



**MINUTES  
FAIRFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL  
BUDGET WORKSESSION  
MAY 20, 2010**

**Present:** R. David Brown, David L. Ferguson, Mary Lynn Kinley, Kamau Marcharia, Dwayne Perry, Carolyn B. Robinson, Mikel R. Trapp, Council Members; Philip L. Hinely, County Administrator; Shryll M. Brown, Clerk to Council.

**Staff:** Davis Anderson, Laura Johnson, Adam Swearingen

In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80 (e), as amended, the following persons and/or organizations have been notified of the time, date, and location of this meeting: The Herald-Independent, The State, and Winnsboro Cablevision, and forty-nine other individuals.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

**2. INVOCATION**

Council Member Kinley led in the invocation.

**3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Presentations: FY 2010-2011 Budget

**A. Fire Service Inventory Update: Tony Hill**

Inventory is about 85-90% complete because some fire departments have not completed their personnel inventory. Out of the 150 -170 people, there are about 20-30 that have not come in yet.

Questions:

- Are you satisfied with that level of what you have gotten reported? Is that pretty much average? What is the reason that you don't have the rest of it?
- Is there a reason you feel like the rest of it hasn't come in or is it just that they haven't followed through with it?
- I know that you have issued individual bunker gear to each fireman. What is the policy if they quit or move on to someplace else?
- Have you gotten any feedback from the different areas on the whys behind the council asking for this information for accountability, responsibility, and a tracking standpoint where this is important for us to have all of this documentation in one area.
- How much does a pumper cost?
- Recently, when the council was discussing whether or not they wanted to purchase land I think you went out and took an evaluation at that particular site and I think your recommendation wouldn't be accurate to place a fire station or an EMS at this particular station at this particular site due to the power lines. The recommendation that it would be a suitable site so did you have another place in mind?

- The last question I have in terms of you being fire marshal, do you have a strategic plans for the county in terms of recruitment? Eight or nine years ago I remember presenting anywhere from 5-8 people to be recruited and they never were and I didn't hear anything about it. We are short of volunteers in the active program to go out and find people that are younger and interested in the county. What is your recruitment plan?
- How many hours does it take somebody to get certified and to keep the certification for a year?

### **B. Comprehensive Plan Update: Ron Stowers**

This is something that is mandated by law to be done every ten years? It is supposed to be done every ten years and we are a little behind on that by a year or so. However, we have finally signed a contract with the associates and that was signed on April 29<sup>th</sup>. We have been in contact with him and supplying him with requested information particularly on new housing units and demolitions for approximately the past ten years. So, they can now update the housing element and he is on schedule. He is to meet the Planning Commission next Thursday to start giving the introduction of what he is going to be doing and when he is going to be getting back with them. His initial schedule is to start with the existing information update such as housing units, infrastructure, and population figures. Then, once he gets that he will be coming back to the Planning Commission on a regular basis to start looking at the future projection for the county in terms of population area growth and infrastructure needs.

#### Questions:

- How long does he anticipate that the process will take?
- Was agriculture included also? We didn't feel like we had enough for that?
- The nuisance does cover abandoned housing and manufactured homes. Will your departments be enforcing that?
- I was wondering about the house across the Good Samaritan House across from the cleaners. It has been there for 20 years and it looks like it has been abandoned and it needs more than a paint job. Has this never been an issue with anyone in the town?
- In the 80's and 90's I have researched some of the ordinances around blight and I was pretty sure that once a landlord was notified...it was something like \$100 per month and they would suggest an issue and they were fined. So that is neither in the county or the city that you know of?

