

City Council Minutes
April 16, 2024

Orangeburg City Council held its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, April 16, 2024, at 6:00 PM with Mayor Michael C. Butler presiding.

PRESENT:

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

ABSENT:

Annette D. Grevious

A motion was made by Councilmember Stroman, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Keitt to approve the April 2, 2024, City Council minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.

Reverend Minnie Anderson appeared before Council concerning Paths to Wholeness Inc. Transitional Home update. She stated, "Paths to Wholeness began operation in 2021 by preparing the home and we accepted our first client in 2022. Our transitional home is called Bea's House, named after my mother. Our vision is to help formerly incarcerated women develop, thrive, and successfully integrate back into society. Paths to Wholeness offers transformative services to address the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental wellness of formerly incarcerated women by offering training in life skills development, mentoring prosocial behavior and securing employment. We have collaborated with community service providers such as the Department of Mental Health, Orangeburg Calhoun Technical College, and the Dawn Center. Bea's House can hold up to four women. We have two bedrooms, each with two twin beds. Our program has 100% reduction in recidivism. I am here this evening to not only update you but also to request your support and financial help as we are looking to complete our renovations of replacing a few windows and seals and paving our parking lot."

Mayor Butler stated former Councilmember Bernard Haire is on the agenda to make an appearance but will not be here tonight.

Mrs. Norma Murdaugh addressed Council concerning closing portion of Goff Avenue from Clark Street to Magnolia Street. She stated, "If a proposal has been presented to City Council in writing about the plans to fence off Goff Avenue and councilmembers have had time to study and scrutinize the proposal, it is imperative that citizens impacted by the proposal be given the same courtesy as Council to study and review the written copy. The administration of Claflin University can again-setup a meeting with concerned citizens of Goff Avenue and discuss our concerns of fencing off Goff Avenue. "

Claflin University Director of Facilities Bill Kropff addressed Council concerning closing portion of Goff Avenue from Clark Street to Magnolia Street. He stated, "At the last meeting, we were asked questions concerning the type of technology, gates, and request to see a plan. On your screen is the intersection of Clark Street. At the top are two red bullseyes where signage will be posted informing and directing of the closure. The first gate is the dark orange line where two individual arm gates and lift gates will be located. The one on the right will be the exit gate and is triggered by a pressure plate. Coming in you will see the yellow gate with the red flag. This would be a station like seen at apartment complexes where a call button is pressed that would be answered by a Claflin public safety person at the front station to allow access if you do not have a key fob or a keypad number to enter. There will be three types of technology including video, keypad, and fob access. The blue area on the drawing would give someone that is not permitted to come into campus an area to turn around and go back out. The second yellow line on the left towards the bottom is the gate that would open to grant access fully into Goff Avenue coming into the campus. Then again you see a pressure plate that will let the gates know either to open as you are leaving or that you have passed and to close. On the Magnolia Street side, on the far left is a double-sided

gate staying with the appearance that is already on Goff Avenue with the brick and columns. There is a double gate that will not be automatic, it would be closed and opened by public safety. We also propose installing speed bump control devices along that area to slow internal traffic. This is the gate at Tingley Memorial Hall. We would like to continue that look along Goff Avenue where it intersects with Magnolia Street. This is on Buckley Street at South Carolina State University (SCSU) that is also a two-gate method with brick columns. This is the arm gate that I referred to on your diagrams shown in yellow that are rated for up to 3,000 cycles a day. The total action time from the time it is up to down is about four seconds. Here is another example of the armed gates where a button is pressed, and the guest could talk to our welcome station at Claflin Circle for access. It can also be done through fob, radio-frequency identification (RFID) and keypad."

Councilmember Hannah asked, "What input from the residents have you received on your proposal?"

Claflin University Chief Williams stated, "We have not received any feedback from the residents concerning this proposal because we were asked to put the proposal together and bring it back to Council. This last slide is a summary from February 20 with the First Reading to where we are now. I want to show a video of hazards and traffic we continue to deal with where someone is going to get injured. On the screen is a car going around a bus that occurred on April 1st. Next on your screen, two days later is a traffic crash that occurred on Goff Avenue. These are the things that we are trying to stop, and we are asking you to assist us."

Claflin University President Warmack stated, "Claflin University celebrates 155 years of existence in the Orangeburg community educating, empowering, and employing citizens in this community. Currently we have 375 residents living on Goff Avenue with addresses between High Rise and Goff Avenue and between Clark Street and Magnolia Street. It is imperative that we protect those citizens like no other. I ask as you make your decision today, you keep in mind the well-being and safety of those 375 residents. In a study done by the University of Georgia, Claflin has an annual \$80 million economic impact to the Orangeburg community, and we employ over 835. We are committed to and believe in this community. It is imperative that we keep these babies safe."

