a work session.



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Councilor Brennan asked if the Economic Development Office is going to form the advisory board.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we are breaking it out by small, medium and large businesses. We want representation from the four districts and the Columbia Council of Neighborhoods. There will be terms and we are open to recommendations from Council.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Brennan and seconded by Ms. Herbert, committee members voted unanimously to endorse the Columbia Economic Development Department Action Plan and ask the City Manager to present the plan to City Council at the next work session.

Councilor Herbert said the Affordable Housing Task Force is working to develop training for churches that are land banking. They need to know the steps for developing affordable housing.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said we appreciate your hard work on this with us. We have learned a lot through this process. Ryan has done a good job of looking at ways to streamline while having a nimble team. We also want to streamline the partner agreements.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director distributed a list of the partners with their work assignments, action items, and the annual cost.

Councilor Taylor asked to schedule the matter for the October 11, 2022 meeting. We are learning that we have to tell our story. We have a great story to tell with 55,000 college students and efforts to better the soil conditions to grow our own headquarters and small businesses.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Upon a motion made by Mr. Brennan and seconded by Ms. Herbert, committee members voted unanimously to enter into executive session at 1:55 p.m. for the discussion of item 6.

6. Discussion of matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body pursuant to §30-4-70(a)(5)



**We Are Columbia**

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- *Project Framework*
- *Wells Fargo*
- *Naman Hotel Vista*
- *Revisions to Programs Encouraging Commercial Development*

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was closed at 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC  
City Clerk