### **C. On-Line Tax Payment Services: Norma Branham**

The first piece of paper shows you how many visitors we had for the last calendar year on the county website. 198,889 pages were viewed but there weren't any tax information on that website. So, the website is getting many visitors and that causes problems because people are searching for their tax information. The next item that I put in the packet was the merchant statement summary for our debit and credit card payments. The key points about the online tax website is that one of the things that comes into conversation when we are at a state meeting or when somebody is making a presentation about online tax service is that delinquent taxes go down considerably when tax information is online because people do not want their families knowing that they haven't paid their taxes. So, that is a consideration to make that historically, it goes down when people are able to view taxes online. Another thing that would be very beneficial to the county would be if people that pay their taxes online would print their own receipts and we wouldn't be mailing receipts We get requests,

especially in January and February for duplicate receipts and we do charge for that duplication and we have a lot of unhappy tax payers who have to pay for a duplicate receipt because they have lost their information. I enclosed a map showing you that the counties with websites who are just serviced by Sturgis. In red are the counties with websites and the blue counties are the only two that offer tax view and the taxes online. There is a one-time set up/design free so the total would be \$4800 but that is a one-time fee. The service with Sturgis is \$495 per month, which is in my budget but if you would like to take it out of my budget I would be glad to share with the tax payers of the county. I would love to be able to offer this service to the people of Fairfield County. Mr. Hinely and I have talked about lockbox before and that is when taxpayers mail their papers into a bank. I am not sure if the lockbox is the way that we were planning to go but if you all wanted to look at the differences and compare it a lockbox still limits people. I brought the file and that is a tax service file that we get and it has maybe 40 mortgage companies in that file and I didn't take time to count how many errors the mortgage companies made. Part of the errors were our fault because we have new tax map numbers that are the same as old tax map numbers that is a nightmare and we had one of those today that we found and somebody got a delinquent tax notice. The mortgage companies send in errors and if they could view online they would know that the property they are paying is the property that they mean to pay and it is not a mistake. If people could just look online and he is looking online because he is making payments through his bank but it would be so much easier if he could just do it on our county website.

Questions:

- This is a great convenience versus having all the paper. From being a banker it is so valuable to be able to go online and pull up tax statement and see what they're worth and how much they are paying. I know we still have e-maps plus but there is value to be able to do that. So, everything is right and it is in the system and we don't have to go far looking to find that information. Could we still send out at least one mailing to everyone for tax notices?
- Do we deposit that in a bank that carries some type of interest? I was just wondering, from taxpayers' money, do we invest that and how does that accumulate for taxpayers?
- We can transfer the money from the receipts. If the \$10,000 is for receipts and envelopes, transfer that to the contractual services and the budget doesn't increase and they are still getting service. Also included would be the projected savings on the top part as well in addition to the mail outs and the receipts that should be considered as well.
- Looking at this from this standpoint, it looks like it is feasible to do it and my recommendation, if Mr. Hinely is agreeing to do this, is that once we get into it for a certain amount of years and we see that a large number of people are using this then we will be saving and if a large number is not using this then we are not saving because we still have to back up the people who aren't requesting the service and we have to go the paper trail way.
- What percentage is using debit cards?

*It was moved by Council Member Ferguson; seconded by Council Member Kinley to transfer the \$10,000 budgeted for receipts and mailings to contractual services, with the understanding that the budget does not increase. The motion carried unanimously.*

**D. Emergency Management/9-1-1/HON Building Update: Phyllis Watkins**

I would like to talk to you about how we considered moving the EOC into what is now South Carolina Emergency warehouse (formerly the HON Building). The emergency management department on the state level had a new director June of last year, and as a part of getting to know him, he began to do county visits. He visited Fairfield County where he had an opportunity to come downstairs to see how we operated in the EOC. What we are talking about is the emergency operation center and that is for emergency management only and 911 are communications and those are two different operations. What we are considering moving is only the emergency operation center. It would be good if we could move the communications center but that would be at a huge cost because we would have to establish a new center. We are just looking to move the EOC but currently we can only seat about 15 people. When we have an exercise, we have anywhere from 50-60 people in that EOC. One of the major benefits of moving there would be the space. We would be able to establish a full EOC with all of the key components. At this time we are only able to do operations so we have to bring in an executive staff and have nowhere to house them. The same for communications. We have to use the dispatch center which we are already handling emergencies as well. We also have other operations that take place along with EOC operations and we are just not able to do it. We are set up in different areas so we are not specifically in one place and this gives us the opportunity to be central and the space we are looking at is 23x76 feet. That is where we are looking at and Mr. Pratt offered it to us with utilities and liabilities with no other costs. I think they have invested at least \$600,000 in upgrading that building, they have full internet and everything and we had the opportunity to move the fire marshal up there too. So, that would be getting those people out of there. We are proposing to get a 15 year lease, free of charge but we just pay the light bill and the insurance but I am going to try to get the 25 year lease. But as far as the building and the area, it would be more manageable for us to operate in a more efficient manner.

