



COLUMBIA CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

The Columbia City Council conducted a Budget Workshop on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at the Busby Street Community Center, 1735 Busby Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann, Mayor called the meeting to order at 1:09 p.m. and the following members of City Council were present: The Honorable Edward H. McDowell, Jr., The Honorable William Brennan, Mayor Pro-Tem, The Honorable Aditi Bussells, The Honorable Tina N. Herbert, The Honorable Peter M. Brown, and The Honorable Tyler D. Bailey. 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. Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Special Revenue Allocations - Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget, Program Management & Grants Director

Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget, Program Management & Grants Director provided an overview of the hospitality tax and sate accommodations tax grant programs. A grant workshop was held on February 29, 2024 and new applicants were required to attend. The Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee received 68 applications for consideration and \$3,594,800 for allocation. There is a total of \$2.8 million available for the six hospitality tax line-item agencies. The Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee had six applicants and two are recommended for funding in the total amount of \$2.3 million. The current budget includes a \$1 million surplus. It is recommended that City Council allocate those funds towards the committee's recommendations. The tourism development fee is the local accommodations tax and the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center is requesting \$2.75 million.

Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee Recommendations - Mr. Matthew Bridges, Chair

Mr. Matthew Bridges, Chair / Hospitality Tax Advisory Committee said the committee is comprised of restaurateurs and at-large members. There is a lot of buy in. The committee received requests totaling \$6.5 million and allocated the \$3.6 million with a focus on sustainability. There are established events that can be self-sustaining. Some of these funds can be allocated to smaller events that may diversify the tourism that comes into our city.



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Hospitality Tax Line-Item Agencies

Ms. Robin Waites, Executive Director / Historic Columbia Foundation said we manage five historic sites, three of which are owned by the City of Columbia. We are under contract with the City to ensure that the operation and maintenance of these sites is done in a way that allows us to operate them as historic house museums and community properties. About 30% of our annual funding is from the hospitality tax and we look for other ways to meet the \$2.5 million budget. Our request is for \$800,000, which is a \$50,000 increase over the previous fiscal year. For more than 60 years we have been committed to preserving historic places and sharing historic stories that connect and inspire our visitors. We also serve as the fiscal agent for ColumbiaSC 63. We are doing a new interpretation of the Robert Mills site this year.

Mr. Xavier Blake, Executive Director / One Columbia for Arts and Culture said we work to promote collaboration through shared celebrations of Columbia's art and history treasures. We maintain a City calendar of events and publish a newsletter. We were re-designated as the local arts agency in October. This allows us to expand our grant funding opportunities. Our request is for \$100,000. Initiatives include public art, the poet laureate, and identifying resources for artists. We entered into a partnership with the City for an Emerging Artist Studio at the Taylor Street Garage. In support of Columbia's strategic plan, One Columbia continues to foster creativity and expand knowledge of and enthusiasm for the history and arts by demonstrating the value of the cultural community to the economic interest of the City of Columbia.

Ms. Della Watkins, Executive Director / Columbia Museum of Art said the state's only international presenting museum opened in 1950 and is ranked among the leading art institutions in the country. CMA has 7,000 works of art and over 330 programs. Nearly 122,000 guests were on site last year. The CMA has been the City's tenant for over 25 years and manages the City's public park, Boyd Plaza. Last year, 13,500 visitors came to see Alexander McQueen within three months. Schools and guests came from 43 of the 46 South Carolina counties and 36% of guests traveled more than 50 miles. CMA's strategic marketing objective is to grow tourism, maximize the impact of our partnerships, and be champions for the region. The request is for \$950,000 in support and a one-time allocation of \$500,000 to help replace the obsolete gallery lighting.

Mr. John Whitehead, Executive Director / Columbia Music Festival Association said CMFA has served as a unique community resource since 1897. During the past season, CMFA partnered with 47 artists and art organizations. CMFA had over 19,000 visitors representing 22 states and four countries. The FBN Opera for Kids rehearses with CMFA. There is no charge for using the space. Over 60% of the budget comes from the City of Columbia. CMFA doesn't compete with the organizations they support. The request is for \$260,000 for operations and maintenance and \$200,000 for capital improvements.



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Mr. Andy Marquart, CEO / EdVenture Children's Museum said last year EdVenture served almost 200,000 visitors. A lot of that energy was generated by becoming a place based, locally focused organization. The second annual lighting of the firefly with the teacher of the year is next weekend. Almost all of the first floor exhibits will be renovated by the end of 2025 at a cost of \$4.25 million from different funding sources. The second floor and outdoor renovations will be reviewed next. Visitation is good and EdVenture is almost fully staffed.

