



MINUTES
CITY OF GOOSE CREEK, SOUTH CAROLINA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
TUESDAY, JULY 28, 2020 – 6:00 PM
FIRE DEPARTMENT HQ – TRAINING ROOM
201 BUTTON HALL AVENUE

Mayor/Council Present:

Mayor Gregory S. Habib
Mayor Pro Tem Kevin Condon
Councilmember Debra Green-Fletcher
Councilmember Christopher Harmon
Councilmember Corey McClary
Councilmember Gayla McSwain
Councilmember Jerry Tekac

City Staff:

City Administrator Natalie Zeigler
City Clerk Kelly J. Lovette
Director of Economic Development Matt Brady
Fire Chief Norm Cutshall
Police Chief LJ Roscoe
Communications Supervisor Chimere Myers

Guests Present:

Press Present:

PURSUANT TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT SC CODE 30-4-80: WRITTEN NOTICE WAS DELIVERED TO THE PRESS BY EMAIL ON FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2020 AND DULY POSTED AT CITY HALL LOCATED AT 519 N GOOSE CREEK BOULEVARD, AN ACCESSIBLE FACILITY, AND ON CITYOFGOOSSECREEK.COM

Mayor Habib called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

STAFF PRESENTATIONS & UPDATES:

I. RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY (MATT BRADY)

Mr. Brady stated sixteen (16) lots have been slated to be sold by the City and are currently being marketed by Carolina One. He stated there are other lots, but they have some type of restriction on them, through either SC Parks and Recreation and Tourism or some other type of restriction based on how the City purchased the lots. Mr. Brady introduced Mr. Lawrence Richard; the Carolina One Selling Agent assigned to sell these lots. Mr. Brady briefed City Council on what the options are Hunter Quinn Homes has offered to purchase all sixteen (16) lots for \$80,000 and there is a lot of work they would have to do, close to \$1,000,000 worth of infrastructure that has to be put in place and the paving of Lila and Dennis Drive. Option two (2), is the City was approached by a non-profit, Patriot Housing Project, Mungo Construction, and asked to donate the property, or to offer some sort of financial assistance, waive fees, assist to seek out funding or whatever the City could do. He stated they would then build the houses and offer to rent the homes to veterans for \$1,400 - \$1,600 per month. There was discussion wherein Mr. Brady and Mr. Richard thoroughly answered all of City Council's and Mrs. Zeigler's questions regarding what types of homes would be built,

Mr. Richard briefed City Council on the two (2) offers that were currently on the table by the developers. He stated the offers were not formal offers at this time as discussions were still taking place by all parties involved, to include Berkeley County regarding the infrastructure that would need to be put in place prior to construction beginning on the homes. City Council

was shown the type of product Hunter Quinn Homes has produced in other locations. Mr. Lawrence stated the price of the homes, based on where the price of cost comes in, would probably be around the mid to high \$260,000 range, possibly even as high as \$300,000.

Mr. Brady stated the next step would be to sell the properties by Ordinance and that would be at the direction of Mayor and City Council. Mayor Habib stated the properties were not doing the City any good in their current vacant state. Councilmember McClary stated he felt it would be wise to know where the monies of the sale of these properties would be going and for City Council to think about why the property was acquired in the first place and to have a plan in action to replace what is being sold or to supplement the properties being sold. Councilmember Tekac stated the City does have a plan and is about to invest \$2,000,000 in property right there in that neighborhood for a park (John McCants Veterans Park). Mayor Habib stated the City currently has fourteen (14) parks and are currently building two (2) new ones; and, the only reason he would be interested in the City owning other properties would be to buy it to redevelop and invest into the City itself; and, the only reason the past City Council bought property in the past was for green space and then nothing was done with the property. He stated the City's laws and ordinances now provide for green space in every neighborhood. Mayor Habib addressed some concerns of Councilmember McClary's about selling off green space. Mayor Habib stated the City had two (2) groups of lots, those in Boulder Bluff and West Greenview, that are reasonable for City Council to turn into residential lots and they began this by evaluating every piece of property owned by the City and they determined the lots in question in Boulder Bluff and West Greenview were the only lots that made sense to turn into residential properties, that was the plan. He stated the lots in West Greenview have a park next to them and the City is currently working on a plan to have the restrictions lifted and to turn around and reinvest those same dollars to enhance the park that is there and those are the lots he has talked more and more about possibly being developed by Habitat for Humanity.

