

City Council Minutes
June 21, 2022

Orangeburg City Council held its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, June 21, 2022, at 6:00 PM with Mayor Michael C. Butler presiding.

PRESENT:

Michael C. Butler, Mayor
Dr. Kalu Kalu, Mayor Pro Tem
Bernard Haire
Jerry Hannah
L. Zimmerman Keitt
Sandra P. Knotts
Richard F. Stroman

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to approve the June 7, 2022, City Council minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mayor Butler and Council presented Parks and Recreation Director Shaniqua Simmons with a Proclamation proclaiming July 2022 Parks and Recreation Month in the City of Orangeburg.

Mr. William Green, 607 Malibu Drive appeared before Council concerning a Department of Public Utilities issue. He stated, "I would like the City to investigate the way DPU determines deposits to turn on utilities. I spoke with several DPU employees concerning this issue and I think the policy is unfair. If you move into an apartment or home, DPU adds the two highest bills that the previous resident had to determine your deposit. For example, there are two exact apartments side by side. One apartment, the previous tenant's utilities were \$100 a month, the new tenant will have to pay \$200 to turn on utilities. The apartment next door, the previous tenant's utilities were \$500 a month meaning the new tenant will have to pay \$1,000 to turn on utilities. I think this is unfair."

Council took the matter under advisement.

Ms. Sonyia Turner and Mr. Rory Dowling with University of North Carolina/Development Finance Initiative (UNC/DFI) addressed Council concerning an update on the Railroad Corner Development Project. Ms. Turner stated, "I wanted to share an overview of the work we have done to date. We were engaged in December 2020 to work with the City in the redevelopment potential of the Railroad Corner site. Our pre-development process is done. We finished the solicitation of private development partners. The remaining item left is to assist the City with negotiations of a development services agreement with a selected developer. We are ready to evaluate proposals received for the Railroad Corner Redevelopment and make sure those developers are who they say they are. Then we will come back before Council with a side-by-side comparison and evaluation of proposals, but ultimately Council makes the decision. We do not bring a recommendation. That is not our role. Our role is to do the due diligence to support your decision making. The hope is Council will select the private development partner for the Railroad Corner Redevelopment by the third quarter. The next step is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiations, which takes two to three months essentially, detailing exclusive negotiations between the City and the developer. After that, you will enter in development agreement negotiations that could take anywhere from nine months to a year because this is a complicated project. We need to make sure the details and interests outlined by the City are clearly defined in the development agreement and all the partnerships required to make this project work are also clearly defined. The hope is by the third or fourth quarter of 2023 shovels are in the ground to see this project started.

As a reminder, these are the Guiding Public Interests that Council endorsed on May 18, 2021, for the Railroad Corner Development:

- Provide a catalytic mixed-use development that connects downtown to the universities and serves as a gateway to downtown
- Respect the historical significance and context of the site and integrate this history into the development
- Consider options for preserving the State Theater building

- Incorporate engaging street level uses attractive for students and the community
- Enhance walkability to increase pedestrian activity from the universities to the Railroad Corner and along Russell Street
- Optimize public investment and maximize private investment

These are the goals and interests that were identified early in the process through in our conversations with you and the public. The proposals will be evaluated against these criteria.

