



Richland County Council  
ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEE  
**MINUTES**  
November 16, 2023 – 6:00 PM  
Council Chambers  
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Jessica Mackey, Chair; Yvonne McBride, Paul Livingston, and Don Weaver

NOT PRESENT: Jason Branham

OTHERS PRESENT: Cheryl English, Gretchen Barron, Ashiya Myers, Stacey Hamm, Michelle Onley, Angela Weathersby, Lori Thomas, Anette Kirylo, Patrick Wright, Chelsea Bennett, Michael Maloney, Aric Jensen, Ashley Fullerton, Peter Cevallos, Tamar Black, Jennifer Wladischkin, Michael Byrd, Quinton Epps, Callison Richardson, Kyle Holsclaw, Wayne Thornley, Abhijit Deshpande, and Sean Taylor

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairwoman Jessica Mackey called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 PM.

Ms. Mackey noted Mr. Branham would not attend tonight’s meeting in person but would try to attend virtually.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. October 24, 2023 – Mr. Weaver moved to approve the minutes as distributed, seconded by Mr. Livingston.

In Favor: McBride, Livingston, Weaver, and Mackey

Not Present: Branham

The vote in favor was unanimous.

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

In Favor: McBride, Livingston, Weaver, and Mackey

Not Present: Branham

The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **ITEMS FOR ACTION**

- a. Department of Public Works – Jim Hamilton-LB Owens Airport (CUB) Airport – Richland County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 3, Airport – The Airport General Manager, Peter Cevallos, noted the three inquiries from last month’s committee were as follows:

1. ***Please explain the rationale for reducing the number of Airport commissioners*** – The reduction was necessary to run the Commission better. They have been frequently challenged with establishing a meeting quorum to conduct business. The SC Aeronautics Commission and other state airports have seven-member boards.

2. ***How will the commission be reduced to seven (7) members if there are currently nine (9) members appointed and serving*** – The membership will be reduced through normal attrition.

3. ***Prior to the recommended changes, how large was the size of the area where the community representatives were found and/or from what neighborhoods were they appointed/designated? Was the area/neighborhoods defined in an ordinance*** – Mr. Cevallos indicated this was built into the original ordinance. The Commission has recommended a larger recruitment area.

Mr. Livingston moved to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve the updated Airport Ordinance, seconded by Mr. Weaver.

In Favor: McBride, Livingston, Weaver, and Mackey

Not Present: Branham.

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- b. Community Planning & Development – Conservation Division – Columbia Rowing Club Operating Agreement – Assistant County Administrator Lori Thomas stated the item before the committee is a proposed operating agreement between the Columbia Rowing Club, as presented by the Conservation Division.

Mr. Aric Jensen, Assistant County Administrator, stated the Columbia Rowing Club has had a dock to launch their boats for approximately 20 years. He indicated they like the location because the water is flat and still, and it is an excellent location to put in to go rowing. The operating agreement before the committee is basically the same one that has been renewed periodically over the years. There were discussions regarding doing something else at the site, but they did not go anywhere due to other issues. The recommendation is to renew the agreement.

Mr. Weaver inquired if there is a cost to the County.

Mr. Jensen responded there is no cost to the County, and the County does not assess the Rowing Club a fee for using the property. The Rowing Club insures the section of the property they use. They pay for all the improvements and maintenance.

Ms. Mackey pointed out on p. 36 that it talks about an annual maintenance cost, which appears to come out of the County's current budget.

The Division Manager, Mr. Quinton Epps, responded those costs are relative to the whole property. The Rowing Club only uses about an acre of the property, and the property is approximately 30 acres with other uses (i.e., fishing). The County maintains the roads and picks up trash.

Mr. Livingston moved to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve a new Richland County and Columbia Rowing Club (CRC) five-year operating agreement, seconded by Mr. Weaver.

In Favor: McBride, Livingston, Weaver, and Mackey

Not Present: Branham

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- c. Grants & Community Outreach – FY23-24 CDBG Public Service Projects and Public Facilities Infrastructure Projects – Ms. Thomas indicated this project will outline the department's FY23-24 CDBG Public Service Projects and Public Facilities Infrastructure recommendations.

Ms. Callison Richardson, Grants and Community Development Manager, stated the County receives Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding on an annual basis. There is something called a timeliness test related to the CDBG funds. She expressed that the division has faced several hurdles to meet the timeliness test. She noted during COVID-19, many of their programs could not run. They could not go into people's housing and do minor home repairs. In addition, there was a high level of staff turnover in Community Development. She indicated they have a strong team now and are excited about the direction they are headed. Regarding the timeliness test, they have until July 2024 to expend \$2.9M in CDBG funds. Some of the funds will be used for the new projects for FY23-24, and some will be utilized for the Annual Action Plan. She stated they would like a diverse portfolio of how they plan to expend the funds.

Mr. Weaver inquired where the \$2.9M comes from.

Ms. Richardson replied all of the funding comes from the US Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD). The whole division, including staff and projects, is fully funded by HUD. They receive two large entitlements. CDBG is the largest one. The other one is HOME Investment Partnerships, which deals with affordable housing. Everything before the committee is funds that are allocated from the federal government. They expend it from their budget and then draw it down as a direct reimbursement from the federal government.

Mr. Weaver inquired if the program assists residents with payments or provide housing.

Ms. Richardson responded it does not assist with payments. CDBG funding allows them to conduct minor home repairs for income-qualified senior citizens in unincorporated Richland County. The City of Columbia also receives CDBG funding; therefore, our funds must be utilized in the County's unincorporated areas. The County runs a program entitled "Operation One Touch" for minor home repairs each year. This year, they increased the amount to \$20,000 a home due to the cost of construction. There is an application process and a goal of repairing 20 houses per year. The other

affordable housing project would entail reallocating some of the built-up funds to do acquisition and rehab to develop more affordable rental units that community partners would monitor. On the HOME side, they have much more capacity to do actual developments and new construction. Any project they expend HUD funding on requires an affordability period on the deed so they can maintain control and guarantee the house does not float with the market rate, which could lead to a homeownership opportunity for someone.

Mr. Livingston inquired if this was based on the original scope and plan developed at the beginning of the year.

Ms. Richardson responded in the affirmative. She asserted that the Annual Action Plan, which determines the budget, must be developed annually. She noted that \$1.6M (\$800,000/annually) is going toward infrastructure and facilities. We have a Richland County Utilities project that will repair sewer in a low-income area. They encouraged the non-profits to submit their facility needs. The facility improvements must either be in the county's unincorporated areas or serve the homeless population. HUD allows the County to fund facilities like the Oliver Gospel Mission or Transitions because they provide homeless services to the residents of the County. The other funding bucket is for Public Service Projects and is determined by HUD. We can only spend 15% of our award toward those programs. Those projects are listed on p. 62 of the agenda packet. She noted there were \$1.2M in requests received for the \$258,509 allowed for the Public Service projects.

As a point of personal privilege, Ms. Richardson recognized Mr. Shawn Taylor, the Community Development Coordinator, who manages the CDBG projects.

Ms. McBride recognized that we continue to fund some of the same organizations repeatedly. She pointed out numerous organizations are run by members of the underserved communities in unincorporated Richland County and do not receive funding. She inquired how the projects were selected to receive funding.

Ms. Richardson responded the level of reporting and HUD requirements make it hard for a start-up or small non-profit to manage the funds. She noted they did the largest "Notice of Funding Availability Process" she has come across from researching the past minutes. They put out a public notice on social media. They built their own webpage that included information on who was eligible, how to apply, the guidelines, and the reporting requirements. The applicants attend two (2) different education workshops to assist organizations. They invited school districts and churches to apply. A 2-step application process allowed applicants to understand how to build a good project for CDBG. One of the things that also made it difficult for some smaller organizations was that there was a minimum request of \$50,000. The rationale for the requirement is that the level of reporting necessary is labor intensive because they have to document every person served with the following information: name, address, race, and household income. Additionally, there are stringent requirements about recordkeeping and financial management. Staff did the first round to ensure all the projects were eligible. Once those who met the minimum criteria were invited back, the applications went through two (2) separate scoring committees.

Ms. McBride inquired about who reviewed the applications.

Ms. Richardson replied because there had not been a committee in place over the last few years, she looked at other counties to determine what best practices were being utilized and structured the committee based on those other counties. For the Public Service Committee, there were five (5) individuals representing the Department of Social Services, a member of the Neighborhood Improvement Program, and three (3) citizens from three (3) different districts who had backgrounds in school district accounting, scoring for Department of Education, or independently involved in the communities we would be serving. Due to the infrastructure and facilities program being so technical, they had someone from the Neighborhood Improvement Program, the Disaster Relief Manager, and the Grants Manager to score the applications.

Ms. McBride inquired if the reviews were blind reviews.

Ms. Richardson responded that how the application is structured would make it difficult to conduct a blind review or have information redacted because the organization has to show the area they would be serving. She assured the committee that those individuals who reviewed the applications had signed a confidentiality and conflict of interest statement.

Ms. McBride suggested Ms. Richardson share quarterly reports with Council to show how the program(s) proceed.

Ms. Mackey requested that staff consider conducting a work session on CDBG and HOME funding.

Mr. Livingston moved to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve, in alignment with the 2023 Annual Action Plan, the proposed allocations and projects for investment with the FY23 CDBG funds, seconded by Mr. Weaver.

In Favor: McBride, Livingston, Weaver, and Mackey

Not Present: Branham

The vote in favor was unanimous.

- d. Grants & Community Outreach – CDBG Substantial Amendments to Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans for Affordable Rental Housing Development – Ms. Richardson stated over the last several years Council has put money into “Operation One Touch.” During COVID-19, the program was shut down, and then the division experienced staff turnover, which resulted in the \$250,000 received annually, amassing over \$1M for “Operation One Touch.” She noted it would take approximately three years to spend the \$1M because of how much it takes to do the procurement, repair work bidding, and application processes. At most, the two people managing this program could do 20 houses per year. She recognizes there is no way they can expend \$1M by July 2024. Therefore, they have looked at another critical community need: affordable rental housing. The request is to utilize \$600,000 from “Operation One Touch” and an Economic Development program by amending the FY20 and FY21 Annual Action Plans and the Consolidated Plans associated with those action plans to acquire and rehab affordable rentals. The goal is to create six (6) rental units that would be set for 20 years at the HOME rate and be affordable for low-to-moderate households.

Mr. Livingston moved to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve the proposed Substantial Amendments to the County’s 2017-2021 Five-Year Consolidated Plan, 2020 Annual Action Plan, and 2021 Annual Action Plan. The amendments will expand the goal of creating more affordable housing for the County. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

Mr. Weaver inquired if they were planning to purchase or build units.

Ms. Richardson responded that they could not construct new units with CDBG funds. They would create a tight toolkit to assist entities like SC Uplift, Homeless No More, and Reconciliation Ministries in identifying property to acquire and rehab up to HUD’s required level. The entities would have to enter into a monitoring agreement with the County to guarantee that they keep the rental unit affordable for a minimum of 15 years. The county would not own the property but would be assisting a non-profit in creating the units.

Mr. Weaver pointed out on p. 70, it says, “...trends in the rental market have also made affordable rental units hard to find in Richland County.” When he met with More Justice, they said they could hardly find anything for less than \$1,000 a month. He noted the condos across the street from his office rent for \$700 a month. He inquired what Ms. Richardson deemed affordable.

Ms. Richardson replied that the federal government says a unit is not affordable if it consumes more than 30% of a household’s income. She noted the rental limits are included on p. 69 of the agenda packet.

Ms. McBride inquired who determines who the entities would rent to.

Ms. Richardson responded that the organizations must have a marketing plan, and each organization would have its own system for identifying who the houses would be going to.

Ms. McBride inquired if Ms. Richardson could provide a report with the demographics of those who receive housing. She noted data is important in assisting us with evaluation. She is thankful for the entitlement funds that ensure each County receives funds, not only the State. Richland County needs to start looking for ways to reach their communities.

Ms. Richardson noted that the County’s funds are based on the number of low-moderate income individuals in our population and that LMI families are moving outside of the City of Columbia. This means the City is seeing a decrease, and the County is seeing an increase. She indicated there will be an Annual Report in December that she will ensure is shared with Council.

Ms. Barron inquired if the assistance is available to other organizations besides the ones noted by Ms. Richardson.

Ms. Richardson responded any organization equipped to do occupancy and monitoring is welcome to apply for the funding. The organizations have to have a system to identify individuals who qualify. Then, there is the monitoring process that we require. They must be willing to do regular check-ins on the property and report to the County annually. We may be able to build this into future Annual Action Plans and have a yearly strategy to develop more rental housing. HUD requires the County to build policies and procedures. There would be educational workshops for organizations that are interested in learning more about it. There would be an application process where they could spell out how they would meet the criteria, and then there would a selection process to identify who would be part of the first wave of acquisition and rehabs.

In Favor: McBride, Weaver, and Mackey

Not Present: Branham

The vote in favor was unanimous.

5. **ADJOURNMENT** – Mr. Weaver moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. McBride.

In Favor: McBride, Weaver, and Mackey

Not Present: Branham, Livingston

The vote in favor was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45 PM.