Mayor Habib directed City staff to bring the properties, in Ordinance form, before City Council for first reading at their regular meeting in August giving the City Administrator the authority to sell the sixteen (16) properties in Boulder Bluff and implementing in the contract the issues and concerns Councilmember McSwain mentioned concerning the development of the property being in a timely manner.

II. BRANDING (MATT BRADY)

Mr. Brady briefed City Council that City staff was in the process of receiving some quotes on banners to capitalize on the branding of the City and stated they will be placed on every other mast arm along St. James Avenue. Mayor Habib stated this is something City Council and City staff have been talking about for the last couple of years and it was finally coming to fruition, and that projects like these can take a while but people will now know where they are when they see the City's logo and these banners.

III. BOULDER BLUFF SIDEWALKS - FUNDING

Mrs. Zeigler stated the sidewalk project was currently at \$1,051,245, that is a lot of money and it is mostly because of right-of-way acquisition that will have to happen because of the sidewalks are set back pretty far because of drainage issues in that area. She stated about two (2) weeks after she started with the City there was an issue with the BCD COG wherein they audited their books with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), a discrepancy was discovered and it was found that the money was no longer available. She

stated she told them the City still wanted to complete the project and BCD COG went back and they lowered the amount they originally gave the City, but they still ranked the project number One (1) and were still able to give the City a little bit more funding; however, the City is still short by \$157,525. She stated typically the City provides a 20% match on all of these projects and Berkeley County Transportation Commission (CTC) has come up with \$110,456 to help out the City. Mrs. Zeigler went back to Supervisor Cribb and inquired if the CTC would entertain another request and he stated you know these projects are supposed to have some money attached to them. She stated as of right now, the City's match will need to be \$157,525, and once the City gives the green light it is a twelve (12) to eighteen (18) month project before SCDOT put the project out for bid. Mayor Habib stated he probably overstepped his bounds, but he told them the City would commit to the monies needed for the project and City Council could vote how they wished but it would be on the agenda for the regular City Council Meeting in August. Mrs. Zeigler stated the monies could come from the sale of the sixteen lots in Boulder Bluff (\$80,000), Capital Improvements Fund (\$92,000) or the Old TIFF Fund (\$151,000), but it is not part of the TIFF it is just in that fund right now and it can be used for this project. Mayor Habib inquired if there was any opposition by City Council to move forward and place the project on the agenda for consideration at the regular City Council meeting in August. Hearing none, Mayor Habib directed City staff to move forward.

IV. CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS – TIME CHANGE

Mayor Habib and City Council discussed moving their regular City Council meeting from 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Mayor Habib stated the City of Goose Creek is one of the few municipalities in the State to hold their meetings at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Condon stated the City Council workshops are scheduled for 6:00 p.m. and regular meetings would match that time. Hearing no opposition from City Council, Mayor Habib directed City staff to place the item on the regular City Council meeting agenda in August.

V. CITY COUNCIL COMPENSATION

Councilmember Tekac stated he took it upon himself to do a Compensation Study based on the information the South Carolina Municipal Association provides access by other municipalities. He stated City Council's last increase went from \$3,600 to \$7,200 annually in June 1998; and the position of Mayor's last salary increase went from \$14,000 to \$30,000 annually March 2008. Councilmember Tekac proposed a City Council salary increase to \$12,000 annually (\$28,800 in additional salary expense) and the Mayor's salary increase to \$36,000 annually (\$6,000 in additional salary expense). He stated based on State law, an increase cannot take place until after the next election which would not be until January 2021, as the Mayor and City Council cannot accept an increase in salary until after an election. Councilmember Harmon stated he felt the increase would help bring competition into running for City Council and Mayor. Mayor Habib stated what Councilmember Tekac was proposing was very reasonable. Councilmember McSwain stated she looked at the same comparisons that Councilmember Tekac did and she stated there are relevant variables, but she did not feel the City of Goose Creek was out of line with most municipalities that are equal to our City and that was the only thing she wished to point out in City Council's consideration. Discussions continued and Mayor Habib inquired if there was any opposition by City Council to move forward and place the item on the agenda for consideration at the regular City Council meeting in August. Hearing none, Mayor Habib directed City staff to move forward.

