



Richland County Council

DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

October 24, 2017 – 5:00 PM

Decker Center

2500 Decker Boulevard, Columbia, SC 29206

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Seth Rose, Chair; Yvonne McBride, Gwen Kennedy, Chip Jackson, and Dalhi Myers

OTHERS PRESENT: Joyce Dickerson, Bill Malinowski, Greg Pearce, Brandon Madden, Michelle Onley, Stacey Hamm, Shahid Khan, Ismail Ozbek, Dwight Hanna, Michael Byrd, Alfonso Smith, Dale Welch, Tracy Hegler, Will Simon, and Larry Smith

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Mr. Rose called the meeting to order at approximately 5:00 PM.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a. September 26, 2017 – Mr. C. Jackson moved, seconded by Ms. Myers, to approve the minutes as distributed. The vote in favor was unanimous.
3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Mr. C. Jackson, to adopt the agenda as published. The vote in favor was unanimous.
4. **ITEMS FOR ACTION**
 - a. Council Motion: Require that all municipal utility service providers must request consent and approval from Richland County Council prior to extending or accepting water and sewer infrastructure within the unincorporated boundaries of Richland County [MALINOWSKI] – Mr. Madden stated a work session was held to discuss this item. Earlier this evening, a letter from the City of Columbia was forwarded to committee members regarding this matter.

Mr. C. Jackson requested staff to provide an overview of the letter since it was only received this afternoon and he had not had an opportunity to review the letter prior to the meeting. It was his understanding the City of Columbia had agreed to provide the County copies of requests being made, but that does not seem to be a part of the letter.

Mr. Madden stated the second paragraph of the letter states the City's Engineering Department will provide a copy of any water or sewer line extension approval letters to the County's Utility Department.

Mr. Rose inquired if that would be prior to.

Mr. Madden stated it appears it is not necessarily prior to. If Council desires, staff can request to be notified prior to any extension.

Ms. McBride inquired if the letter addresses the issue and if it has any “teeth” to it.

Mr. Smith stated it is a beginning to something that perhaps has some “teeth”. He stated to the extent the City is are willing to give the County certain information, when would the information become available and will the County have an opportunity to address it before the City does anything. It is his suggest to go back to the City and suggest to them an IGA between the entities so there is no confusion of what the process is. The IGA will have some “teeth” to the extent that it is enforced.

Ms. Myers suggested the committee to instruct the staff to do what Mr. Smith suggested. She agrees with her colleagues to go back to the City to request they provide the County with the information they stated they would provide during the work session.

Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Mr. Rose, to instruct staff to draft an IGA between the City of Columbia and the County to address the notification process of upcoming water and sewer projects in unincorporated Richland County. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Mr. C. Jackson stated he would like to have an answer and a resolution by the time the committee meets again.

- b. Council Motion: If an employee is in need of sick leave, any employee can donate that leave to a specific person and not just a sharing pool [MALINOWSKI] – Mr. C. Jackson stated the Human Resources Department researched this matter and provided a report, which is included in the agenda packet. Mr. Hanna is on hand to address any specific questions the committee may have.

Mr. Rose requested an overview of the motion and what the County and other entities policy is presently.

Mr. Hanna stated the motion revolves around what is typically referred to as a leave pool or catastrophic leave, which is different than the County’s sick leave. The County also has annual leave, as well as, advanced sick leave. Leave pool or catastrophic leave is primarily for serious cases. The percentage of pay for catastrophic leave is approximately 67%. On p. 8 of the agenda packet are examples of what other government entities do with regard to leave pool. A concern is that if it was solely determined based on whether or not another employee donated that it might get to where it was not a County benefit. It would solely be based upon an employee by employee participation. There is normally a waiting list of employees for the leave pool to be approved. If an employee wanted to donate to the leave pool it would not go directly to said employee, but it would aid in that employee’s approval, if they met the criteria.

Mr. Malinowski stated he made the motion after being approached by more than one employee. While leave pool overall is a worthwhile thing to have, it was mentioned that some employees will not just give their leave to a generic leave pool. If there is an employee they know is in need, they would be willing to donate. Even though we in fact have a “shared” leave pool that we’ve never had to deny someone from using, I think this would increase the amount of giving by employees if we also allow them to give to a specific need or specific employee.

