



Richland County Council

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

December 18, 2018 – 6:00 PM

Council Chambers

2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Livingston, Chair; Bill Malinowski, Yvonne McBride, Dalhi Myers and Norman Jackson

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Joyce Dickerson and Greg Pearce

OTHERS PRESENT: Michelle Onley, Trenia Bowers, Sandra Yudice, Kimberly Williams-Roberts, Larry Smith, Stacey Hamm, Edward Gomeau, Ashiya Myers, Quinton Epps, Ashley Powell, Janet Claggett, James Hayes, and Jennifer Wladischkin

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Mr. Livingston called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 PM.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a. November 15, 2018 – Mr. N. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Malinowski, to approve the minutes as distributed.

In Favor: Malinowski, Myers, N. Jackson, and Livingston

The vote in favor was unanimous.
3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Mr. Malinowski moved, seconded by Mr. N. Jackson, to adopt the agenda as published.

In Favor: Malinowski, Myers, N. Jackson, and Livingston

The vote in favor was unanimous.
4. **ITEMS FOR ACTION**
 - a. I move to (1) increase the Fire Services Budget for Fiscal Year 2019 by \$368,410 to cover the personnel expenses for the 11 positions under the SAFER Grant from January 1 to June 30, 2019. The grant expires on December 31, 2018. Through the contract negotiations with the City of Columbia, County Council approved these 11 positions for Station 22 located at 2612 Lower Richland Blvd., Hopkins, SC 29061; and (2) to direct staff to include these positions in the recommended budget for the subsequent fiscal years [MYERS] – Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Mr. N. Jackson, to forward this item to Council with a recommendation to approve the budget amendment to cover (1) costs for 11 firefighters for the remaining six months of the 2018 – 2019 budget year and (2) include the positions in the next biennium budget request.

Mr. N. Jackson stated this station has been staffed all these years.

Dr. Yudice stated this station has been staffed with 11 SAFER Grant positions by the City of Columbia Fire Department approximately 2 years ago. They requested funding without the County's knowledge. Now that we know the grant is coming to an end on December 31st, the funding for those positions will be gone, if this is not approved.

Mr. N. Jackson stated the fire station has been there for years and it has always been staffed. He is not sure what the City did without our permission, or knowledge, but they are requesting us to fund 11 positions. The fire station is in his district. We used to vote there, and it is has always been staffed. He is concerned about what happened to the people that were there before.

Dr. Yudice stated we may have the address incorrect, but she knows it is Station 22.

Mr. N. Jackson stated that is the only fire station on Lower Richland Boulevard.

Ms. Myers stated, in conversations with Chief Jenkins, it is her understanding that 3 years ago, as Dr. Yudice pointed out, they undertook a different funding mechanism for this department. They applied, and received, a grant. They have used those grants proceeds to pay the 11 staff members at this fire station. There will not be new staff members. These staff are not included in the ordinary budget that we have approved for fire services because they have been paying them from the grant. The debate as to whether or not the City should have done that without consulting us, or whether someone, along the way, should have told us what was going on, you were right to raise that. The issue here is this is where the money has been coming from for these 11 positions. Without this money, those 11 positions will not be funded in any budget. That is why there is a request for a budget amendment.

Mr. Livingston stated he is almost certain the Fire Chief brought this to our attention. He is not sure if it was mentioned in the last biennium budget, but he recalls this being mentioned during the budget process. To him, this is not new because he heard about this before. Where it got lost at, he is not sure. If we are going to continue the station, we are going to need the positions. He does not have a real problem with the first part of the request, in terms of continuing those positions. His concern would be the 2nd part, in terms of trying to make a decision about a new budget before you get to the budget process. What his concern would be is to consider moving forward with the 1st and then forward the 2nd part to the budget process.

Mr. Malinowski stated he was always under the impression, from what we have been told, that the unincorporated portion of the fire services were run by volunteers. He inquired if that is true or not.

Dr. Yudice stated some of them are run by volunteers, but this specific one is run by firefighters, and funded by the grant.

