

**WORK SESSION OF NEWBERRY CITY COUNCIL  
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, NEWBERRY, SC  
February 27, 2017 – 6:00 P.M.**

Members Present: Mayor Foster Senn, Councilman Zebbie D. Goudelock, Councilman Thomas Louis Boyd, Councilman David E. DuBose, Councilman David T. Force, Councilman Edwin E. Wicker and Councilman R. LeMont Glasgow

Also Present: City Manager Matt DeWitt, Municipal Clerk Jennie O'Shields, Finance Director Shannon Smith, Fire Chief Keith Minick, PRT Director Scott Sawyer, Interim Police Chief Roy McClurkin, Public Works Director Mac Bartley, Planning and Development Director Ward Braswell, HR and Risk Management Director Tamra Tootle.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mayor Senn called the meeting to order and led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilman Glasgow gave the invocation.

**DISCUSSION**

**Neighborhood Improvement**

Mayor Senn thanked everyone for coming and recognized each department for the creative new ideas implemented by each department that had made a difference in the community.

Mayor Senn turned the meeting over to City Manager Matt DeWitt who detailed the reasons for the meeting and how it could impact Neighborhood Improvement. He stated that over the past several years, the City of Newberry had focused our efforts on enhancing the utility system, downtown area and city parks but that it was now time to focus on our neighborhoods and communities and building positive relationships with the constituents of Newberry. The City Manager asked all department heads to come up with 2-3 ideas each related to relationship building, service building and enhancement of customer service to help facilitate the process.

**NEWBERRY OPERA HOUSE**

City Manager DeWitt invited Newberry Opera House Director Molly Fortune to come forward to kick off the presentations. Director Fortune discussed to Expansion and Enhancement of the Dufford Diversity Institute and the 2017 Eclipse Outreach ideas to Council and explained the concepts in detail. With the demand in technology and scientific fields on the rise, Director Fortune stated that it was our responsibility as a community to encourage growth in these areas by exposing children to the arts. Director Fortune gave detailed statistics showing that children exposed to the arts excelled in not only reading but math and science as well.

The Dufford Diversity Institute would reinvigorate the community and bring it into the future. The program would allow all Newberry School's 3rd, 4th and 5<sup>th</sup> graders to attend 27 performances over a 3-year period that would be of no cost to their parents. This program would also expand the reach to homeschoolers and daycares. Director Fortune's vision is that the Opera House would be a leader in education for all children of the community especially in the field of technology. She stressed that all children should be afforded the same opportunities to learn.

Director Fortune transitioned into the 2017 solar eclipse outreach program stating that Newberry was striving to be a NASA designated city. By all accounts, it is estimated that South Carolina will see an influx of 1.1 million people to participate in the event on August 21, 2017. Lasting 2.33 seconds and being one of the longest windows in the country to view the eclipse, Newberry has already seen hotels bookings the dates increase and public safety is in the beginning stages of examining contingency plans. With all of the excitement taking place in Newberry, what better way to get the children of the community interested in science, arts and technology with programs initiated by the Opera House. If Newberry achieves the NASA designation, there would be an astronomer on hand and we would have the capability to connect to NASA online during the event. Prior to the eclipse, the Opera House is looking at providing a space camp and other interactive learning events that would be inclusive for all children. Director Fortune stated that she would like to offer an opportunity to learn science, math and the arts with a realistic approach. Teaching children how to make eclipse glasses, a solar oven and showing films are some of the ideas the staff has tossed around.

Lastly, Director Fortune posed the question pertaining to lending libraries. She asked was there an ordinance preventing this type of project and if not to maybe consider placing these around town for people who were not able to visit the public library or as a means of convenience for people and inspire good reading habits.

### **PARKS, RECREATION & TOURISM**

City Manager DeWitt asked PRT Director Scott Sawyer to come forward to address Council about lighting up the parks, wi-fi bathroom door locks and the recreation mobile.

The first item for discussion was lighting up the parks. Director Sawyer stated that recently while doing an evening check of the parks he noticed an adult and several children at the park around 7:30 P.M. He realized that they had been playing in the dark when the park would not officially close for another hour and a half. Director Sawyer stated that at least 5 months out of the year, it is dark when parent's get off of work and they are unable to utilize the city parks. By adding lights to the park, not only does it allow residents to actually use the park until closing time but is also visually appealing and adds an additional safety factor. He further stated that the main cost for the project would be the installation of poles, wiring and lights.

Council asked Director Sawyer to investigate the possibility of solar lights.