VI. CONSOLIDATED DISPATCH

Mayor Habib stated consolidated dispatch was something Mr. Jake Broom, the last City Administrator, and him started discussing a long time ago. He stated Berkeley County is now investing into a new emergency operations center which includes a new dispatch center. He stated they approached the City and asked if we would like to be included. He stated both the Police Chief, Fire Chief, City Administrator, and himself have a lot of opinions on the matter. Mrs. Zeigler stated she would like to have both chiefs speak to Mayor Habib and City Council to brief them on their opinions on the subject, as well as answer any questions. She stated both departments are very different, and the chiefs have very different opinions.

Chief Roscoe stated she is not for consolidated dispatch and she understands why the Fire Department is in favor and that both agencies have very different needs in how their departments operate. She thoroughly briefed and answered the questions of Mayor Habib and City Council on the various reasons it would behoove the Police Department to remain independent. She compared the two (2) organizations between the City and Berkeley County and elaborated on the following, just to name a few: the time it takes a dispatcher to answer a call; certification for dispatchers under State law; after hours staffing to handle walk-ins; the cost involved; the City's dispatchers know the City and the area and this helps the officers when more clarity is needed on certain types of calls; the citizens of the City of Goose Creek expect a very high level of service; and, her dispatchers know the officers and can tell inflections in their voices when situations in an emergency are more stringent and/or stressed.

Interim Fire Chief Norm Cutshall stated he was in favor of consolidated dispatch and the fire and EMS side, he provided various examples of challenges his department deals with on a routine basis and the confusion that is caused from the back and forth between having to go to various channels and you're dealing with both Berkeley County and Goose Creek's dispatch with medics and fire stations. He stated the City's Fire Department runs approximately twenty (20) calls per day and about fifty percent (50%) are Berkeley County. He stated there are many times when someone calls 911 and the call may go to Berkeley County and then it has to be transferred back to Goose Creek's dispatch and there is confusion about who is taking which calls and which medic unit is coming from where and there are multiple channels being operated on and decisions are having to be made as to which calls are taking priority and where they are being dispatched. He stated the system could be a lot better if there was a consolidated dispatch and there would be a lot less confusion especially when you are dealing with a fire and someone is trapped. He stated there is a lot of duplication when calls come in and are being transferred and the person on the other end needing assistance has to repeat themselves as to their emergency. If everyone was on the same channel and under one (1) roof, things would go a lot smoother and delays to answer and dispatch calls would be much faster.

There was discussion regarding "flipping the switch" wherein Goose Creek dispatch and Berkeley County's dispatch two (2) systems will be communicating with one another and there would be a merger of radio channels. Chief Roscoe stated she believes the issues the City's Police and Fire Departments have had will be resolved if they "flip the switch". Also discussed was the mandatory training and certification required of dispatchers under Federal law. Mrs. Zeigler stated a decision does not need to be made in August, the City has probably until December, because the City would not go into the dispatch center until July 2021. She stated she would sign off on flipping the switch; but this would give them time for the Fire Department to use it and time to hire a new Fire Chief and get their opinion on the

system. She stated for budget reasons \$300,000 is not a ton for the City's budget, City Council would have to figure out what level of service they wish to provide. The City will need about \$1,000,000 for when the new fire station opens and \$1,800,000 to get the new station open with equipment and personnel, that does not include the building. She feels this is a policy decision that should be made by City Council and they should receive input from the experts as well.

There was discussion between City Council and City staff. Mayor Habib requested Chief Cutshall speak with Fire Departments who serve the municipalities/counties Chief Roscoe has already spoken with on the law enforcement side, but for Chief Cutshall to get the take of those who provide fire and EMS services and to find out what their opinions are on consolidated dispatch center. It was discussed how the City's CALEA accreditation could be affected by the dispatch center not being accredited if they went consolidated with Berkeley County; calls being pinged from cell phone towers to the wrong dispatch centers and they have to be transferred.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn by Councilmember Tekac, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Condon.
Discussion: None.
Vote: All in favor. Motion carried. (8:33 p.m.)

Date: October 13, 2020

Kelly J. Lovette, MMC
City Clerk