We are also looking at an event that the 911 center has to evacuate. We have a place to go now but it is not adequate to operate at the magnitude that we are designed to operate. At this point, if anything happens, we go to the Winnsboro police department.

**Questions:**

- I think the EOC and 911 are the same thing, so you can make a distinction between those two?
- What kind of communications upgrades would we have to do up there if we are going to move just for exercises?
- Based on the nature of these computers, is this a grant opportunity for us?
- So the only thing we are leasing and paying the light bill on is the front office area?
- Do we have the equipment like headphones that filters out the other information or all of the background calls?

**E. Property Tax Comparison: Adam Swearingen**

A couple of weeks ago I brought to you a tax comparison based on a value of \$197,500 for the home. It was suggested by Council that we modify this to reflect a majority of the county so we reduced that a little bit and the comparison that you see is based on a value of \$100,000. We simplified the spreadsheet just to make it easier to understand. What you see is primary residents only and we also added Kershaw County just so that we have a good comparison of all of the counties that surround us. As you can see, we are number four out of the six counties listed. Additional fees--Richland County has a \$249 garbage fee so that is where that comes in and none of the counties we looked at had any additional fees.

Questions:

➤ In places like Kershaw, are they structuring those to be included in the tax notice so that I could use those as a tax write-off?

**F. New Appraisal System: Wendell Irby**

We are committed to serving the citizens of the county and we are the best in service and technology. We are making some changes for the future and one of the most significant changes is the implementation of the new computer assisted mass appraisal which is a camera program and it was purchased from patriot properties out of Massachusetts. This program was designed to assess us and help us in appraising by pairing like properties no matter where they are located in the county. The results of this are equality, fairness, and uniformity. It does have some great benefits, as a result of this program and the laptops that we use in the field, we were able to complete the 2010 reassessment in about 8 months and we were given a 98% approval rating by the S. C. Department of Revenue.

- 2010 Reassessment: 18,615 Parcels, 274 Appeals, 166 Satisfied, 108 Pending. 90% of those appeals were due to misinterpretation.
- South Carolina property tax laws are some of the most complicated in the country.
- Our Public Access Counter Terminal
  1. Search by (TMS, name or address)
  2. Ownership and Address
  3. Sales history (all deed transactions)
  4. Legal description
  5. Property values and land size
  6. Sketch of all buildings on property
  7. Photos of all buildings on property
  8. Print information at fifty cents per copy
- New property Record cards VS. Old Property Record Cards
 

Old: Too costly in labor and time to duplicate; new system requires cards to be replaced when changes occur. One change could result in five cards being replaced; over 500 changes could occur each month; cost of one five hundred pack of paper is \$3.00; cost of a vendor to duplicate 500 old style cards in color on both sides is estimated \$200 and may take up to one week to produce after the staff makes the copies to be sent.
- The Ultimate Goal: To create a heavier paper summary property record; make the public access terminal available; the assessor's staff will assist and encourage all visitors to use the public access terminal; with the public access terminal and the updated E-maps website, the staff will have to spend very little time giving the public information about a property.
- The Results: More productivity; Less people in the office; Less cost to maintain the system; Giving the public access to a top quality information system; Property values will be done fairly and equitably; Will result in Fair Taxation
- GIS Mapping Program: A technically advanced computer mapping program that is one of the best in the state; Used to show property maps, flood maps, zoning maps, county maps, voting district maps, location of water, sewage and electrical lines, town boundaries, topographic maps aerial photography, emergency management maps showing locations of damage assessments and endless layers that can be created to fulfill the needs of the towns, county, or state.
- A Final Word: The Fairfield County Assessor's Office is considered by the South Carolina Department of Revenue to be one of the leading counties in the use of advanced Computer

- Assisted Mass Appraisal and Geodetic Information System Technology. Through the use of this technology, the Assessor's Office can fulfill its mission to serve the citizens of Fairfield County with a level of service that is second to none.

