



Richland County Council

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

September 22, 2020 – 6:00 PM

Zoom Meeting

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Joyce Dickerson, Chair; Bill Malinowski, Yvonne McBride, Joe Walker and Dalhi Myers

OTHERS PRESENT: Allison Terracio, Paul Livingston, Michelle Onley, Ashiya Myers, Angela Weathersby, Leonardo Brown, Ashley Powell, Dale Welch, Tariq Hussain, John Thompson, Michael Maloney, Clayton Voignier, Elizabeth McLean, Stacey Hamm, Sierra Flynn, Tamar Black, Sandra Haynes, Ronaldo Myers, Dwight Hanna, Bill Davis, and James Hayes

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Ms. Dickerson called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 PM.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a. Regular Session: June 23, 2020 – Ms. McBride moved, seconded by Ms. Myers, to approve the minutes as distributed.

In Favor: Malinowski, Dickerson, McBride and Myers

Not Present: Walker

The vote in favor was unanimous.

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

In Favor: Malinowski, Dickerson, McBride and Myers

Not Present: Walker

The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **ITEMS FOR ACTION**

- a. Richland School District One's Recommendation to Deny Richland County Request for an Additional \$500,000 Payment for the Southeast Sewer and Water Expansion Project – Dr. Thompson stated this item was deferred at the last meeting, and the committee requested additional information. Ms. A. Myers provided the additional information on August 6th. Richland School District I is saying they are deferring the opportunity of providing the County the additional \$500,000. From their vantage point, the County is picking up \$1M in funding from DHEC. According to the consultant, the cost to build out the infrastructure for the School District is approximately \$2.7M. Based on that, we have adequate funds to build out their infrastructure.

Included in the briefing documentation is a draft IGA, just in case it costs more than \$3M, the County has the ability to go after the School District for the additional funds.

Ms. Myers stated this is not an attempt to overcharge the School District or put any added burden on the schools, but an attempt to equalize the burden of this system and provide a reduction in the rates for the ratepayers. To the extent that there is money put into the system, we are basically charging the bond payments to the ratepayers. It is her understanding, the plant that is going on the ground at the schools will cost \$3M. The plant, which we have long established, will not work without the rest of the system that is being amortized over all those users for actually using the system. If we were to use the logic you are putting forward, the ratepayers could come back and say, "All that is on my facility is a pipe. What is the cost of that pipe?" This project is fundamentally a project to fix the schools. It is not a project that Richland County is doing, and is asking the school to join. The ratepayers are incidental. If the School District does not chip in the \$500,000, which goes toward the pipes leading away from the school and leads to the backhaul. They cannot get service without backhaul. She does not understand how it makes sense for the School District not to pay this portion, and amortize it over the ratepayers. We have already had to come back and lower the rates for individual customers. If the School District agrees to pay the share they agreed to pay, it would relieve individual rates. To now say, the School District should only pay for what is onsite is illogical, and she would like for us to move away from that and ask the schools to pay what they originally agreed to pay.

Ms. Dickerson noted she provided the information on this matter, from her tenure as Chair, to the Administrator.

Mr. Brown stated he reviewed the information, and it was noted that an agreement was circulated, but we do not have a copy of the agreement where a specific value was agreed upon.

Mr. Malinowski stated, on p. 17 of the agenda, it references the cost to serve schools. He inquired if this amount also includes the amount the County is paying Joel Woods.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about the amount of taps for the schools.

Dr. Thompson responded there are 90 taps for the three (3) schools.

Mr. Malinowski stated, for clarification, the County is not charging the schools for the taps, which would be a savings of approximately \$3.24M.

Dr. Thompson responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if the County will have any expenses in Loan Assistance provisions.

Dr. Thompson responded he will have to get back with this information.

Ms. McBride inquired about the repercussions if this item is not passed.

Mr. Brown responded, ideally, before the County moved forward with its work, and the bonding process, there would have been IGAs with the School District in place. Therefore, the project would not have moved forward, until this happened. Right now, the County has already begun a project, and he does not know that this body is going to say not continue with the project.

Ms. McBride inquired if the School District has the money budgeted to take care of this.

Mr. Brown responded that he has not spoken with anyone at the School District to make that determination, but he can certainly reach out to them.

Ms. McBride stated it appears we may be double taxing the citizens Richland County.

Ms. Myers stated, if you recall, in the meetings with the School District, they had the money in reserves, but did not want to contribute up to that level.

Mr. Livingston inquired if this project is feasible without the commitment from the School District. In other words, would the ratepayers be able to move forward.

Dr. Thompson responded it would be feasible. We are building the backbone of the infrastructure now to convey sewage to the wastewater treatment facility.

Mr. Livingston inquired about how it would affect the ratepayers.

Dr. Thompson responded that it will not affect the rates.

Mr. Livingston inquired if there are funds in the project that are directly tied to the School District (i.e. grants).

