



Richland County Council
Administration and Finance Committee Meeting
MINUTES
June 28, 2022 – 6:00 PM
Council Chambers
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Malinowski, Chair; Yvonne McBride, Paul Livingston, Jesica Mackey and Joe Walker (via Zoom)

OTHERS PRESENT: Ashiya Myers, Angela Weathersby, Leonardo Brown, John Ansell, Geo Price, Abhijit Deshpande, John Thompson, Patrick Wright, Justin Landy, Kyle Holsclaw, Michael Maloney, Jennifer Wladischkin, Dale Welch, Dwight Hanna, Anette Kirylo, Stacey Hamm, Lori Thomas, Tamar Black, Syndi Castelluccio, Michael Byrd, Dante Roberts and Michelle Onley

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Bill Malinowski called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00PM.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. May 24, 2022 – Ms. McBride moved to approve the minutes as distributed, seconded by Mr. Livingston.

In Favor: Malinowski, McBride, Livingston, J. Walker, and Mackey

The vote in favor was unanimous.

3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Ms. Mackey moved to approve the agenda as published, seconded by Ms. McBride.

In Favor: Malinowski, McBride, Livingston, J. Walker, and Mackey.

The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **ITEMS FOR ACTION**

a. I move to consider Riverbanks Parks Commission's petition to allow the Riverbanks Park District to issue not to exceed \$80 million in general obligation bonds to make improvements at Riverbanks Zoo and Gardens [O.WALKER - June 7, 2022] – Mr. Leonardo Brown, County Administrator, stated there are representative from the Riverbanks Zoo who will be able to answer any questions the committee may have.

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Ms. McBride moved to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve the resolution for a public hearing and First Reading of the ordinance, seconded by Ms. Mackey.

Mr. Tommy Stringfellow, Riverbanks Zoo President and CEO, stated about every 10 years they look for ways to grow Riverbanks Zoo and continue community engagement. This is the 5th request in 50 years for a major influx in capital dollars, which will allow them to overhaul infrastructure, add new exhibits to keep the zoo and botanical gardens fresh, and grow the attendance for an economic return on the taxpayers' investment. He noted the rates are starting to increase for bonds and some of the animals they are interested in are increasingly harder to get; therefore, the timing seemed right to ask Richland and Lexington Counties for an investment.

Ms. McBride inquired if this bond was separate from the other bonds County Council has.

Mr. Brown responded in the affirmative.

Ms. McBride inquired if the bond would impact the County's bond status.

Mr. Brown responded it would not affect the County's cap space.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if the 2020 obligation bonds are still being paid on.

Mr. Stringfellow responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about the tax rate.

Mr. Stringfellow stated it was a bond issued in 2013 for \$32M and has 10 more years before rolling off.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if we will be paying for the old and new bonds simultaneously.

Mr. Stringfellow responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Robert Hobson, First Tryon, stated the current request is a 1.83 millage. There is a 0.8 millage left on the existing bonds.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if Lexington County and the City of Columbia have approved funds.

Mr. Stringfellow responded Lexington County is putting the item up for First Reading in August. Both Councils will have to go through all three readings before the bonds can be issued and would take effect in 2024.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about the additional annual costs of personnel and operations.

Mr. Stringfellow responded they will add approximately 25 staff members and the salaries will be less than \$200,000 a year.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about the additional take at the gate.

Mr. Stringfellow responded the new gondola is not only a transportation provider, but a revenue generator, which could generate up to \$500,000 annually. By the time all of the exhibits are open, the increase could be 400,000 in attendance and an additional \$30M.

He noted there will always be an increase in the gate and food and beverage.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about the liability/insurance for the gondola.

Mr. Stringfellow stated it is less than the liability they have running the tram.

Ms. Mackey inquired about the estimated impact to taxpayers and if the \$4.07 includes the current bond.

Mr. Hobson responded it is an additional \$4.07.

Ms. Mackey inquired if there was consideration of a phased-in approach, and, if so, what would be the dollar amount for the taxpayer.

Mr. Stringfellow noted a \$40-\$50M build is now more like a \$60-\$70M build. By phasing in the project it would decrease the impact by approximately \$2 per household. Decreasing the project would decrease the attendance, thus decreasing the impact of the investment. He noted the original package was \$150M.

Ms. Barron inquired if there has been any attempts to get State funding.

Mr. Stringfellow responded they were recently granted funding from the State, but not as much as they would have like. The funds will be applied to their infrastructure problems and allow them to sue the bond funds for new animal exhibits and attractions. They are also requesting private donations.

Mr. Livingston stated he would like to have more information about the impact of the investment on their revenue and the operational costs. He inquired if there was community input and/or feedback.

Mr. Stringfellow responded they surveyed 50,000 membership holders and asked for their input on what they would like to see at the zoo. In addition, they surveyed the staff to see what would contribute to the growth of the population and what would encourage visitation.

Ms. Mackey inquired about the projections with increasing interest rates in the current economy.

Mr. Hobson responded the interest rates on the bonds will be locked in whenever they are sold in the next year. He noted there is some risk of the interest rates changing in that time, so they built in some cushion in the millage. Currently the borrowing rates is at 3.24%, which is still at a historically low rate for 20-year financing, but it is not as low as it was 6 months ago.

Mr. Malinowski inquired how much the interest rates will have to go up to reach 2 mills.