Mayor Pro Tem Keitt stated, "I appreciate the gate presentation. It is professional and looks great. I am hoping that once the gate system is completed, the residents will find it is quieter for them as they will not have the traffic. A gated area makes sure only certain people come and go, and this is what we need on Goff Avenue."

Councilmember Kalu asked, "I know this is a strong topic for all parties involved. Looking on both sides of the fence, just for clarification, I think the Murdaughs are feeling not respected in terms of inclusion. I also asked for clarification in terms of the type of gate. I asked Chief Williams and learned there was a sketch for it. Will the Murdaughs have perpetual access to their property?"

President Warmack stated, "That has been our goal from the entire onset of this to ensure that they have direct access to their property. I want to go on record that our purpose is not to block anyone out. When we were asked to do this, it was about safety. That road, for clarity, is a state road that we have no responsibility for, and you have a document that identified multiple cases there, and our babies are not safe. So, if there is another solution that Council has, that I can present back to the families and parents, we welcome that. We were asked to present a solution to the problem and that is what we did."

City Attorney John Marshall Mosser stated, "One of the concerns we have heard articulated here tonight was an easement for access, legal access to the property for the homeowners. We proposed language if any member of Council would like to make a motion to amend the ordinance. Presently the ordinance provides that the City is going to reserve to itself easements for access to service utilities. We also propose that we reserve legal access for any homeowners who are not the university who are residing inside Goff Avenue. Further that is not going to help them as much as it might if they have an individual easement that is attached to their property. Because we are a City and it is a public road, it is a little more challenging. We have proposed instead, the City will deed the property to Claflin University who, as a condition of accepting that deed, turn around and simultaneously convey perpetual access and utility easements to the homeowners that are inside the area to be closed. I have spoken with the counsel for Claflin University, and they are on board with that plan. The nature of that easement is it would be recordable, which is also in the proposed

amendment to the ordinance which will do a couple of things. It will be able to be recordable for these individual homeowners. It will run with their land. It will be under their names, and it will be enforceable against Claflin University. So, they will have a legal right of access granted to them by Claflin University, enforceable by them, their children, whoever they might convey the property to.”

Councilmember Hannah asked, “Are the residents aware of this ordinance?”

Attorney Mosser stated, “To my knowledge it has not been provided to them and Council would need to make a motion to amend the ordinance on the floor before it is passed.”

Councilmember Stroman asked, “Would this go to the next owner if they were to sell their property?”

Attorney Mosser stated, “Correct, we would be reserving a generic easement when the City conveys the property forward, but the University is going to convey specific individual access and utilities easements which are perpetual to the individual homeowners that will be able to be indexed against their property and the real property records. Anybody looking for it will be able to find it. If they want to convey it forward to their children or anyone, or if they would like to sell the property that is the nature of the easement that would be required.”

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Keitt, seconded by Councilmember Stroman to approve the third reading of an ordinance accepting a portion of Goff Avenue from Clark Street to Magnolia Street from the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT); Closing Goff Avenue from Clark Street to Magnolia Street; Transferring such road to Claflin University to include the following additional language in Section 2: legal access rights for any real property owners, other than Claflin University, whose property abuts Goff Avenue and including the City’s ability to repair, maintain, and expand and/or extend such uses, of the Closure Area, including for example public utilities, and authorizes the City Administrator to execute a quit claim deed in favor of Claflin University with such reservations and such other and further documents as may be necessary and prudent to effect this Ordinance’s intent, provided that by accepting the deed from City, Claflin University with such reservations and such other and further documents as may be necessary and prudent to effect this Ordinance’s intent, provided that by accepting the deed from City, Claflin University is required to simultaneously convey individual, perpetual access and utilities easements to, and for the benefit of, any real property owners whose property abuts Goff Avenue, which easements shall be in recordable form. The motion was approved 4-2. Councilmember Hannah and Councilmember Knotts opposed.

Chief Austin addressed Council concerning a proclamation recognizing National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week April 14-20, 2024. He stated, “A proclamation was signed in 1994 by President Bill Clinton which declared the second week of April as National Public Safety Telecommunicators week. One of our goals over the past year was to get all our telecommunicators state certified which we have accomplished.”

Mayor Butler read the proclamation declaring the week of April 14 through 20, 2024, as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week in Orangeburg, in honor of the men and women whose diligence and professionalism keep our City and citizens safe.

A motion was made by Councilmember Stroman, seconded by Councilmember Kalu to go enter to Executive Session concerning 1) discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements and proposed sale or purchase of property – Project Shell – S.C. Code Sec. 30-4-70(a)(2) and 2) performance evaluation – proposed contractual arrangement – City of Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities Manager S.C. Code Sec 30-4-70(a)(1). The motion was unanimously approved.

Council did not return to open session. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda McDaniel
Linda McDaniel
City Clerk