Dr. Thompson responded the only grant funding for the project is the \$1M from DHEC, which is contingent upon the School District being involved, and can only be used for the schools.

Ms. Myers stated, even at the start of this project, the ratepayers are experiencing rates higher than what we promised them. They could experience relief if the School District would pay its fair share. There is no analysis that says the School District is only getting a \$3M value from this system. The other side of it is, if we agree that the School District should not pay this \$500,000, then she would be interested in having them pay for their taps. Individual ratepayers are now realizing rates of 20% - 30% more than they were originally paying. She stated there is an all-around problem with how this rate structure was developed, and the information that staff provided Council did not prove out.

Mr. Brown stated he had some discussions with the former Interim Administrator and former Utilities Director to try to get some clarity on the rates. It is his understanding, the rates were driven by the fact that the County had gone for years without maintenance on its system, which was the largest component of the system, and not because we are building this new system.

Ms. Myers noted this system is not free, and acting like it should be free to the school, which is the only reason we undertook this buildout, is asinine.

Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Mr. Malinowski, to deny the draft IGA.

In Favor: Malinowski, Dickerson, McBride and Myers

Not Present: Walker

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- b. Sewer and Water Connection for Residents Living Within the Southeast Sewer and Water Expansion Zone – Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Ms. McBride, to forward to Council with a recommendation that Richland County install the sewer and water system to selected private properties. The 70 selected homes will be connected to the sewer system which consists of the tank, grinder pump, and line. The 60 selected homes will be connected to the water system

which consists of the meter, line, and valve. Moreover, County Council approves waiving the connection (Tap) fee to customers who signed-up for water and/or sewer services by December 16, 2019 deadline and extend the free tap deadline (Council provides the new deadline date).

Mr. Malinowski stated he does not see how extending the free tap deadline honors the free tap deadline of December 16, 2019 that we initially set. He does not support extending the deadline to new customers. He noted, under fiscal impact, he does not believe the figures are correct. The briefing document states, "The fiscal impacts are \$370,000 in tap fees..." for 70 homes.

Mr. Davis responded there are 60 water customers at \$1,500 and 70 sewer customers at \$4,000.

Ms. Myers stated the only publicity about the deadline for this process came from her. She held meetings and dropped off flyers. The County sent out a 3x5-index card that was impossible to read, and contained misinformation. She stated you may want to hold staff responsible because there was no public information campaign to put residents on notice that the deadline was approaching; so they would not have been able to sign up timely unless they attended one of the meetings she hosted.

Mr. Malinowski requested an explanation on the chart on p. 51 of the agenda.

Mr. Davis responded they have four (4) separate contracts for the backbone of the system. Two of the contracts are under one contractor. The other two contracts are under different contractors. When a project is bid, each line item may be different, depending on which contractor has the work. The number of items predicates a higher number for certain contractors who may not have the people to go on private property, so they have to sub that work out to someone else.

In Favor: Malinowski, Dickerson, McBride and Myers

Not Present: Walker

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- c. Change Order for Division 4 of the Southeast Sewer and Water Expansion Project – Mr. Malinowski inquired as to where the line flow to, at this point.

Mr. Davis responded, looking at the data, there are a large number of lines, and one of the lines they saw on the map was going to the City. The City could not disconnect from that particular line because the customers within their service area would have been disconnected. They only wanted to turn over the customers on the east side of Trotter Road. The line they were going to turn over was a storm drain line, and not an abandoned sewer line; therefore, we were not able to utilize it for sewer, as intended. We currently have 200 customers on the line, at a cost of \$6,752 per month. The \$71,000 will be recouped within approximately 10 months.

Mr. Malinowski inquired as to who is incurring the cost to build the new lines.

Mr. Davis responded that the County is incurring the costs.

Ms. McBride moved, seconded by Ms. Myers, to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve Change Order 2 for the additional gravity line installation required for Division 4 of the SESWEP.

In Favor: Malinowski, Dickerson, McBride and Myers

Not Present: Walker

The vote was in favor.

- d. Sewer Request for the Farm at McCord's Ferry Road – Mr. Malinowski inquired if the \$13,504 monthly cost the County will pay the City is forever.

Mr. Davis responded the monthly cost will be incurred based upon how many houses are built. If the Southeast Sewer System is up in June/July 2021, the funds will start coming back to the County.

Mr. Malinowski stated, on p. 67 of the agenda, it notes the developer that will be responsible for the project has yet to be determined. It seems to him, we are passing something without complete information.

Mr. Davis responded, since the July 8th letter, included in the packet, we have received a specific request for the development of these 400 lots.

