

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
September 3, 2019

Orangeburg City Council held its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, September 3, 2019, at 7:00 P.M., in Council Chambers with Mayor Michael C. Butler presiding. **2845**

PRESENT:

Michael C. Butler, Mayor
Bernard Haire
Jerry Hannah
Charles W. Jernigan
L. Zimmerman Keitt
Sandra P. Knotts
Richard F. Stroman

ABSENT:

None

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Keitt, seconded by Councilmember Stroman to approve the August 13, 2019 Special Minutes at the Department of Public Utilities minutes as distributed. This motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Councilmember Knotts, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Keitt to approve the August 20, 2019 City Council minutes. This motion was approved 6-0-1, Councilmember Haire abstained as he was not present at this meeting.

A motion was made by Councilmember Haire, seconded by Councilmember Stroman to approve the third reading of Ordinance for a zoning district map change to O-I Office-Institutional-Residential District for property belonging to Gressette Investments Limited located at 1807 Columbia Road TMP #0174-17-08-006.000. The motion was unanimously approved.

City Administrator Yow addressed Council concerning vacancies on the Building Board of Appeals Committee. There are currently vacancies on this Committee. Mayor Pro Tem Keitt made a motion to appoint Mr. Spencer Anderson of Timberland Drive, this motion was seconded by Councilmember Stroman. Mayor Pro Tem Keitt stated that he worked at Claflin University in construction. The vote was unanimous.

Councilmember Knotts made a clarification that the previous appointment's name is Mr. Larry Jackson. Mayor Pro Tem Keitt made a motion that his term and the term of Spencer Anderson are for the terms ending July 1, 2022, seconded by Councilmember Knotts. The vote was unanimous.

City Administrator Yow stated there remains one vacancy that expired July 1, 2019 that needs to be filled.

A motion was made by Councilmember Haire, seconded by Councilmember Knotts to approve third reading of Ordinance amending the Budget for the City of Orangeburg, SC for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2018 and ending September 30, 2019. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Councilmember Haire, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Keitt to approve third reading of Ordinance to raise revenue and adopt a budget for the City of Orangeburg, SC for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2019 and ending September 30, 2020. The vote was unanimously approved.

Councilmember Stroman nominated Tyler Gardner to the Election Commission, seconded by Councilmember Haire. The vote was unanimously approved. This was due to a recent resignation of Susan Fields. This term is until 3-31-23.

Ms. Evelyn Disher, Executive Director of the Community of Character and Chief Mike Adams accepted the September 2019 Character Trait Proclamation, Trustworthiness.

A motion was made by Councilmember Haire, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Keitt to approve third reading of an Ordinance to adopt an amended budget for the Operation of the Department of Public

Utilities of the City of Orangeburg, State of SC for the fiscal year October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019. The vote was unanimously approved.

Mayor Pro Tem Keitt responded that the same thing should go for Department of Public Utilities as the City. We have to keep up with raises, but we must upgrade across the City, and I want to thank you and your staff.

A motion was made by Councilmember Haire, seconded by Councilmember Knotts to approve Ordinance to adopt a budget for the operation of the Department of Public Utilities of the City of Orangeburg, State of SC for the fiscal year October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020 (2) adopt amended electric rates effective October 1, 2019 and (3) adopt amended gas rates effective October 1, 2019. The vote was 6-1, Councilmember Stroman opposed.

DPU Manager Harley stated, "The only change in this Ordinance is just a non-substantial change on page 3 of item #10 where we are clarifying the actual light from Custom City to Decorative. This is just for clarification purposes and it does not change the Ordinance. The rate increases are needed so that we are able to address the ongoing aging infrastructure and we must have an ongoing plan to address those as soon as possible. We must do this to maintain the reliability and the safety of our system. When things go bad, we don't want to be in a position where we can't get lights back on. That is what we are trying to do going forward, we hope that this will help solve the issues going forward."