Questions:

- The deed book, page, and plat like we used to have--my question is, like the new program, are we ever going to be able to access it like we do from our offices?

**G. Economic Development Plan Update: Tiffany Harrison**

The purpose of the economic development plan is to provide a roadmap and to take a targeted approach to economic development and to be an implementation plan which is a very specific plan with action items on how to move forward. The point of the plan is to take a look at the current economic development initiatives to tell us what we are doing very well and to tell us where we have some opportunities to do better. Recognizing that we are in a severe economic depression right now and everybody is fighting for a piece of a dwindling pie. Last year, our legislative delegation had a purpose to try to make this county more competitive and was able to secure some public funding from Santee Cooper for us to be able to pursue this economic development plan. We received a written commitment from Santee Cooper in November of last year to move forward with selecting a consultant to secure the plan for us. We got a consultant through a competitive selection process in January or early February of last year and the group that was chosen is at Genesis consulting. Dr. Morris is the principal at Genesis consulting. He is very well-known in the economic development community and he has a long history of economic development initiatives and ways to remain competitive. Dr. Morris is the chief of staff at the SC department of commerce for several years, he was the former Mike Briggs and he also understand work force development as he also was over the state college technical institute for a number of years so we are very pleased to be able to have his team on board to move forward with this plan. The process has started. This is a data intensive process. Right now they have been collecting all kinds of data, demographic, sight, infrastructure, basically anything that would be related to economic development. They are also looking at the quality of life data along with facts and figures. They are looking at the county and they are also going to do a comparative analysis of some of our peer groups meaning some counties that surround us and counties that are somewhat like us. So, we are going to be looking at how we compare to them on a region, state, and national level. We are very excited that this plan has gotten underway and they have started about two months ago and the plan is for them to provide us with a SWOT analysis as a part of the process. The acronym means Strengths Weakness Opportunities and Threats. This again gives us an opportunity to see how we stack up and how we compare. Being a data process, this will take some time and they plan to have a preliminary plan to come back to council and present some findings towards the end of August or the beginning of September.

Questions:

- Can you give us an update on Peach Road while you are here?

**H. Transit Plan Update: Maggie Holmes**

- Restructuring of the staff. Administrative decision to change job titles, duties, and responsibilities. Now there is a program manager and a logistic coordinator instead of a program dispatcher. SCDOT asked them to do in-house instead of at the administration facility.

- Regulations go into compliance on June 1. Drivers have already received all required training. Not in compliance with the maintenance shop. ASE (Automotive Service Excellence plan) was activated, workers were asked to become ASE certified is not in process. In the maintenance shop: 2 people lost to retirement; 2 people have applied to fill the empty spots.
- Transit received stimulus funding from SCDOT. Vehicles were replaced. Secured \$158,000 used to purchase three new vehicles and money is kept in-house to help where they come up short in federal and state funding. Grant money is trying to be secured instead of asking from the inside.

#### **I. Public Works: Davis Anderson**

- Currently a 15'x20' structure. Houses public works department and staffing manager. Was in front of the old Detention Center.
- Now under construction: 50'x60' building. Consists of three offices, four restrooms, reception area, meeting and training room and a break area; will be a metal building with a brick front; front will say Fairfield County office of Public Works and Recycling; side door will have a roll up door with office windows; buildings have a 50 year warranty; process began on May 10, 2010; due to arrive on June 13, 2010.

#### **J. Probation, Pardon, Parole: Davis Anderson**

- The proposed Probation, Pardon and Parole will be on a 60'x36' floor plan. It will consist of 7 offices, 2 restrooms and a break room. The building will consist of metal siding with a brick façade in front.
- Site preparation began approximately May 10, 2010; soil boring samples were taken May 20, 2010; building due to arrive at site on June 13, 2010; by the time of building arrival, the site preparation will be complete, the utilities will be added and the pad will be poured.