Mr. Malinowski inquired as to how it was run before the grant came about 3 years ago.

Dr. Yudice stated they will have to research that, and get back with you.

Mr. Malinowski stated he would like for staff to do that. He stated it is a shame that we do not have somebody who would be a spokesperson for the fire service or our emergency services to answer some of these questions. They should have the knowledge to do so. It is also a shame a motion like this is brought by a Councilmember. If this is something that was needed by those services, then the Chief or Mr. Byrd should have been the one to bring this motion forward. He suggested keeping it in committee to get some answers.

Mr. N. Jackson stated he is not against it. Since he has been living in Lower Richland, the station has been there, and it has been staffed. He wants to know what happened to the funding that was staffing the fire station before. It is like there are 11 people there, and if this money is not granted, it will not be staffed. What happened to the people that was staffing it before this grant came in 3 years ago? Another question, he has been asking over the years is, if Richland County and the City of Columbia fund approximately 50/50, why is the City paid and the County volunteer. Why are all the firefighters not paid for staffing these fire stations? Again his concern is, if it is needed, it is needed, because safety is utmost. He wants to make sure the people in that area are safe, and it is properly staffed. His question is, what happened to the money that used to fund those staff members, prior to 2 – 3 years ago. Why are they in a situation now that if we do not get these grant, they will not be staffed? Or why was it switched? Even though they may have applied for the grant without Council's knowledge, why was it switched, or why was it placed in the budget that these guys are now operating on this grant, and this money is moved somewhere else.

Mr. Pearce inquired if we are going to get an answer to that.

Dr. Yudice stated they will research that question.

Ms. Dickerson inquired if the average fire station has 11 positions.

Dr. Yudice stated because there are different shifts. She believes it is to cover all the shifts.

Mr. Gomeau stated the manning requirements are set by the population in the area, and businesses around there. There are 3 firefighters on every shift, which equates to 11 firefighters.

Ms. Myers stated this motion appeared on the Council agenda. She does not know the exact date it was sent to us. On the night that it appeared on the Council agenda, the Chief and Michael Byrd were here, and we sent it to committee. She is not making an excuse. She is offering that as information. The second thing is, she would suggest that we divide the question. The issue as to whether or not the way we got to this point is proper, and if we should have had notice beforehand, and the City should have come to us with regard to how these changes were made, she believes is a fair question. She believes Mr. N. Jackson and Mr. Malinowski's questions and comments are proper. Her concern is that if we hold this committee, it will not get dealt with until February. Funding will have run out. We have one fire station in that area. To the extent, those people are paying taxes to have fire service too, she thinks there is something wrong with us thinking that this is not an emergency. Fire service is pretty critical. She does not know that we would be suggesting holding the need to fund a police station in committee for 3 months. We need to look at the issue that is before us, and then the other questions are quite serious and important questions. She thinks those questions go more to the nature of the fire contract that we are paying into. Where volunteers are getting place? Where full-time, or part-time employees are getting paid? Those are separate questions, and she thinks those questions lend themselves more to a work session than to this decision, as to whether or not we are going to keep properly funding a fire station.

Mr. Malinowski stated he agrees with Mr. N. Jackson and Ms. Myers in that safety is of the utmost importance when it comes to providing a service such as this. Having said that, and everyone concurring with that, he still have one station up in Springhill that has absolutely zero manning to it. There is no manpower at all up there. He has been arguing this, and debating it, and trying to get something up there. He was told we are going to buy property. We are going to build a new station. It has been going on and on for years. There is still nothing. Yet he is expected to vote to put 11 people down in this station when there are zero people up there. He cannot support that.

Dr. Yudice stated, per the contract with the City, the Fire Chief has the authority to move those firefighters amongst the different fire stations. We have the fire assessment needs study underway. It will be completed in the Spring, and will be brought back to Council for discussion. With that in mind, as the briefing document explained, we have that study underway.