Ms. Kennedy inquired if there are guidelines on what is a serious illness.

Mr. Hanna stated there are guidelines, but they are more driven by the length of the illness vs. the specific condition. Some of the concerns of the department heads was that employees were saving their annual leave and going to the “leave pool” for a day or two.

Mr. C. Jackson inquired if employees have a maximum number of sick leave hours or days that can be earned in a year.

Mr. Hanna sick leave is accrued a day a month. Annual leave is based on years of service.

Mr. C. Jackson inquired as to what happens if an employee exceeds the number of accrued sick leave days.

Mr. Hanna stated the maximum that can go into their sick leave bank is 90 days. If they exceed that amount they can either donate to the leave pool or the days are lost.

Mr. C. Jackson stated the County should encourage employees that are losing their days to donate to the leave pool instead of donating to a separate pool. He stated he is concerned about the potential for favoritism as a result of this selective way of giving leave to some and not to others.

Ms. McBride inquired if the County has a process called "forfeit leave".

Mr. Hanna stated he does not believe so.

Ms. McBride inquired if there is any other governmental entity, County or State, which allows a person to designate the person they would like to donate to.

Mr. Hanna stated based on the survey the State and Greenville County permit individualized leave.

Ms. McBride inquired if they have had any issues with the leave.

Mr. Hanna stated he does not know. He stated could contact them and inquire about this matter. They surveyed them to see if they offered this type of leave pool.

Ms. McBride stated she shared Mr. C. Jackson's concerns of favoritism and leaving those employees really in need without the leave necessary.

Mr. C. Jackson moved, seconded by Mr. Rose, to defer this item to allow Mr. Hanna time to go back and research the success and failures of the Greenville and State individualized leave pool. The vote in favor was unanimous.

- c. Council Motion: Move to examine the EMS Department and receive a report on its current status – Mr. Byrd introduced Dr. Bill Gerard, Medical Director; Dr. Spencer Robinson, Associate Medical Director; Mr. Alonzo Smith, Assistant Director of EMS; and Mr. Laney Bernard, Division Manager of EMS and Operations.

Mr. Byrd stated there has been a steady increase in call volume that have resulted in increased employee workload and response times. EMS Management has implemented a set of tools to maximize available resources (i.e. system status deployment system). However, additional personnel is needed to reduce the workload and improve morale. Council has not increased EMS staff in approximately 10 years. The operational budget has remained or has declined. The mission does not change nor can we put off our response to 911 calls regardless of the staffing or budget. Everyone has done an outstanding making sure we continue to meet our mission regardless of the circumstances. The workforce is very dedicated and they enjoy the lifesaving work they do; however, there are fewer people selecting EMS as a career. This makes it difficult to recruit and retain workers when other EMS services have less workload and pay more. This is not just a local issue, but a regional, State and national problem as well.

Because of the call volume, Richland EMS workers will see more death and destruction in one shift than many EMS workers in other counties will see in a year. They will encounter blood, vomit, urine, etc. They respond to situations are out of control and often arrive before law enforcement. The instances of domestics, car crashes, fires, stabbing and gunshot scenes, as well, as overdoses are increasing. They work in all kinds of environments (darkness, sunshine, rain, sleet, cold, heat, thunderstorms). They are so busy sometimes they do not get a meal break or an opportunity to go to the restroom. They are exposed to HIV, AIDS, TB, pneumonia, meningitis, hepatitis, and other diseases. They may not even know they are exposed until several days later until the tests comes back. Seldom are they recognized for the outstanding job they do responding to the 75,000 – 80,000 per year.

All of these factors contribute to worker fatigue and morale issues. For the last 14 months we have done as many things as we think possible to do given the circumstances. We have a new division manager for operations who has been recruiting locally and nationally for EMT and paramedics. We have formed employee committees to review equipment, supplies, uniforms, and other concerns. We have staggered shifts to cover peak call times. We have revised medic protocols to be current with DHEC standards, as well as management standards. We are in the process of rewriting the standard operating guidelines. We have installed software to streamline reporting, shift scheduling and employee communication. We have finalized a plan for improved transmission of data from the field. However, that funding is pending. We have overhauled the equipment/supply function. We have installed dispersal machines in headquarters and designated a supply clerk for each shift to speed up resupply and streamline operations. We have drafts of programs to recognize our employees. We have increased our use of part-time employees up to our funding level. We have deployed shift supervisors to respond to calls. The County's Risk Manager has looked at the parking lot safety and security and has come up with a plan to improve that. Council recently reduced insurance for dependent coverage.

We continue to face numerous challenges. There is an increase risk to the employees with on scene hazards, including assault by patients and bystanders. There is a perception of decreasing benefits to County employees. The insufficient pay raises have not kept pace with the cost of living. The operational budget is not keeping pace with expenses. We have seen equipment and supply costs skyrocket. Some medications have gone up by 800% and many are on national back order. There is a continued need for improved technology and face safety and security challenges. We also need new facilities.

The questions that were posed by Council have been addressed in the report.

Mr. Rose inquired about what the immediate needs of the EMS department are.

Mr. Byrd stated the immediate need is to increase the number of workers to combat the fatigue to workers. He stated it takes 8 workers to staff one ambulance. Therefore, by adding 24 workers it will increase the number of staffed ambulances by 3. And after that, we would need to look at whether we need to increase the staff based upon workload. The starting salaries, and salaries in general, need to be increased. We are not competitive on the front end. If an employee that has been here for several years can now go to another EMS service and make the same amount or more money with less workload then some are choosing to do so. Operationally, we need more funding for supplies and equipment.

Mr. Rose inquired about the number of employees that is needed immediately.

Mr. Byrd stated realistically it would take 10-12 months to recruit 24 employees, but he would gladly accept the challenge to hire 48.

Mr. Rose inquired about how the recent 10% increase to starting salaries and 5% increase for existing employees factors in.

Mr. Byrd stated it gets us close, but he is not sure if the County will be extremely competitive at 10%. It is a good faith effort on the part of the Administrator to get us higher than we are now and see where the Comp & Class study shows when it comes back.

Mr. Rose inquired about when the Comp & Class study will be completed.

The Comp & Class study is due to be back in April 2018.

Mr. Rose inquired where the \$2.5 million for operations that is slated to have Third Reading soon puts the County.

Mr. Byrd stated those funds are bond funds; therefore, they cannot be used for operations. Those funds will be used for capital improvements. There is a list of equipment ready to go out for proposals or to be purchased as soon as the funding is approved. This will not take care of all of the needs, but will make a good start. He further stated that one thing they have to deal with is that when they change one piece of equipment they have to change it 58 times.

Mr. Rose inquired as to the dollar figure that would be needed to be operationally whole.

Mr. Byrd stated he would like to bring that information back, but he would guess approximately \$10 – \$15 million.

Ms. Kennedy stated she would like to thank Mr. Byrd for the changes he has made to the department over the years. When she was on Council the first time there were only 4 or 5 ambulances stationed in strategic places in the County. She would like to see it the best it can be.

Ms. McBride stated she is glad we are trying to address the issues that have been raised recently. She inquired about what is needed to increase recruitment and employment immediately.

Mr. Byrd stated there are not a lot of paramedics; therefore, they know they can go just about anywhere to work. To address recruitment immediately, he would like to accelerate the Comp & Class study, which he knows is not possible. Whatever can be done to address the salaries would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. N. Jackson stated for clarification that EMS is understaffed and underequipped.

Mr. Byrd stated he would say EMS is understaffed and underpaid. And there are equipment supply challenges.

Mr. N. Jackson stated he has noticed a constant job posting for the past 2 years for EMS workers that have not been filled. He is concerned and confused where EMS is understaffed, but there has been a constant posting. He inquired if the EMS Department is aggressively trying to recruit, since there is a capacity to hire someone but no one has been hired.

Mr. Byrd stated they keep a pool of applications. EMS workers come and leave all of the time. There are people that come to work with the EMS Department who are waiting to get into medical or nursing school; therefore they keep the pool of applicants. The job posting stays up because we know we will have those vacancies to fill. The Department is very close to filling the authorized

positions, with the exception of the 8 additional positions. One of the challenges is there are fewer and fewer paramedic applications.

Mr. N. Jackson inquired as to the number of employees needed to be fully staffed and efficient. And the amount of funding needed for equipment.

Mr. Byrd stated in terms of positions the 24 or 48 and several million dollars more than the \$2.5 million. He would like to bring back a more solid number at a later date.