Councilmember Stroman addressed Council, "You talked about 10% increase in gas and electric during our meetings. When I got the paper here, it looks to me it is more than 10%. From \$9 to \$12, looks like 34% increase. I have had people come forward and cannot afford the 10% not to mention the 34%. We are then going to hire a Budget Director; we didn't need one before. I know we have got to replace these transformers, we have money in reserves. I am not against that. I went along with it the first two readings. I cannot vote on this tonight, I work for the citizens and I just can't do this."

Mayor replied, "That is your conviction. The directors brought this to us. We have aging infrastructure and we have to upgrade for the citizens to keep the power on and going. Some of the equipment is very old."

Councilmember Stroman replied "I am not against the replacement. What we are replacing won't even last as long as it did before."

Director Harley stated, "We have received a lot of service out of our old equipment. As you know, you have received a map of our system with ages on all of those where the majority is 40-50 years old. We are at the point where we need to get ahead of any catastrophic failures in these substations. We have work ongoing at three of the substations now and once this work is done it will be a 12-million-dollar investment in this project. Those items are not cheap to repair and upgrade. We are trying to do this in a way to save the taxpayers as much as possible, but we need to increase our pace in this area. We are not alone in this area, other utility companies across the state have put off improvements due to the past economic downturns, but we can't wait any longer. We will do with what we have, but it is my recommendation to approve this Ordinance and move forward."

Councilmember Stroman replied, "I am not against the improvements, I don't think the taxpayers should be affected all in one year. Spread it out over two years, 5% and then another 5%. We increased gas rates last year. Someone needs to be selling gas to customers. We ran lines to Santee and Ellore, but there are no customers. It seems we need a salesman instead of a Budget Director."

Director Harley stated, "We have marketed our utilities in that area, we did mention to you one new customer that should be coming on board. Our goal is continuing to pursue that, we continue to get interest in that area. We contact customers once we know that they want service. Sometimes there is a delay on their side. We offer a good service and price other than propane in that area."

Director Harley stated, "The three substations we are working on now, we had to bring in a spare transformer when the power went down before. We are old and cannot use modern equipment and

some things are not compatible with what we have. In order to be successful, we need to move forward in this. I commend you in getting this far and we appreciate whatever you decide to give us at this point.”

Councilmember Hannah stated, “I represent District 3 which is very diversified from the rich and famous to the lower level. Persons have contacted me from all walks of life with the same thing. Why are the rates being raised again? I can come up with the same thing, if you are satisfied with Andy Griffith and Barney Fife then that is fine because that is what we have. If you see this as an investment to a modern and high-tech investment where people can understand that. All people understand Barney Fife. We want something that will sustain us so when the lights are out, you may not know. We were almost to the point of having candles and it is saddening that we got to this state.”

Director Harley stated, “I want to say that Orangeburg is not unique in this, if you look across the Country, various utilities have put off projects. We cannot put this off any longer. We need to be sure a plan is in place where if I am not here or someone else, there is a plan moving forward and the resources moving forward.”

Mayor Pro Tem Keitt stated, “We have to tell our citizens that we are still one of the lowest, if not second lowest in the State.”

Director Harley replied, “We are in terms of this region, we still maintain some of the lowest rates in the state.”

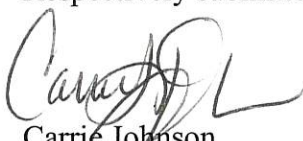
Councilmember Stroman stated, “I work for the stockholders in Orangeburg and they are supposed to get the lowest rates.”

The vote to approve the Ordinance to adopt a budget for the operation of the Department of Public Utilities of the City of Orangeburg, SC for the fiscal year October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020 (2) adopt amended electric rates effective October 1, 2019 and (3) adopt amended gas rates effective October 1, 2019 was 6-1. Councilmember Stroman opposed.

A motion was made by Councilmember Haire, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Keitt to enter into Executive Session concerning Legal Matter, Opioid Litigation and Contractual Matters, A. Employee Medical Clinic-Grove Park Pharmacy and B. Purchase of real property located at Boulevard/Railroad Corner.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectively submitted,


Carrie Johnson
City Clerk

/lrm