Mr. Hobson responded he is not sure of the exact number, but it would have to be substantial (3.25% to 4.25%).

Ms. McBride inquired how the citizens feel about the increase.

Mr. Stringfellow responded the input was on the master plan. They have not shown the taxpayer what it would mean price wise. It will be discussed during the public hearing.

Mr. J. Walker inquired if this could be voted on by the taxpayers similar to the Penny Tax.

Mr. Ray Jones, Parker Poe, responded it will come down to how much capacity the zoo has to issue, in terms of its assessed value. Having the combined assessed value of Richland and Lexington Counties the assessed value is substantial. Only if the zoo needed to go over their constitutional debt limit would they need to go to the voters to specifically authorize the issuance of debt.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about their constitutional debt limit.

Mr. Jones responded it would be 8% times \$3 billion.

In Favor: McBride, Livingston, J. Walker, and Mackey

Opposed: Malinowski

The vote was in favor.

Ms. Mackey and Mr. Livingston requested additional information.

Mr. J. Walker requested updates on this request from Lexington County as this would require both counties' input.

- b. Department of Public Works - Solid Waste & Recycling Division - Collection Area 2 Contract Amendment/Extension** – Mr. Brown stated this process stems from Council's communication to staff in re-engaging contractors. Staff is requesting approval of a contract amendment and extension for Collection Area 2 with GFL Environmental, Inc.

Mr. J. Walker moved to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve a contract amendment and extension for Collection Area 2 with GFL Environmental, Inc., seconded by Ms. McBride.

In Favor: Malinowski, McBride, Livingston, J. Walker, and Mackey

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Department of Public Works - Solid Waste & Recycling Division - Collection Area 4 Contract Amendment/Extension - Mr. Livingston moved to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve a contract amendment and extension for Collection Area 4 with GFL Environmental, Inc., seconded by Ms. McBride.

In Favor: Malinowski, McBride, Livingston, J. Walker, and Mackey

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- c. Richland County Sheriff's Department – Additional School Resource Officer - Keenan High School** – Mr. Brown stated Richland School District One has agreed to cover all expenses related to adding the school resource officer. Staff recommends approval.

Mr. Livingston moved to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve Richland School District One's request for an additional School Resource Officer to be placed at Keenan High School, seconded by Ms. McBride.

Mr. Malinowski inquired what would happen if the school no longer wanted the School Resource Officer.

Chief Polis responded they believe Keenan High School would use the School Resource Officer in perpetuity.

Mr. Mackey inquired if this item would have to come back to the committee every year for renewal.

Chief Polis responded it would become a part of their normal annual MOU renewal process.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about the cost difference between the operating cost for the first and second year.

Chief Polis responded the difference is first year purchases vs. recurring costs.

In Favor: Malinowski, McBride, Livingston, J. Walker, and Mackey

The vote in favor was unanimous.

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

- a. Direct staff and CASA to look into what it will take to have Richland County CASA receive state funding to operate the way that all other CASA groups in the state do, with state funding. Richland County should not be excluded from something that is provided to all other counties by the state. [MALINOWSKI - May 3, 2022] – Mr. Brown stated staff has begun looking into this issue, but it will require a change at the State level.

- b. Direct staff and legal to create a new IGA regarding the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center Inmate Per Diem rate. Richland County is operating on fees that were implemented effective July 1, 2018 and but did not go into effect until July 1, 2019 due to the 90-day notice requirement pursuant to the agreement. The agreement in effect at that time was to have a fee only increase \$10 per year until it reached 95% of the actual cost to the County. We are currently losing thousands of dollars per year the way this is being handled.

Richland County should not have taxpayers pay for outside entities who placed individuals in the County Detention Center, as that is the responsibility of the placing entity. Every entity who places an individual in the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center should have an IGA with Richland County that reflects the current rate they will be paying as well as the fact rates are subject to change upward or downward on an annual basis. Those IGAs should also be worded as an annual agreement with up to so many extension years and the 90-day notice needs to be either reduced or more closely followed by staff [MALINOWSKI - May 3, 2022] – Mr. Brown noted we have added some current expenses, in terms of services. The information will go into a calculation that will be provided to other agencies. He noted have some “moving targets”, so the information has not been set. We anticipate having something by the 1st quarter of the fiscal year.

- c. Any agency receiving funds from Richland County must provide an accounting for those funds prior to a request for funds in the next fiscal year budget. REASON: Accountability is a must for taxpayer dollars [MALINOWSKI - June 7, 2022] – Mr. Malinowski stated this applies to Hospitality Tax grants, outside agencies, the Solicitor, the Sheriff, etc.

Mr. Brown stated, with the agencies we provide grant funding, there are processes in place. If the agencies are not compliant they will be restricted from getting funds. He noted he may need additional clarification on what information is being requested.

Mr. Malinowski stated he is inquiring about any agency. He noted Council never sees how the funds are spent.

Mr. Brown stated he would share this information with all parties to find out what feedback they have and present the information back to this body during the budget process.

Ms. Mackey stated, for clarification, we are referring to outside agencies.

Mr. Malinowski responded in the affirmative.

5. **ADJOURNMENT** – Mr. Livingston move to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Mackey.

In Favor: Malinowski, McBride, Livingston, J. Walker, and Mackey

The vote in favor was unanimous.