



Richland County Council

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

November 21, 2019 – 6:00 PM

Council Chambers

2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Michelle Onley, Larry Smith, Stacey Hamm, Jennifer Wladischkin, John Thompson, Clayton Voignier, Ashiya Myers, Angela Weathersby, Leonardo Brown, Gary Watts, Chris Eversmann, James Hayes, Brad Farrar, Quinton Epps, Cathy Rawls, Ronaldo Myers, Tariqu Hussain and Tyler Kirk

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Ms. Dickerson called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 PM.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a. October 22, 2019 – Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Mr. Walker, to approve the minutes as distributed.

In Favor: Malinowski, Myers, Walker and Dickerson

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

In Favor: Malinowski, Myers, Walker and Dickerson

The vote in favor was unanimous.
4. **ITEMS FOR ACTION**
 - a. Conversion of Six Part-Time Deputy Coroner Positions to Full-Time Status – Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Ms. Dickerson, to approve, for discussion.

Ms. Myers stated, in the briefing documents, it says there will be no budgetary impact, but that we are essentially bringing them in-house for benefit purposes.

Mr. Watts stated there is some essential impact, as it relates to the insurance cost, but based on the amount of time they working, they would be eligible for insurance.

Ms. Myers stated, for clarification, in terms of the current salary, they are working so much overtime they are FTEs, but not being provided benefits.

Mr. Watts stated they are being paid the same rate, and because the full-time employees are exempt, they are having to pay overtime to the part-time employees, if they work beyond their normal hours. The other costs is the training and equipment, since they have to have the same training and certifications a full-time employee has, and then losing them to another agencies because of benefits.

Ms. Myers inquired if Mr. Hayes had looked at the side-by-side comparison of where we are now, and where we would be if we were to approve Mr. Watts' request.

Mr. Hayes stated there is an analysis in the packet that shows where we are currently. Even without a conversion, they were projected to have a deficit in the part-time, but a surplus in the regular salary line item, which would equate to a net deficit of \$38,000. Ms. Hamm noted, upon conversion, there may be some health insurance requirements that may be an additional \$46,000, for an overall deficit of \$84,000. Even with Council not making any adjustments, there would still be a deficit of \$38,000, which would have to be absorbed through any surplus in the General Fund.

Ms. Myers inquired, going forward, if this is a better budgetary move to keep these people as part-time.

Mr. Hayes stated anytime you are assuming additional costs you would not say it is a better financial move; however, if it causes the Coroner's Office to retain employees that is a good move.

Ms. Myers stated, from the standpoint of employee retention, scheduling and the ability to hire people who come into a system where they see a success arising, this makes sense. The financial impact, over time, is not meaningful.

Mr. Malinowski stated, according to the information in the agenda packet, this was never brought to the full Council for a request. This was all a backdoor deal between...

Mr. Watts requested that Mr. Malinowski not call it a backdoor deal.

Mr. Malinowski stated, then it was concocted by an Administrator and an elected official, unbeknownst to the officials here.

Ms. Dickerson requested that Mr. Malinowski and Mr. Watts refrain from name calling and point of fingers.

Mr. Malinowski stated this request was never brought to Council. He inquired if that is the way seeking full-time employees are normally retained.

Mr. Watts stated, as elected officials, they have always been guided by County Council to take our issues to the County Administrator. He does not know what the budget process is for hiring a new employee, as far as what Council does. He did what he was asked to do for the last 17 years, when he had an issue, and took it to the County Administrator. What he did from that point forward, who he contacted, who he did not contact, he has no idea. He stated there emails in the packet that show the exchange between himself and an Assistant Administrator. He stated he had explained the issue with the County Administrator. The County Administrator, in turn, said this what we can do, and inquired if that was acceptable. It was agreed upon, and it was implemented. What happened from there, he cannot answer.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about how much it costs to train an employee.

Mr. Watts stated it costs approximately \$20,000.

Mr. Malinowski noted the backup documentation states "The salaries might not change, but once the employees are converted..." He inquired how that is possible.

Mr. Watts stated the employees are still paid the same hourly rate, as the full-time Deputy Coroners.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if there are options to select various insurance coverage, and if it affects the financial impact.

Mr. Brown stated the County has a multi-plan insurance coverage, and there are different costs associated with those plans. The County pays for the plan, but the employee share different cost structures depending on which plan they choose.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about how many employees the Coroner's Office has lost in the last 2 – 3 years.

Mr. Watts responded between 6 and 8.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if Mr. Watts knows what the difference in salary was where these employees were going.

Mr. Watts stated it was not so much salary, as benefits.

Mr. Malinowski stated the way he phrased his opening comments was due to the email from Mr. Hayes to Mr. Brown and Dr. Thompson, on August 22, 2019. In the email, it says "I believe based off my research and just speaking to the coroner himself who told me that the funds have always been available in their PT object code they proceeded to pay these deputy coroners out of the PT object code but they essentially worked the same number of hours as the FTEs because 'he had to do something since you all were not going to give me the positions'". He requested Mr. Watts to explain his comment.

Mr. Watts stated that is a fair statement because he had to cover the schedule. The only way he could cover the schedule, without the full-time employees, was to use part-time employees to cover. He had to do something to cover the schedule.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if the Coroner came to the County, at any time, and inform them they were going to be over budget because of this.

Mr. Watts stated he assumed the Administrator would address that with the planning of the employee costs. He noted the budget deficit for last year was \$642.30 on a \$2.9M budget. They had funds in full-time employees, which they were not using, and were able to transfer over to the part-time line item.

Mr. Malinowski inquired as to where the funds are coming from.

Mr. Hayes stated it would come from the General Fund Surplus Fund. Overall, the General Fund has a yearly surplus.

Mr. Malinowski inquired what the approximate annual cost that will be added to the Coroner's budget to cover this next year.

Mr. Hayes stated the deficit amount should be \$84,000.

Mr. Watts stated, as the investigators become better trained, and more used to processes, they have a better opportunities and chance, to conduct the investigation, getting doctors to certify death certificates, and doing more on frontend, which allows them to cut down on the backend with autopsy costs. If they do not have to do autopsies it will save them thousands of dollars, and will come back in to cover any costs associated with the full-time employees.

Ms. Myers wanted the record to reflect that Mr. Hayes said the County has a budget surplus every year.

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

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- b. Amend the Hospitality Tax Council Allocation Process – Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Ms. McBride, to forward to Council with a recommendation to authorize staff to revise applicable procedures to ensure the compliance of all projects receiving H-tax funds as allocated by County Council.

Mr. Malinowski requested Mr. Hayes to give him a definition of Zoom Grants.

Mr. Kirk stated Zoom Grants is the external website they utilize to collect and store the applications and associated paperwork from grantees. It is an online service that helps manage the process, and assure that all of the required documentation is submitted.

Mr. Hayes stated they recently conducted a workshop and walked the grantees through how to use Zoom Grants.

Ms. McBride stated, for clarification, the programs that are eligible for Hospitality Tax are tourism-related buildings including, but not limited to, civic centers, coliseums, and aquariums, etc. She inquired about what kind of work can be done there.

Mr. Hayes stated it has to do with the operations and infrastructure.

Mr. Kirk stated, per the guidelines approved by Council, 20% of the operations and maintenance cost is an allowable expenditure. It is for maintaining an existing building, instead of building a new building.

Ms. McBride stated, for clarification, if you wanted to build a “fence” you would have to go through Council.

Mr. Kirk stated Council has approved specific projects that are outside the scope (i.e. Gateway Pocket Park), which is separate from the application process, which has to follow the guidelines approved by Council.

Ms. McBride stated, for clarification, it is possible for you to build the “fence.”

Mr. Hayes responded in the affirmative.

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

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- c. Intergovernmental Agreement – Town of Eastover – Magistrate Renewal – Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Mr. Malinowski, to forward to Council with a recommendation to accept the Chief

Magistrate's recommendation to renew the Intergovernmental Agreement with the Town of Eastover for the Town of Eastover Municipal Judge.

Mr. Malinowski inquired about how many hours Judge Simons spends at the Town of Eastover each month. He noted the town is propping to pay him \$100 a month.

Judge Edmond stated that is standard for the municipal judges.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if Judge Simons has been working there from September through November, because the agreement expired September 4th.

Judge Edmond stated, as him being the new Chief Administrative Judge, it is updating these IGAs. There will be some others that will come before Council in the future. Of course, they have to negotiate these IGAs between the municipalities. Once they do the negotiations, they will bring it to him and he will forward it to Administration.

Mr. Malinowski suggested Judge Edmond to have his staff to attempt to get the IGAs done prior to their expiration.

Ms. Myers inquired if the municipalities pick their own judges.

Judge Edmond responded in the affirmative. Usually they use the magistrate in that district. Once Council approves it, he will draft an Order, to send to the Supreme Court, to recognize them as a municipal judge.

Ms. Myers inquired, since Judge Simons is retired, is the County paying a full salary, and the town is supplementing it.

Judge Edmond stated Judge Simons will receive a salary as a County magistrate, and the Town of Eastover will pay the County for his services. As you know, the magistrates are under the Police Retirement Plan.

Mr. Smith stated the Town of Eastover will pay the County the municipal judge's portion, so it comes through the County, and is reflected on this County payroll check.

Ms. Myers stated, for clarification, we are not setting up a system where we have one magistrate that has been selected, and he is making more money than everybody else because he has been selected. The rest of the magistrates, which have not been handpicked, make what the County pays them.

Judge Edmond stated the municipalities pay that cost. Forest Acres and Irmo are the only municipalities that do not have County magistrates.

Ms. McBride stated, for clarification, the magistrates are selected by the Richland County Delegation.

Judge Edmond stated the Senate delegation selects the magistrates, and then they are confirmed by the Governor.

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

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- d. Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Columbia for Murray Point Water System – Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Mr. Malinowski, to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve the Intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the City of Columbia for bulk water purchase.

Mr. Malinowski inquired if all of Richland County’s cost be covered by this program by the fees we collect.

Mr. Hussain responded that all of the costs will be covered.

Ms. Myers inquired if we set these rates, pursuant to a rate study.

Mr. Hussain stated the rate study was only for the sewer.

Ms. Myers suggested that arbitrarily setting these rates, without a rate study, might do for us what we were all afraid was going to happen with the sewer. If this is a true enterprise system, there should be a rate study that tells us what the costs are that go into, and what we should be charging customers. What it looks like here is that we are using the General Fund to pay this, and we are estimating this should cover the costs. After looking at the numbers we are using, for the sewer systems in Northwest and Southeast, as a citizen, she would likely come back and say, “Wait a minute now. If over here we are going to guess at what we think should be a fair rate, let’s guess at it all around.”

Mr. Malinowski stated, for clarification, because the water is coming from the City of Columbia we are basing the rate on what we are being charged.

Ms. Myers stated this is a part of the system that we are ultimately hoping to migrate over to us. She does not want the customers to be brought into a system, and they have this artificially low rate. We know our goal is to own the water service ourselves, and we have no numbers that we have put together. At least, customers should be notice, when there is a system we are currently building out, these will be the rates.

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

The vote in favor was unanimous.

5. **ITEMS PENDING ANALYSIS** – Ms. A. Myers stated following the complete review of the sidewalk program, as developed by DPW, which is currently in the D&S Committee. Once the item has been vetted, and gone before Council, it will be attached to these sidewalk awards.
 - a. Approval of Award for Engineering Services – Kneece Road Sidewalk Design – No action was taken.
 - b. Approval of Award for Engineering Services – Longreen Parkway Sidewalk Design – No action was taken.
6. **ADJOURNMENT** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:35 PM.