Ms. Robin Harriford, Director of Development / EdVenture Children's Museum said the renovations will give value to visitors. Last year, 20% of visitors were from 50 miles and beyond and almost 68% were outside the City of Columbia. The Regional Economic Analysis Laboratory reported that EdVenture had an impact of \$214,800,000 between 2013 and 2023. Approximately 250,000 visitors are projected for the two locations in Columbia and Myrtle Beach.

There was discussion about the museum partnering with the City of Columbia to pick up litter outside of the museum; the attraction of Blippi; and partnerships to offer admission packages for out of state visitors.

Ms. Kelly Barbery, Vice President of Marketing and Communications / Experience Columbia SC said Experience Columbia works with a lot of the partners to offer different passes to out of state visitors through marketing and promotions. The Cool Pass is a multi-ticket attraction for EdVenture, Riverbanks Zoo and the State Museum. The Culture Pass is for the Columbia Museum of Art, Historic Columbia and the State Museum.

There was a request to receive information on the packages that were sold in 2023. There was discussion about telling our story and a future funding request for marketing funds on behalf of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee. EdVenture Children's Museum was asked to provide consistent updates, communication and invitations.

State Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Recommendations - Mr. Hal Stevenson, Chair

Mr. Hal Stevenson, Chair / Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee said the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee met last week. Experience Columbia and Lake Murray Country have been funded at 85% and 15% and that is the recommendation. An additional recommendation is to allocate carry forward funds from last year using the same percentages.



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Tourism Development Fee

Mr. Bill Ellen, President & CEO / Experience Columbia said the Midlands Authority for Conventions, Sports, and Tourism is the umbrella organization for the Conventions & Visitors Bureau doing business as Experience Columbia, Columbia SC Sports, and the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center. He presented a brief promotional video. This year, over 250,000 people will enter the doors of the Convention Center. The request is for \$2.75 million from the tourism development fee, which is the same amount as this year. There is a need to draw from the reserves that are set aside for capital expenditures at \$760,000 for carpet, a heater exchange and digital equipment for the meeting rooms. The organization is expected to receive \$750,000 from Richland County; investment income at \$15,000; and event revenue at \$2,756,000. The total budget is \$7,061,500.

There was discussion about the need for a room block agreement with a hotel at the Convention Center, mixing the type of events booked, and having a written strategy for growth.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said the City has branded a new logo and there has to be consistency in messaging. The City's themes are similar to the themes expressed in the Experience Columbia video. We need to be intentional going forward to make sure we are partnering with our teams at the City and your team.

City Council recessed at 2:24 p.m. and reconvened the Budget Workshop at 2:49 p.m.

2. Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Proposed Parking Fund Budget - Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget, Program Management and Grants Director

Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget, Program Management and Grants Director said the parking fund is an enterprise fund. The budget for 2024/2025 is proposed at \$10.4 million. The parking rate study has been completed and the city manager is reviewing it prior to making recommendations. There are 11 parking decks, 14 surface lots, 3,600⁺ on-street parking meters, and 1,400⁺ on-street Passport supported spaces. Parking Services supports the business community, universities, downtown, special events and other economic activities. The budget includes \$10.1 million in revenues. Departmental budgets total \$6.1 million. Highlights include \$250,000 for the T2 Luke Pay Stations, two vehicles, and funding for maintenance and support contracts. There is also consideration of funding for staffing to address enforcement, special events, and employee engagement at \$180,000. The city manager will address those at a later date. The budget covers existing debt and an indirect transfer to the general fund at \$500,000. Staff has prepared a \$10 million capital improvement program for presentation along with the parking rate discussion.



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There was a request for the percentage of revenue generated by each parking entity and the ability to extend parking times on Main Street near the Richland County Judicial Center and City Hall.

Ms. Missy Caughman, Budget, Program Management and Grants Director announced that the budget public hearing is scheduled for June 4, 2024.

There was consensus of Council to conduct a Budget Workshop on June 18, 2024 and to review requests from the hospitality districts to ensure that the Clean and Safe Programs are not impacted.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Brennan and seconded by Dr. Bussells, Council voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 3:01 p.m. for the receipt of legal advice relating to a pending, threatened or potential claim pursuant to S.C. Code 30-4-70(a)(2) – Deborah Mungo v. City of Columbia and employment of an employee pursuant to S.C. Code 30-4-70(a)(1) – City Manager and City Attorney evaluations and Municipal Court.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk