



**HEALTH, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES  
TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2024**

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**CALL TO ORDER**

The Health, Social and Environmental Affairs Committee conducted a meeting on Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at City Hall (Mayor's Conference Room), 1737 Main Street, Second Floor, Columbia, SC 29201. The Honorable Aditi Bussells, Chair called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

<b>Attendee Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Status</b>
Aditi Bussells	Chair	Present
Edward H. McDowell	Member	Remote
Tyler D. Bailey	Member	Present

**COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

1. Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission Update - Mr. Russell Jeter and Ms. Kristin Dow, Co-Chair and Member of Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission – *Received as information*

Ms. Kristin Dow, Member of the Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission said heat risks are not well integrated into emergency management. One way of addressing heat is by having adequate shade. Within the boundaries of the city, approximately 21% of tree canopy was lost due to cutting, dying, removal or clearing for different purposes. We are not able to see the efforts of the city to replace those large canopy trees. We joined a heat mapping campaign, which allows us to pursue an understanding of heat risks that we're exposed to. We were able to get a grant with the support of the Richland County Conservation Commission, Climate Protection Action Committee and many others. Volunteers took instruments onto prescribed routes around the city to collect data. They looked at air temperature and humidity at the level people experience it. On a 93 degree day in the summer, you can see certain areas of the city are in danger. According to the National Weather Service, this means there is a probability of experiencing heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

Mr. Russ Jeter, Co-Chair of the Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission said Dr. Dow has helped us focus on where we think the city can best spend its limited funds. We focused our efforts on where the money is and helpful solutions that won't break the budget. The main objective of the proposed ordinance is to prohibit new utilities above ground where we've successfully undergrounded. This would apply to all new projects or renovations of a certain size. The ordinance would also strongly encourage or require the planting of trees where undergrounding has been accomplished. We would like to see the city do smaller projects that people will see. We think it will have a greater impact on the citizens. We would also request



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that city staff determine the cost of an additional water truck, employee, and all the related costs. We're asking you to consider funding to underground one to two blocks annually.

There was discussion about the potential assessment of citizens in each district, grants and federal dollars, and bandwidth within the intern program.

There was consensus of the committee that staff should review the draft ordinance with the feedback before presenting it to the City Council for endorsement.

2. Rental Housing Ordinance - The Honorable Tyler D. Bailey – *Received as information*

Councilor Bailey said I started looking at the residential rental ordinance that we have in place to give the City Attorney's Office more tools when there are emergency situations.

Ms. Jessica Kinard, Senior Assistant City Attorney said Councilman Bailey asked for an ordinance to help people that are displaced, especially in situations due to landlord neglect. In the City of Columbia, we do not have a civil cause of action. We only have criminal enforcement procedures and a criminal court. If we wanted to go after them, it would have to go to the Court of Common Pleas. Councilman Bailey provided us with ordinances from places around the country that are starting to require emergency plans from the landlords. If a major event occurs due to your neglect or issues that you've allowed to go unchecked, you have to be responsible for housing the tenants. For units or complexes that are deemed high risk, they will also have to file an emergency operations plan, which will include how to notify the tenants, defines the emergency, how the management company will take steps to ensure the tenants have a safe place to reside, remediation for the underlying cause of the event, and the owner's plan to reintroduce the tenants to their prior living arrangements. This would have to include a copy of the certificate of insurance. If there is no insurance, the owner or property manager has to inform the tenants in writing.

There was discussion about the connection with the Tenant's Bill of Rights and sharing information with the Administrative Policy Committee, State Housing Authority, and Community Development.

There was consensus of the committee to receive updates before moving forward to Council.



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3. Update on Perfluorinated Substances in Drinking Water - Mr. Clint Shealy, Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water – *Received as information*

Dr. Bussells said Clint and his team introduced PFAS to myself, Councilman Duvall, and Councilman McDowell a few months ago. Since then, there has been a lot of attention around it. As the science is emerging, we wanted to get an update given that there are potential regulations from the Environmental Protection Agency that could affect us.

Mr. Clint Shealy, Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water introduced the Utility Operations Director Frank Eskridge and Dr. Alejandra Beier, Water Compliance Manager. We wanted to make our customers and citizens aware that PFAS compounds are not something that we're adding in the water. These are compounds that have been used in manufacturing and personal care products for years. We can see them at lower concentrations now because the analytical methods are getting better. That is what has prompted the EPA to move forward to propose this draft regulation. The average of all the data gathered shows that we are slightly below that regulatory threshold. This regulation may be finalized by mid-April of 2024. The data is readily available on our website and we have been transparent about the significant investment in treatment technology as well. We're advocating strongly that these compounds be regulated out of our economy so they can't be put into our receiving streams. They will pollute our waterways and that's not good for our aquatic environment, fish consumption, or recreational use.

There was discussion about investment in treatment technology in relation to the upcoming election, safe drinking water, and early detection of substances.

There was consensus of the committee that updates on developments and testing results will be provided regularly.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC  
City Clerk