Ms. Myers stated she shared Mr. Malinowski's concern. The reason that she asked for the fire assessment, countywide, was for exactly what he was pointing out. She, personally, went to the Gadsden fire station a month in need of assistance for her mom, and nobody was there. She agrees with Mr. Malinowski. If we are paying half of the contract value, for fire station, then these stations should be properly manned, but she would not suggest that we protest supporting one station until we get an answer on the other because that is dangerous. What she would say is, she agrees and she would support a motion from Mr. Malinowski, in February, to get a head count at that station. She thinks it is unacceptable that you have a fire station and nobody manning it. She does not disagree with that at all. She would suggest the residents in this area, and this station although it is located in District 11, it covers a large swath of Districts 11 and 10. Given the fact this is the largest station for almost 160 sq. miles, she does think it is really dangerous to hold this funding up for reasons that have to do with the contract that Mr. Malinowski is right to say ought to be revisited, and there ought to be some evaluation given to it. She agrees with that.

Mr. Malinowski stated, in reviewing the information in the agenda packet, it tells us the study is underway. Dr. Yudice just said it is going to be completed in the Spring, so it seems we are doing things backwards right now. We are being asked to vote to provide something when we do not know if it needs to be provided. It is kind of like ordering the tires for your car, but we do not know if it needs any tires. Then after we buy them, what do we do with them, if we do not need them. Find another vehicle, or another station. As of right now, he would be willing to support alternative #3: "Await the information from Fitch & Associates before proceeding."

Mr. N. Jackson stated the grant expires December 31st, so anything after December 31st there is no money. For safety purpose, he cannot sit here and go against something with no one at the station. That is a safety issue. If something was to happen, he cannot live with that. He has no choice but to support it, on that account. Again, his concern is why were they put in this position, and why at the last minute. Even if it is approved tonight, it will be February before it gets on the agenda. As for Mr. Malinowski, with one person at his station, he is not sure what the density of that area is, but he knows with this fire station, there are 4 schools: Lower Richland, Hopkins, Horrell Hill and South East School. It is very densely populated. He is just concern, and frustrated that at this last minute we are getting this thing right here.

Mr. Malinowski stated, for clarification, he has 3 schools within a mile of that station also.

Mr. Livingston stated what is really before us, and he did have a conversation a little while back with Chief Jenkins about this particular issue, and that is why he recalls that he knows, at some point in the budget process, we were informed the grant for these positions was expiring, and they would need the additional money. What it means is, if we choice not to, we have 11 people would simply not go to work on January 1 at the fire station. You would just shut it down. That was his concern. Originally, he said he was reluctantly okay to support the 1st part of it. Again, the 2nd part, to say you are going to go ahead and put those in the budget before the budget process is not something he cannot consider. He would consider dividing the question, so that way we can take care of the immediate need, and take care of the other with the budget process.

Mr. Malinowski stated he can understand Mr. N. Jackson's comments. Even, if we approve this tonight as a committee, it is not going to be at Council until February. The City is the one that got us in this position, or got this department in this situation, we probably need to go back to the City and say you pay them now until February because we cannot say to pay them from the

committee level. It has to go to the full Council, and that will not be until February. And, then if it is a budget amendment, it is going to need 3 readings and a public hearing, so we are into March. He would say to tell the City to keep paying.

Dr. Yudice stated it is her understanding that is what is going to happen. This will supplement what the City will be paying between now and 3rd Reading of the ordinance.

Mr. Malinowski stated we still cannot commit to them getting the funding because the committee cannot approve that.

Ms. McBride stated, for clarification, the City will continue paying, but they want us to commit to reimburse them.

Dr. Yudice stated that is her understanding.

Ms. McBride stated she is upset that we are sitting here debating whether to continue to fund the firemen for the fire station. In as much as this is something the funding agency for the grants saw a need for, so they approved it. Secondly, we have a Fire Chief that has all of the expertise. More expertise probably than any other fire chief, and we are questioning him about the need for safety for the people in Richland County, regardless of where they are in Richland County. She really has concerns because she has sat on here, and she has seen other people come up and there is no debate over an issue as important as the safety of human beings. She concerned that we are taking this position, regarding whether we are going to fund these 11 positions or not. She is glad the Federal government gave us the funding. It is unfortunate they saw that we needed it, but they gave it to us. The Chief sees that we need it, and he is requesting assistance. She does not see why we are sitting here taking all of this time for discussion.

Ms. Myers stated she would like to note that the 29061 zip code, which is the zip code where this station sits, has the highest number of deaths per fire across the County, according to the 2017 numbers, which may have factored into how they got the grant. This is not a theoretical, esoteric discussion. This is a core County responsibility. She would like us to take the theoretical issues that need to be discussed with the City, and separate those issues out from the immediate concern, which is how do we find the money for these 11 critical positions.

Mr. Malinowski stated, for clarification, not once in our information, for us to review, is the Chief mentioned once. This is not questioning the Chief, this questioning the information that he sees in front of us. And, as Mr. N. Jackson said, how did this come about? Where were these people? Dr. Yudice has said they will research it and get back to us on it. It is a question of questioning what happened to possible previous funding. We are not questioning the Chief. The Chief is not mentioned in here once, for anything.

Ms. McBride stated she thought this was something the Chief had mentioned to us previously. Is this something the Chief has stated that he needs? She recalls hearing about this some months ago, when the Chief made his presentation about the grant. She inquired if anybody could give her answer regarding the position of the Chief. She was sure that this was part of his position.

Dr. Yudice stated the Chief provided the information to us, and made that request.

Mr. Livingston stated, since this body cannot really make any final decision, would it hurt to forward it without a recommendation, so we can have it to act on. By moving it forward, at least we can act on it quicker.

Mr. N. Jackson stated he is not questioning the need. He knows the need is there. The only question he had was what happened to the funding before, and where did it go. If it was staffed

previously, and now it is under a grant, how did the City switch the funding away to use the grant. What happened to the permanent funding that was there to fund the station?

Ms. Myers stated, as to Mr. Livingston's question, she would like to vote on this. She would like to forward it with her...she is very uncomfortable forwarding something this important to the full Council, with no recommendation.

Mr. Livingston stated, in case someone questions his vote, as he said, he cannot support...he is concerned about the 11 positions, but he cannot support the motion as presented. He thinks it is unfair for us to move something to next year's budget.

Ms. Myers suggested, if Mr. Livingston and other members of the committee are concerned about the 2nd part, which is a theoretical question, and is very different from the 1st part, she is happy to have the motion amended to move forward the issue of funding the 11 positions, in the current budget cycle, and entering the 2nd half of the question in the new budget cycle.

Mr. N. Jackson agreed to Ms. Myers' amended motion.

In Favor: Malinowski, Myers, N. Jackson, Livingston and McBride

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- b. (1) I move that the Magistrate's Office on Wilson Blvd. be constructed with brick siding and not metal [KENNEDY]

(2) To make a change order to the Upper Township Magistrate contract to include brick for the outside of the entire structure. Additional funding associated with this change order must be identified and approved by County Council [KENNEDY] - Mr. N. Jackson moved, seconded by Ms. McBride, to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve both b(1) and b(2).

Mr. Livingston requested that before this comes before Council we have a cost, and any other options that may make it look aesthetically pleasing.

Mr. Gomeau stated we do have an estimated cost for the brick building. He has been out there with Mr. Niermeier. They have looked at different ways to get some landscaping with the building, and do some other things that will tone down the siding, and the building itself, to make it look acceptable to the neighborhood. We think we can make a huge difference in that for the people in the neighborhood, and the people that come to use the building. There is alternates to the whole building being brick. They can open up the Magistrate's Office with brick around, and doing something with the rest of the siding. There are ways to look at this to make it look like what it is supposed to be, instead of storage building, which is what it looks like now. He and Mr. Niermeier were not a part of the design aspect of this, but he thinks they both would have done it differently had they had the ability to look it. They are definitely going to make it look better than what people have seen, and what they think it is.

Mr. Livingston requested staff to bring back some renderings to look at and decide.

Mr. Malinowski stated he thought there were some architectural drawings, and he does not know why they are not in the agenda packet.