#### **K. Wood Chipping Facility Update: Davis Anderson**

- Chipping permit submitted to DHEC December, 2009.
- Mid-January, 2010, DHEC visited chipping site to assess the property and site layout.
- DHEC requested that all modifications be made to the site layout. Modifications submitted to DHEC.
- Final approval is expected on or before July, 2010.

#### **L. MOU With Midlands Technical College: Davis Anderson**

Those guys know what it takes to run that college on a day to day basis so they came up with this matrix and everything from pest control to refuge, trash, monthly checks, custodial supplies, and all other maintenance. With them being so far away, they definitely want support from us in the IT area. So, if they have any type of computer problems, our staff will go up there and help them. It will be 30-40 minutes before they can even attempt to get up here and that would kill class time tremendously. This is the matrix that we came up with. They teach and we are responsible for everything else.

#### Questions:

- Are we still on schedule?

**M. J. Mitchell Graham Competition: Davis Anderson**

The J. Mitchell Graham competition is coming up soon and we always like to get Council's ideas. With EMS and the things that they are doing with a county our size is tremendous. I didn't know if you all would like to get them to apply for this award this year or not. The new animal adoption center or any others that you all may have are eligible too. As long as we do one strong one, we may be in a better situation to capitalize on that this year.

**N. Boards and Commissions By-Laws Update: Philip Hinely**

Technically, we started the boards and commissions update about four years ago. About a month ago, Council decided all of these boards should have consistent bylaws. We want to have Mr. Ed Thomas look for specific needs and it will be worth the time and energy. While we are looking at bylaws, this is also a good time for the person who is working on this project to look at the ordinance that established these boards and commissions because as you already know, many of the ordinances were created in the 70's and it has forced us to make some changes. There are a lot of ordinances like that and they need to be revised and updated because the bylaws and ordinances marry each other and you want them to be consistent. It is awfully difficult for them to be working with a newer set of bylaws and work on an archaic set of ordinances. It takes three readings and a public hearing to upgrade and update those ordinances. There are certain paragraphs and certain sections that can be updated to make that ordinance whole again. That is going to be a project that will be worth our while and it will also make your citizens more encouraged to participate in board and commission activities.

Council Member Ferguson maintained that the county employees did not receive any additional compensation last year and that this budget is not set up for it this year. He added that if the economy holds as it is right now then there will probably be a third year that the county goes without compensating them. *Due to that factor, he requested to make a proposal, and so moved, that the county increase the salary of its employees by two (2%) percent this year. The motion was seconded by Council Member Kinley.*

Discussion:

- We will have to get a cost analysis on that. What will that cost?
- I know times are difficult and we can look at it but from a corporate standpoint, we did not give raises and we were not able to give raises this year.
- We have nine months and we will reduce it to keep from going up on taxes. I don't think nine months is enough and they will tell us that we have to fire half of the people that we are looking for. They don't have a fund balance and they don't have anything to play off. If they go bankrupt, we are the source for the income but we are not the provider of the income.
- I will say this and I quit. We talk about what things are in the school business. I worked without a raise for four years. Do you know how much morale for when you work three years when you don't get a pay increase? We can vote on it right now or we can vote it up or down tonight. Where we are headed this year is probably the same place we are going to be headed next year. Once things start to turn around, do you know where your employees are going to be? Somewhere else.
- I don't think there will be any opportunities out there for anybody right now. Last year, we did give them a gift certificate which may have helped but when those businesses start to pick up. *Subsequently, Council Member Kinley withdrew the second to the motion; Council Member Ferguson withdrew the motion.*

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**ADJOURN**

The budget work session was adjourned at 9:15 P.M., upon unanimous approval by Council.

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SHRYLL M. BROWN  
CLERK TO COUNCIL

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RUSSELL DAVID BROWN  
CHAIRMAN