In keeping with the utilization of the parks, the restrooms are often an issue with parents of young children. Director Sawyer stated the bathroom facilities were only available to those who came by the Recreation Office to get the key after having rented a shelter. For most parents, if you need to take the children home to use the restroom, it makes no sense to come back, often cutting play time in half. It was proposed to Council to add wi-fi or automatic door locks that could open the bathroom doors at the beginning of the day and lock them at the close at 7 pm when the parks close. The idea of adding outside bathroom cameras was also introduced to allow monitoring for the prevention of vandalism. Director Sawyer stated that obesity is a real problem facing our state and if we can encourage and support longer play times it would be a benefit to the children of our community.

The final PRT item discussed was the inclusion of a recreation mobile to be utilized during the summer break. The concept would require part-time summer help or college interns to visit a designated park and bring games and toys for children to play with. There would be a summer rotation schedule so that each park is utilized and give children who may not have access to toys or equipment the chance to interact with others in a safe environment.

### **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Continuing the conversation, Planning and Development Director Ward Braswell came forward to discuss Habitat for Humanity and Home Surveys. Director Braswell noted that Habitat for Humanity now works in several of the counties surrounding Newberry and helps people of the community achieve strength, stability and independence through safe, decent and affordable shelter. He supported the idea of partnering with another entity and perhaps having the City donate the parcels of land gained through condemnation. Staff would also be encouraged to volunteer for service with the program. There was also the idea of grant money from the state housing authority to help fund the costs of the program.

The idea of Home Surveys was also posed to Council. Planning and Development would contract with a non-biased third party to survey each home within the city limits. The approximate total cost would be around five thousand dollars and homes would be rated on a 1-4 scale. Homes with a one rating would be considered excellent condition while homes that are rated as a four would need to be demolished. The homes with a 2 and 3 rating would receive recommendations for repair. Director Braswell stated that there were at least 5 homes within the city limits that currently needed to be demolished before the end of the fiscal year. Several of the homes around the city that are in such disarray are owned by out of state and out of county proprietors. They are typically difficult to contact, do not have a vested interest in the community and do not intend to bear the cost of demolition. The issue with the dilapidated homes is it lowers the property values of neighbor's homes, is an

eyesore to visitors and can lead to a haven for illegal activity. It was recommended by Councilman Glasgow that we condemn these properties before the demolition stage. Liens would be put on the property for the amount of the demolition costs. Director Braswell suggested that the City needs to be more aggressive with the demolition of these abandoned and hazardous properties.

Council asked for research on programs to assist the homes with a 2-3 rating and also grant programs to help fund Habitat for Humanity as well as a proposed partner for the program.

### **PUBLIC WORKS**

Public Works Director Mac Bartley came to the podium to discuss roll cart issues, Mosquito issues and pot holes.

Director Bartley stated that since the inception of roll carts in 1984, there have always been issues with consumers not rolling in their carts in a timely manner. After a recent study that took place over several weeks, it was determined that on average 15% of the carts on each route were not rolled in before the 9 P.M. deadline. During that study, it was also determined that there were around 100 cars blocking the areas hindering garbage trucks from emptying the roll carts and an overflow problem that led to trash piling up outside of the roll carts. Director Bartley suggested implementing a 3 stage notification system. The first phase would be mail campaign to target offenders. Phase two would include going to the residence to inform the constituent that they are not following the city policy. The third step would include a proposed fine for repeat offenders.

Director Bartley indicated that the Zika virus is expected to reach South Carolina this year. West Nile virus has been a problem in the past and the city has always taken a reactive approach to the mosquito problem. Since the change in the law regarding the frequency in which cities are allowed to be sprayed, it is imperative that a more proactive stance is taken. The Public Works Department on their part would address drainage issues and standing water. Director Bartley suggested that we educate residents about protective clothing and repellent but more importantly about cleaning up their yards and disposing of old tires and other containment areas that are breeding grounds for mosquitos. Code enforcement for repeat offenders was suggested as an option to deal with the problem. It was also mentioned that this year the Public Works Department has applied for over \$31,000 in grant money to aid in the education, prevention and treatment of mosquitos in the city.

Currently the city uses a cold asphalt mix to fill pot holes and utility repairs throughout the city. The cold mix is designed as a temporary fix for such issues meaning constant repair to patched pot holes. The Public Works staff researched using a hot mix which is more suitable to correct these hazards. It was determined that the minimum order to start up the hot mix asphalt plant is 60 tons and there are few times when a standard patch requires this much asphalt. The staff also looked into the purchase of a hot mix machine several years ago at a price of \$30,000 but it was

determined that the budget did not have an expenditure to cover this line item at the time. The hot mix would allow the holes to be properly packed and sustain longer use. Presently the department is experimenting with an aqua fault which sets up with water and is environmentally friendly. The downside to this product is that it used for small repairs since it can only be purchased by 5-gallon bucket quantities and over time is not cost effective. Director Bartley suggested Council and staff revisit the idea of a ¾ ton hot mix machine.

Director Bartley in summation also asked Council to consider a Nixle type program that all departments could utilize to spread notifications to the public regarding not only security but community efforts.

### FINANCE

Shannon Smith, Finance Director, recognized her staff who were all involved in the process of coming up with new and inventive ideas to contribute to the initiative. The Finance department decided upon presenting 3 diverse ideas which included welcome packets for new customers, a kiosk monitor to inform and educate the public and 911 signs to ensure the safety and welfare of the community.

New customer packets would demonstrate why we are the “City of Friendly Folks” by allowing us to welcome new customers and businesses alike. The packets would include a city reference sheet, Newberry Opera House guide, Newberry Magazine, PRT brochures and information from other partners of the City. The department feels that this will help to build strong relationships with residents and businesses and assist them in making a smooth transition to Newberry.

The Kiosk or Education Center was an idea that focusses on keeping customers educated and informed while allowing each department to utilize the tool to disseminate valuable information. In an age when people are most comfortable with receiving information through technology, it would serve as a backup if they are not receiving mail communication. The program would also allow the city to not only promote festivals and events, but new businesses that have chosen to make Newberry their home. The costs are minimal and would be associated primarily with the initial set-up. The finance department would update and maintain the media that is viewed and all departments would be invited to submit content for the program.

With welcoming and education addressed, the department felt that safety efforts for the community would be a great enhancement to round out their presentation. Director Smith stated that it was the goal of the department to insure that every resident of the city has a 911 emergency sign to assist first responders in finding them quickly and efficiently. The idea would be to roll the program out during September during National Preparedness month. The Finance Department would partner with the Fire Department to properly identify each residence. The project would require an expenditure of \$2000 to \$5000 dollars per year over a 5-year period. This initiative would benefit the residents, first responders and utility officials alike.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

Human Resources and Risk Management Director Tamra Tootle addressed Council with the two concepts of City Shops Local and Serving the Community through Volunteerism.

With the City Shops Local concept, the idea is to “Share your bread where you earn your dough”. Essentially, the City would develop a rewards program in partnership with local merchants as an incentive to employees to patronize local businesses. The more local dollars that an employee spends, the greater the rewards/incentives. The idea would encourage more local spending and ultimately add value to City economic development.

Serving the Community through Volunteering was the second concept. Corporate Social Responsibility is an opportunity for the City employees. There are so many organizations in the community that rely on volunteers to carry out the duties and services that they provide to the community. The employee would be granted a minimal number of paid leave hours annually to volunteer with a local, approved charity/organization. Examples of opportunities mentioned City employees participating with Adopt-a-School programs, Meals on Wheels, and others that may enhance outreach through the help of more volunteers. Empowering employees through Corporate Social Responsibility partnerships within the City communities would be a win-win.

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Fire Chief Keith Minick offered up three separate ideas for Council with the enhancement of the Kids Fun Day and Good Fellow Baskets, smoke alarm program and the introduction of the Citizen’s Fire Academy.

The Kid’s Fun Day is an annual event that is funded by an annual golf tournament. Forty percent of the funds raised by the golf tournament are donated to the MUSC Burned Children’s Foundation with the other is used specifically for the Kid’s Fun Day. The Fire Department would like to reach more children to spread safety and awareness. Additional funds and the use of the finance kiosk are ways to improve promotion of the event.

The Good Fellow Baskets Campaign is done each year at Christmas and designed to give a leg up to those in need. Chief Minick challenged Council to offer up anyone who could be a worthy recipient that may not have received one of the baskets in the past. The baskets are filled with essential food and fruits and funded through the Fire Department turkey stew fundraiser each year. At a cost of \$40 to \$45 dollars each. The Fire Department would like to opportunity to provide supplements to individual baskets on a case by case basis.