Mr. C. Jackson stated he would like to echo the statements by his colleagues and for him this is personal. Last November, his mother became ill at her home. The response was incredible. The attention was unbelievable and he is convinced it made a difference in her life. Then just two weeks ago at his church, Bibleway Church at Atlas Road, which has approximately 2,500 parishioners at the 11:00 Sunday service, a longstanding member became critically ill. Unfortunately, the member passed away, but the response rate was incredible and the professional service she received was unbelievable. Even though they were not able to save her life, the way they handled the situation with such dignity was amazing.

However, Mr. C. Jackson thinks it is critically important that we get specific and detailed about what the needs are. For example, during the last budget cycle what was the request? Did you request the positions? Were you denied those positions? Did you get any part of it? How much of your budget did you get over the last couple years? Have you been requesting increases? Were you denied or did you get some percentage of it? He feels that is really important because the impression the public gets is that EMS has been going woefully unattended. And there have been requests that have fell on deaf ears. He wants to ensure to set the record straight. And if in fact there are specific needs that have been quantified that can tell us exactly what is needed by this Council to ensure those professionals working for EMS get what they need to do their jobs in the most effective manner. In addition, he inquired about the connection or relationship between the EMS staff and the First Responders at the fire stations throughout the County.

Mr. Byrd stated they submit a budget every year. The budget request reflects the department's needs. They have requested positions and capital for years. They have requested what is needed to adequately fund operations. There are meetings with Budget, Finance and Administration, which is then presented to Council. When the budget process is completed they are given a budget. They are expected to make sure they can provide the services with whatever amount they are given.

In addition, Mr. Byrd stated the relationship between the Fire/First Responders and EMS is pretty good. Dr. Gerard also assists in the Fire/First Responder program, so they try to come close to using the same protocols and equipment. If Fire Service is there before EMS gets there, there is a transfer of care and equipment. It is his understanding the Fire Department is looking at making some changes in their First Responder program. It is very important and helps in a tiered response situation where First Responders, if they can get there before the paramedics, they have automatic external defibrillators, which are crucial in a life and death situation.

Mr. C. Jackson inquired if Mr. Byrd had been involved in the discussions in regards to the recommended changes the Fire Department is considering.

Mr. Byrd stated he has not been involved in detail. Dr. Gerard has been involved in those discussions.

Mr. C. Jackson inquired if Mr. Byrd has been privy to any discussions regarding the proposed new 911 Call Center.

Mr. Byrd stated he has been in meetings with the Sheriff's Department and Administration. There are issues there and he knows the Sheriff has expressed his concerns. And they have expressed their concerns as well.

Mr. C. Jackson stated it is his hope that Mr. Byrd will remain involved in the proposal by the Fire Department and the Sheriff's Department's proposed 911 Call Center.

Mr. Pearce stated historically Council only has themselves to blame for where we are, but he is not sure they can even blame themselves. There is only so much money in the pot and there is not enough money to go around. The needs are there and you short change someone you frequently, particularly when it comes to First Responders, create an emergency situation. Council's inability to meet the budget over the past several years and the way money is allocated, if there is no money there you cannot give someone something you do not have. He does not feel this problem is going to resolve itself totally by money. Mr. Byrd has already stated he has positions he currently cannot fill. Although the 10% raise will help, but that still will not put him in a competitive position. We need to look at some other kinds of creative solutions to this. He was touched by Mr. Seals' recommendation to potentially begin subsidize the education of people interested in working for us if they agree to come to work for us after they finish their education. This is actually how he went to work with the Department of Mental Health 50 years ago. They sent him to graduate school and paid for his education. He in turn had to work his time off.

Mr. Pearce inquired about the feasibility of using private ambulance services to subsidize what the County has to lessen the workload until the issue of salaries can be addressed. He realizes there are liability issues. He suggested the Chair meeting with Mr. Seals to enact an Ad Hoc Task Force to continue to monitor the hiring, etc. He does not see how throwing more money at the problem is going to help when the people are not there to hire. A concern to him is the national back orders of critical supplies.

Mr. Byrd stated there is not one presently, but they do crop up periodically and affects the supply.

