



COLUMBIA CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2018

The Columbia City Council met in Executive Session on Tuesday, August 7, 2018 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201. The Honorable Mayor Pro-Tempore Tameika Isaac Devine called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Sam Davis, the Honorable Howard E. Duvall, Jr., the Honorable Edward H. McDowell, Jr. The Honorable Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin, the Honorable Moe Baddourah, and the Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann were absent. Also present were Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer and Ms. Erika D. Moore, 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. Update from the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority (The COMET) - Mr. John C. Andoh, CCTM, CPM, Executive Director / CEO

Mr. John C. Andoh, CCTM, CPM, Executive Director / CEO introduced himself to the Council members, noting that he has twenty years of experience in public transit management. The City of Columbia appoints three members to our board of directors; provides the transit center and Assembly Street bus shelter through a lease; and the ability for us to install bus stops throughout the City. The City is served by twenty of our thirty-eight bus routes and services. The City is the primary benefactor of the transit system. We operate fixed routes and reflex deviated fixed routes, DART paratransit for riders with disabilities, and a downtown circular known as the Soda Cap Connector. We are developing a new short range transit plan and a comprehensive operational analysis. We will be conducting a study with the COG and SCDOT to determine the need for express buses from remote locations into downtown Columbia. A transit center refresh is underway along with several new partnerships.

There was an in-depth discussion regarding the Soda Cap Connector, changes at the Transit Center, the location of bus shelters, electric buses, and stops.

Mayor Pro-Tem Devine welcomed Mr. Andoh to Columbia. She commended Tiffany James for her efforts to inform the community. We are a great resource and we can share information from the COMET with the community. Let us know what you need.



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2. Healthcare Update - Ms. Pamela Benjamin, CPM, Chief of Staff / Director of Human Resources

Ms. Pamela Benjamin, CPM, Chief of Staff / Director of Human Resources explained that the City of Columbia has been self-insured for healthcare benefits for over thirty years. It has allowed us to be flexible and to provide a very rich benefit. Due to increased healthcare costs nationally, requirements of the Affordable Care Act, and changes to the governmental accounting reporting standards the City had to make some difficult decisions. Healthcare claims were projected to grow to \$32 million in fiscal year 2018/2019 and five to fifteen percent each year thereafter. The City was also facing an OPEB liability in excess of one billion dollars by 2047. We explored several options to include increased premiums, plan design changes, adding spousal surcharges for active employees, dropping spousal coverage for retirees, and eliminating coverage for some retirees. We looked at the State Health Plan as a viable option that would allow us to continue to provide comparable insurance coverage to eligible active employees, retirees, and their dependents. She reviewed matters that should be taken into consideration if we transitioned to the State Health Plan.

Councilor Devine said we've been aggressive with promoting wellness and it sounds like we could potentially lose some of that autonomy.

Ms. Pamela Benjamin, CPM, Chief of Staff / Director of Human Resources continued to explain that the State Insurance Benefits program offers a variety of coverages to active employees, retirees, survivors, and their dependents. All local subdivisions participating in the State Health Plan are required to offer health, dental, dental plus, State vision plan, basic life insurance, optional life, dependent life, basic long-term disability, supplemental long-term disability, MoneyPlus flex spending account, and the Vision Care Discount Program to full-time employees. The City doesn't pay any costs for the optional benefits, but we do have to pay a \$3 administration cost for each of our members. For our retirees and their survivors, we are required to offer health, dental, dental plus, State vision plan, and Vision Care Discount Program. The participant can choose which level of insurance they want and who they want cover on their insurance. To get started, we had to submit an application and a small fee to the State. The application must be approved 120 days prior to date coverage takes effect. We are aiming for a January 1st coverage date. Once the decision to participate in the State Health Plan is approved by Council, information will be sent to active, retiree, and COBRA participants. Open enrollment will begin in October, but dates are subject to change. She reviewed the eligibility guidelines. In general, all of the employees who are covered now will be covered when we move forward. She reviewed the benefit eligibility for retirees and retirement eligible employees. If we



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make this change, we will work hard to educate employees and retirees about the State Health Plan. Also, PEBA has extensive information on their website. When we transition to the State Health Plan, we can no longer change our premiums. We will pay a set cost for being a participant. The active employee premiums will be set by PEBA. The retiree premiums can be set by the local subdivision. She recommended that the City cover the funded rate for pre-65 retirees just like the active employees. She recommended that the City continue to provide assistance to the post-65 retirees, as well. She presented an estimated comparison of the monthly premiums for the City and PEBA as proposed for 2019. She recalled that we hadn't decided whether or not to increase premiums for retirees. The State Health Plan offers one Medicare supplement for post-65. We have to decide what to charge for both pre- and post-65 retiree premiums.

Councilor Duvall said this is a sustainable decision.

Councilor Devine said we have to know what we are doing. I think it's good. We have to be prepared to deal with any discussion or opposition. The changes benefits retirees more than anybody else and it wouldn't be fair if they didn't pay their share. She questioned the next steps related to maintaining the Wellness Incentive Program and the Employee Health Center.

Ms. Pamela Benjamin, CPM, Chief of Staff / Director of Human Resources explained that if City Council decided to move forward, they will need to vote to join the State Health Plan at the next meeting. The Wellness Incentive Program is administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield and we would need to find another administrator for the program or not have the program at all. Last year, only 10% of the employee population took advantage of the program. We would also lose the connectivity with managing the Employee Health Center through UCI. We can bring a recommendation back to City Council. There are benefits to having an employee health center.

Councilor Devine asked Mr. Palen if there would be any value in investing any savings from switching plans into all of our wellness initiatives to include the employee health center. It is being utilized more and it's a huge benefit for the employees who use it.

Councilor McDowell expressed concern for the persons who use the health center to address medical issues like diabetes. We need to see where that ball will bounce. Some people depend on the wellness incentive.



We Are Columbia

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Ms. Pamela Benjamin, CPM, Chief of Staff / Director of Human Resources explained that the State Health Plan has chronic disease management programs. They have some of the same things that Blue Cross Blue Shield is offering us now. The wellness checkups are important to them as well. It will just look different under their program. We have to determine if the costs will be beneficial. They encourage their participating employers to do things in their organization to help with wellness.

Councilor Devine said we'd like to see the details of the benefits prior to August 14, 2018 so that we are clear on what might be lost or gained during the transition.

Investigator Amy Mostella, Columbia Police Department said thank you, we've been fighting for this for years.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion made by Mr. McDowell and seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore, CMC
City Clerk