An overview of the process, the marketing document was released in March 2022. The solicitation period was open for 90 days. Our team engaged with nearly 40 firms across the Southeast, 53% of those firms were South Carolina development firms and 26% of those firms were Minority Women Business Enterprise (MWBE) firms. The project was marketed on the City's website, our website, the local newspaper as well as the Columbia Regional Business Report. Our team was available to these development firms for the entire duration of the process answering questions, doing site visits, and giving tours. We were very engaged in this process. We are pleased to announce the City of Orangeburg received three responses to the solicitation for development partners for the Railroad Corner Redevelopment. Two complete proposals were received from JDH Development and Orangeburg District Partners and one letter of interest from Odeidra Williams. Next on the screen is an overview of the designs that were presented. These are high-level schematic drawings. The final designs may change, but this is helpful for us to get an idea of how these development teams are thinking about the Railroad Corner Redevelopment. The first image is provided by JDH Development, a New York-based firm with local ties to Orangeburg as the lead developer is from Orangeburg. They are a minority-owned firm, and they are proposing the Collaborative Architecture Lab (CAL) for architecture; for their engineering, Earth Source; and as general contractor, Brownstone who is also a local South Carolina general contractor. The second proposal is Orangeburg District Partners. This team's architect is MOA Architecture who is also working on the new City Hall, their engineering firm is Stantec, and their general contractor is Holt Brothers Construction which is also minority owned. This firm is based in Virginia with local ties through their partnerships, and minority owned. Our team will assist the City in evaluating these responses. We will request clarifying (or missing) information, analyze development assumptions, review financial feasibility, and compare public-participation scenarios, contact/interview references provided to make sure they are who they say they are. We are analyzing google and news articles to learn as much as we can about these firms. We want to make sure we provide you with all the information you need to make an informed decision. We will also facilitate developer consultations with universities. We met with the Presidents of both universities earlier today to provide them an update as well as Mr. Cecil Williams. We are doing our part to make sure these key stakeholders are involved every step of the way. This process will take about six to eight weeks just to make sure we have time to do the interviews, research analysis, and coordinate the meetings with the universities. We are hoping to come back to City Council in early August and then hopefully a decision from Council to select a private development partner. We do not want to rush things as there are a lot of factors and this is a big project. Best-case scenario. Council can be in the position to select their preferred development partner in the third quarter to make the Railroad Corner Development a reality."

Councilmember Haire asked, "Does this cover all the properties that the City acquired? Are there portions that the City has control over but are not included in the plans?"

Ms. Turner responded, "The proposals include all the properties that the City owns and each proposal shows a master development of those City-owned properties."

Councilmember Haire asked, "Within the properties that the City acquired, there are some property owners that did not care to participate for whatever reason. How do we mesh this together when we have those in between who have not made any commitments?"

Ms. Turner responded, "Our team has been working with the City, Mr. Evering, and Mr. Singh to build relationships and keeping all the property owners, especially a couple of key property owners on Boulevard Street, informed throughout this. I have been on phone calls as well just making sure they are engaged and have access to information and decision making. That is an ongoing conversation that we are having with Mr. Evering and Mr. Singh to make sure this is a cohesive development, and all stakeholders are involved."

Councilmember Hannah stated, “You showed two slides that had actual renditions of the buildings. Is the cost factor the same or similar?”

Mr. Rory Dowling stated, “It is important to note the two slides that were shown are just one page of very in-depth proposals that were submitted. You will have access to the full proposals, and we encourage you to reach out to us with any questions. Both teams have made significant effort and investment in time to understand what this project needs to be successful and so we are extremely excited about the experience, the local ties and what these teams could potentially bring to the project. When you see the proposals, you will see they are very in-depth visions with a lot of detail and we look forward to hearing your feedback.”

Ms. Turner stated, “Both development teams were provided our analysis and community engagement reports. Again, we will have an opportunity to share side-by-side how they line up with the public and community interests.”

Assistant City Administrator Singh addressed Council concerning Façade Grant Update. He stated, “In the booklet on your desk is the rough draft of the new Façade Grant process and application for improving the downtown corridor. This is a new Façade Grant program with a larger dollar amount than what we have done in the past. We wanted to get this to you for your review and comments. We are certainly looking for any input that you may have with a target date of August for getting this program started.”

Mr. Marc Wood, Sheheen, Hancock & Godwin, LLP, CPAs addressed Council concerning the April 2022 Financials. He stated, “I distributed the April 2022 financials for your review. I want to give you a few highlights. We have collected 45% of revenue through April. The target mark is 58%. We are still a little behind but compared to this time last year, we are in line. Expenditures are 60% which is on target.”

Assistant City Administrator Singh addressed Council concerning four expiring terms on the Building Board of Appeals board. He stated, “We wanted to see if Council had any renewals or new nominations for the four expiring terms on the Building Boards of Appeals.”

Councilmember Keitt asked, “Have these expiring members been contacted to see if they would like to continue serving?”

Assistant City Administrator Singh stated, “They have not been contacted. We will have staff contact them and place this on the next agenda.”

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu, seconded by Councilmember Keitt to approve the Third Reading of an Ordinance amending the City of Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities Operating Budget for Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2022 (DPU AMI Water Project). The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to approve the Third Reading of an Ordinance amending the City of Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities Operating Budget for Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2022 (DPU Hampton Street Sewer Project). The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Councilmember Knotts to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda McDaniel

Linda McDaniel
City Clerk