Ms. McBride stated, for clarification, this is after we vote on this, and we get to full Council that you are requesting this, or are you saying hold this in committee.

Mr. Livingston stated to instruct staff now, so when this item goes to Council in February we have something to look at to base our decisions on.

Ms. Myers stated, in the future, it might be helpful, and part of what was missing in this process, was the representatives for the impacted areas had no input, and the citizens had no input on the aesthetics of the building before it got put up. Everyone saw it go up, and after the fact, it was unacceptable. It might have been more helpful, and this is a general concern that many of us have voiced, to have more input from the elected official in the area, so that we could have open dialogue with the community to be sure that what we are pouring money into, their tax money, is acceptable before we get to a point like this again. This has been really controversial, and the citizens have been very upset about it. We could avoid that in the future.

Mr. Gomeau stated Ms. Myers is exactly correct. He thinks, in terms of that, we have looked at the building. There is space in there that might be provided for either the County, or the community. We are seriously looking at this, in terms of the neighborhood. We are really concerned about the impact on the neighborhood, at this point and time. He was not here for it, or he would have changed it himself. He thinks they deserve a little different look at that building.

Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Mr. N. Jackson, to forward to Council with a recommendation to instruct staff to bring back renderings to improve the façade of the building, so that when we come back we can look at improvements, as well as costs.

Ms. McBride stated she is concerned in terms of brick, or whatever else is used, because she does not want anything that is not appropriate with the community. She is sort of skeptical of what may come up, as a result of that.

Mr. Livingston stated brick should be included as an option.

Ms. McBride stated she is really skeptical because last time she requested to be a part of the discussion with the architect, and for some reason she was not invited on several different occasions.

Mr. Gomeau stated they are looking back at the whole process, and he thinks we will improve on that process of community input.

In Favor: Myers, N. Jackson and Livingston

Opposed: Malinowski

The vote was in favor.

- c. Everyone, including Elected Officials, receiving funding from Richland County during the budget process will submit quarterly reports – Ms. Myers stated staff has already provided a fix to that. They have stated they will provide the information. Unless, Mr. Malinowski disagrees, she thinks the suggestion they provided fixes the issues.

Mr. Malinowski stated that is fine, but under “Issues” it states, “Do we want it for these organizations or just Richland County government departments, divisions and Elected Officials?” That’s who we wanted it for because you have your A-Tax, H-Tax and other grantees. There is already processes in place, and rules they have to follow in reporting before they get their funds, so he would think we only want the 2nd half, which are the Richland County government departments, divisions and Elected Officials. He inquired if Ms. Myers concurred with that.

Ms. Myers stated the issue is that the information is being generated, but we do not have it. She would agree to take out the A-Tax and H-Tax portion.

Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Mr. Malinowski, to withdraw the motion.

In Favor: Malinowski, Myers, N. Jackson, Livingston and McBride

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- d. I move to increase the FY 2019 budget by \$3,103,000 to fund the emergency repairs to address the Broad River Wastewater Treatment Plant Consent Order. The funding will be a loan from the General Fund Unassigned Funds to the Broad River Utility System Proprietary Fund and approve the Reimbursement Resolution as presented to County Council – Mr. Malinowski moved, seconded by Mr. N. Jackson, to forward to Council with a recommendation to funding the CAP and approval of the reimbursement resolution. The recommended schedule to amend the Broad River Utilities System Fund Budget is as follows: 1st Reading – February 5, 2019; 2nd Reading and Public Hearing – February 19, 2019; and 3rd Reading – March 5, 2019.

In Favor: Malinowski, Myers, N. Jackson, Livingston and McBride

The vote in favor was unanimous.

5. **ITEMS PENDING ANALYSIS: NO ACTION REQUIRED**

- a. Explore developing municipal enterprises for economically distressed communities with conservation and other properties owned by Richland County [N. JACKSON] – No action was taken.
- b. Develop incentives and tax credits for Green Economy. This promotes green collar jobs in environmentally focused industries in environmentally sensitive areas [N. JACKSON] – No action was taken.

6. **ADJOURNMENT** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:41 p.m.