Mr. Rose stated it is his understanding that money will go a long way to alleviating the issues. Instead of being creative, let's be competitive. If you properly fund the positions they will be filled. He does not want to see Richland County training workers to only see them leaving for higher paying positions at other counties. He wants to see the best and the brightest responding.

Mr. Rose moved, seconded by Ms. Myers, to hold this in committee and request Mr. Byrd, in conjunction with his staff, to bring back some hard numbers to fill the positions, how many positions are needed and the starting salaries for those positions, the operational needs, as well as facility needs. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Ms. Myers stated like Mr. C. Jackson she had an incident with her mom. There is no doubt in her mind the EMS workers saved her mother's life and she really appreciates what they do. She stated the issue of salaries are Countywide, which is why the County is undertaking a Comp & Class study. She inquired about other factors that are driving this that Mr. Byrd may need to pay closer attention to. She noted in the report it stated in some places it takes up to 45 minutes to get a person to help, which could contribute mightily to the stress level.

Mr. Byrd stated in Richland County there are 7 hospitals that we transport to. As indicated, there are areas in the County where they are 45 minutes away from a trauma center, stroke center, etc.

Ms. Myers stated she rode along with the EMS workers and her mom. The EMS workers were nervous because they knew she was having a heart attack. She stated she is in favor of providing

additional funding, but she agrees with Mr. Pearce about finding more creative ways to address the issues. She suggested look at what we are doing across the County to inspire people to come to work for Richland County. And to not ignore the big picture.

- d. Council Motion: If Developers, Builders, etc. cause any hardship on any community due to poor workmanship or unapproved or unpermitted work of any kind that fails, all of their building permits should be pulled and the builder not allowed to build until they fix the problem(s). The homeowners, nor the citizens, should have to pay to fix poor workmanship [N. JACKSON] – Mr. C. Jackson moved, seconded by Ms. Myers, to defer this item to the November 16th Committee meeting. The vote in favor was unanimous.
- e. Council Motion: HOA's operated by developers or management firms should be fined if due to their poor management, and not that of the homeowners, it causes a hardship on the homeowners or community. NOTE: There are improperly maintained detention ponds that have trees growing in them which causes flooding during a bad storm [N. JACKSON] – Mr. C. Jackson moved, seconded by Ms. Myers, to defer this item to the November 16th Committee meeting. The vote in favor was unanimous.
- f. To simplify the emergency preparedness process in the future, I move that Richland County coordinate with the City of Columbia and other municipalities to identify different types of emergency shelters/facilities and certify them, meaning what is required and the readiness of the facility factoring in accessibility due to potential obstructions i.e. impassible bridges, roads, etc. Working with recreation centers, schools districts, churches and other civic centers to qualify and certify these facilities to accommodate citizens in need during certain crisis. In this process each certified facility would be updated annually. Working with Councilmembers willing to participate from each district would also improve the process. NOTE: Shelters to include overnight stay, storage and accommodate the Red Cross and other agencies. Facilities to include storage for distribution to designated areas [N. JACKSON] – Mr. C. Jackson moved, seconded by Ms. Myers, to defer this item to the November 16th Committee meeting. The vote in favor was unanimous.

5. **ITEMS PENDING ANALYSIS**

- a. Council Motion: Develop an emergency plan with SCDOT to immediately repair Rabbit Run Road and Bitternut Road. Developers' constant neglect to repair the storm drainage system causes dangerous flooding. A school bus almost overturned in the flood this morning (April 24, 2017) on Rabbit Run Road. We cannot afford to endanger the lives of citizens, especially school children because of neglect [N. JACKSON] – No action was taken.
- b. Council Motion: Direct staff to research changing the ordinance relating to water runoff so in the future it will require environmental studies and not allow any runoff that exceeds the current runoff from the undeveloped property. This motion should be reviewed/completed and provided to the Planning Commission no later than their June meeting [MALINOWSKI] – No action was taken.
- c. Council Motion: Direct Legal to research what is required to enact a parking ordinance in communities/subdivisions [McBRIDE] – No action was taken.
- d. Council Motion: I move that we re-allocate some of the funding we used to increase the general fund balance farther above the minimum policy amount than it already was, and given that the FY16-17 budget produced a surplus, to EMS [MANNING] – No action was taken.

6. **ADJOURNMENT** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:59 PM.