The committee moved to forward this item to Council with a recommendation to direct staff to issue a sewer availability letter that permits the developer to connect the Farm at McCords Ferry Subdivision to the City of Columbia sewer collection subject to the following conditions:

1. The construction of the project is completed and fully permitted for operations before the completion of the Southeast Sewer and Water Expansion Project (SESWEPE).
2. The developer shall install an 8" force main that can convey all the sewer flow from the development to the County's Garners Ferry pump station.
3. At the completion of the SESWEPE, the developer shall disconnect from the City of Columbia and reconnect to the County's sewer system using the 8" force main already installed. All cost associated with disconnection and reconnection shall be the responsibility of the developer.

In Favor: Malinowski, McBride and Walker

Opposed: Dickerson

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- e. Utilities Delegated Review – Mr. Malinowski noted input from someone in Utilities was included in all of the other items related to sewer. This particular one, which has great importance to the County, and what Council will or will not do moving forward, does not have any input from Utilities. We have input from Dr. Thompson, but he would like to see input from the Utilities Department.

Mr. Malinowski moved, seconded by Ms. McBride, to defer this item until the October committee meeting.

In Favor: Malinowski, Dickerson, McBride and Myers

Opposed: Walker

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- f. Broad River Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Headwork and Emergency Storage (Lagoon) Upgrade – Mr. Malinowski inquired if staff is going to negotiate the price, since the estimated cost is exceeded by the lowest bid.

Mr. Davis stated this is part of a corrective action plan that we have with DHEC. When it comes to compliance, we have a schedule that we have agreed to. We need to complete the work by July. We have already gone through the procurement process, and received an approved bid.

Ms. McBride moved, seconded by Mr. Walker, to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve the awarding of the Broad River WWTF Headwork and emergency storage (Lagoon) upgrade to Republic Contracting Corporation.

In Favor: Dickerson, McBride, Walker and Myers

Opposed: Malinowski

The vote was in favor.

- g. Alvin S Glenn Detention Center – Detainee Telephone Service – Mr. Walker moved, seconded by Ms. Dickerson, to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve the contract to GTL for the detainee telephone service at the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center.

Ms. McBride inquired about the cost for the detainees to use the services.

Mr. Myers responded the Detention Center charges the recommended Federal Communications rate of \$0.15 per minute.

Ms. Myers inquired if there other detention centers that are charging less, and if we are making a profit on this.

Mr. Myers responded that he does not know the exactly what other detention centers charge, but the rate is normally consistent throughout. The County does make a profit of approximately \$400,000, which is deposited into the General Fund.

Ms. McBride stated she finds that to be an extreme cost for indigent detainees.

Ms. Myers made a substitute motion, seconded by Ms. McBride, to defer this item until the October committee meeting, and provide the information Ms. McBride has requested.

In Favor: Malinowski, Dickerson, McBride, Walker and Myers

The vote in favor of the substitute motion was unanimous.

- h. Richland County amend the retirement insurance benefit for employees to be granted full insurance benefit to employees who serve a total number of accumulative years instead of total consecutive years for their perspective terms for full retirement. Example: employees who qualify for full retirement at 25, 28 and 30 years be granted full retirement benefits based on a total accumulated years served instead of consecutive years. The total years must be with Richland County Government – Ms. McBride inquired if this is going to cost additional funds.

Mr. Hanna responded in the affirmative. There are several aspects of the costs, as it relates to the pure premiums, it could be an increase of up to \$30,000 per person, per year. There is also the aspect of GASB75, as it relates to the County's liability. There is a possibility there could be implications, as it relates to bonds.

Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Ms. McBride, to defer this item until the October committee meeting.

In Favor: Dickerson, McBride and Myers

Opposed: Malinowski and Walker

The vote was in favor.

- i. County Council – Discretionary Spending – Mr. Malinowski moved, seconded by Mr. Walker, to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve the motion to reduce the amount of discretionary funds available to individual council members; be it funds for training, travel and entertainment, printing materials, or otherwise, by one half of the currently authorized amount. This is to include funds reimbursed to council members as well, be it from a discretionary account or otherwise.

Ms. Myers made a substitute motion, seconded by Ms. McBride, to defer this item until the October committee meeting.

In Favor: Dickerson, McBride and Myers

Opposed: Malinowski and Walker

The vote was in favor.

- j. We move to immediately terminate the individual issuance of and usage of Government Procurement Cards by elected and appointed officials in Richland County – Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Ms. McBride, to defer this item until the October committee meeting.

In Favor: Dickerson, McBride and Myers

Opposed: Malinowski and Walker

The vote was in favor.

5. **ITEMS PENDING ANALYSIS**

- a. Repeal and change a portion of Richland County Ordinance Article XI, INQUIRIES AND INVESTIGATIONS, Sec. 2-652. Conduct of investigations. (a)(1), that starts with, “Commence any official investigation...” – No action was taken.
- b. In addition, have the Richland County Legal Department in conjunction with the Richland County lobbyist contact SC State Legislators and the South Carolina Association of Counties to request Section 4-9-660 of the South Carolina Code of Laws be repealed/changed. – No action was taken.

6. **ADJOURNMENT** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 PM.