The Smoke Alarm Program was exclusively funded with grant money and through partnering efforts with several different organizations in the past. The Fire Department has partnered with DHEC, FEMA grant, Red Cross and Horry County Fire/Rescue to give our community free smoke alarms. Smoke alarms have been 10-year maintenance free, hearing impaired with a built in strobe with a few only having a 9-volt battery. The department also received 3 years' worth of free batteries to be used in smoke alarms from Energizer. As of today, these programs are not available or on hold due to the request. The partnership has been great and has provide a life saving device to those in our community who could not afford or may disregard the safety of their family. The thirty thousand dollars received through FEMA grants allow the fire department to canvas the city installing one ten-year maintenance free alarm to those who were 60 and older, kids under 10, handicap/disable and own the home. However, the Fire Department did install some in a few rental houses as they saw fit. The partnership with Red Cross last year allowed them to go door to door in the Mollohon area and cover all houses regardless of the previous criteria and install as many as needed. It also allowed the staff to see some of the alarms that they previously installed and to add more if needed. Chief Minick also stated that if more funds were available the campaign could continue to serve as not only an outreach program to other sections of the city but serve as a way to educate people about other hazards such as mosquito prevention and neighborhood crime.

The Citizens Fire Academy is a new idea for the department in which around 15-20 people would be selected to participate in an 8-week program. It will be 2 hours a night one night a week for the 8 weeks. The program would teach them of all aspects of the fire service and have a graduation at the end. Paired along with a weeklong explorer camp in the summer, where the day to day operations are covered. This will serve as a recruitment tool for the young generation teaching about fire safety and how they can give back to the community by serving. This would not only serve as a small portion of a day in the life of a firefighter but expand on the recruitment and retention issues that most departments face. The sole purpose of the day in the life of a firefighter project is to expand the education of all three by selecting a select few to actually participate at an advance level of what a firefighter will be tasked during a call. It will also serve as an award for kids from the city school by allowing them time to come to the station before school, eat breakfast with firefighters and have the fire engine carry them to school while other school mates wait outside on their arrival. All of these programs will enhance our public relation with the community in which the fire department serves while allowing the community to have a firsthand experience of how the fire department functions.

## **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Police Chief Roy McClurkin came forward to discuss door to door crime prevention tips and a reward system for citizens obeying the law.

Chief McClurkin stated that while he had a department of roughly 32 officers, he had the potential of increasing his force to over 10,000 people if he were to institute his door to door crime prevention campaign and utilize the citizens of the community. He invoked the importance of having a trust based relationship with the citizens of the city so that they feel safe to report crimes and other suspicious activities. Chief McClurkin's idea would be to target different neighborhoods and have officers go out to visit the constituents giving them tips for safeguarding themselves and their property. This would also allow citizens to not only know the local officers as people but enable them to feel comfortable to report crimes if the situation arises.

In keeping with positive reinforcement, the Citizen's Reward System to authorize officers give a reward for citizens doing the right thing. Local gift cards would drive sales for local business owners while empowering citizens to think before they act. The campaign was felt to be most effective during the 100 deadliest days of summer.

## UTILITIES

City Manager Matt DeWitt came forward to discuss with Council the ideas generated from the Utility Department. With the introduction of the Pay Go prepaid electric option, the power is put back into the community's hands. The program allows people to see how they can save money and manage their utility usage.

The introduction of a Fiber network would fill a void in the community that some other cities and metropolitan areas have already addressed. The option makes a community attractive to young professionals and allows people who work from home. The implementation of a fiber system could put us a cutting edge of growing rural communities.

The efficiency surveys are an idea that stems from necessity. In the next 10 years' people will be able to choose their utility providers and it is important that we show these same people how to not only be more efficient with their utility usage but help them save money to invest back in to their homes. The efficiency surveys would allow the City to recommend to people how to save money on an individual basis. The utility department has approached PMPA regarding funding of a program of this type. There has also been talk about the possibility of a tax credit for the home inspection. Duke has recently implemented a similar program.

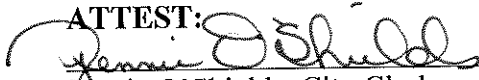
Mayor Senn suggested an idea that he urged the staff to research. The concept of a problem property task force and data base implemented in Boston recently received national notoriety. Mayor Senn felt that this concept could easily be used on a smaller scale to identify repeat offenders.



**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before City Council, Councilman Goudeock made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 P.M. Councilmember DuBose seconded the motion which was carried by a unanimous vote of City Council members.

  
Foster Senn  
MAYOR

ATTEST:  
  
Jennie O'Shields, City Clerk  
Newberry, South Carolina

(SEAL)