

PUBLIC NOTICE

Aiken Municipal Development Commission Meeting

The Aiken Municipal Development Commission will meet **in-person** on Tuesday, August 10, 2021, at 3:30 P.M. at the Lessie B. Price Senior & Youth Center at 841 Edgefield Avenue NW.

EXECUTIVE SESSION NOTICE

After the regular meeting, the Aiken Municipal Development Commission will meet in Executive Session pursuant to Section 30-4-70(a)(1) and (2) of the South Carolina Code to discuss matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body.

Specifically, the Aiken Municipal Development Commission will discuss matters regarding proposed development projects.

Aiken Municipal Development Commission

Agenda

Lessie B. Price Senior & Youth Center
841 Edgefield Avenue NW

August 10, 2021

3:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

1. Approval of Agenda for August 10, 2021.
2. Approval of Minutes for July 12, 2021.
3. Sub-Committee Reports.
4. Update from City Council Meeting.
5. Discussion Regarding Potential Lobbying for State of SC American Rescue Plan (\$2.5B).
6. Report from Dr. Tom Hallman.
7. Comments by Commission Members.
8. Information and Updates from Staff.
9. Executive Session to Discuss Economic Development Projects.

ADJOURNMENT

Aiken Municipal Development Commission Minutes

Municipal Conference Center – 214 Park Avenue SW

July 12, 2021

Present: Keith Wood, Catina Broadwater, David Jameson, Stuart MacVean, Philip Merry, Doug Slaughter, and Chris Verenes.

Absent: Marty Gillam and Tom Williams.

Others Present: Tim O'Briant, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Sabina Craig, Sara Ridout, Diana Floyd, Tom Hallman, Buzz Rich, of the Aiken Corporation, and Landon Stamper of the Aiken Standard.

Mr. Wood, Chair, called the meeting of July 12, 2021, to order at 3:35 p.m. He noted that after the regular meeting the Aiken Municipal Development Commission will meet in Executive Session pursuant to Section 30-4-70(a)(1) and (2) of the South Carolina Code to discuss matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body. Specifically, the Aiken Municipal Development Commission will discuss matters regarding proposed development projects.

Mr. Wood asked for approval of the agenda. Mr. Verenes moved, seconded by Mr. Merry that the agenda for the July 12, 2021, meeting be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

MINUTES

Mr. Wood asked the members to consider approval of the minutes for the June 8, 2021, meeting. Mr. Jameson moved, seconded by Mr. Verenes, that the minutes for the June 8, 2021, meeting be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Wood stated the next item is reports from the sub-committees.

Aiken Innovation and Impact District

Mr. Jameson. Convenor, stated that the Innovation Committee had not met since the last meeting, and the same report stands that Stuart MacVean is going to get a report on Innovation Parks. The report should be available in another ten days or so and then the committee will meet and review it.

There was a question as to whether there was a forthcoming meeting with the new Chancellor at USCA. Mr. Jameson stated he thought it would be a good step for the Commission to introduce themselves to the Chancellor, and to talk specifically about the AMC, the Dreamport, and the Innovation Park. He was very aware of those through his interview process, and in previous positions he has been in, he has been involved in facilities very similar to those so he has a lot of confidence that he can help move this along. Mr. Jameson stated he would arrange a meeting.

Buzz Rich mentioned that Dr. Sandra Jordan suggested that the new Chancellor be her replacement on the Aiken Corporation. He said he had extended an invitation to him.

Mr. MacVean stated regarding the Innovation Parks report, the research has been done. He said he needs to get a presentation together to demonstrate. He said he would have the presentation together next week for review.

Make Aiken More Business Friendly

Mr. Merry, Convenor, stated the Business Friendly Committee did not have a formal meeting, but there had been some conversations with committee members. He said similar to the last report he had been attending the Stormwater Task Force Committee meetings. He said he had been part of the committee making recommendations to the City for revision of the stormwater requirements to be more in line with the standards of other cities around the state. It was noted that the Stormwater Ordinance revision was on the Council agenda for the July 12 meeting. He pointed out one of the ideas of the Make Aiken More Business Friendly was to expand the committee with non-MDC members, particularly they had suggested Ryan Bland as Planning Director. However, in the meantime Mr. Bland has left the City. He said he would like to have someone from the Planning Department involved and would also like to have another person familiar with real estate on the committee. He felt the Planning Director would be integral to not only the process, but also for putting together the recommendations in some executable format. He said the Committee has a list of areas in which they would like for improvements to be made to make Aiken more business friendly. He said they need a strategic path forward and engage as many people as possible to have the value of their support as they ultimately go to Council. He said it is felt that the Committee needs to have some recommendations for solutions to Council for improvements rather than going to Council and airing their complaints.

Mr. Wood suggested that the Business Friendly Committee bring a short list of improvements to MDC to review. Mr. Merry stated he had a list and the idea is to expand the reach and get more people to make a contribution. At some point there needs to be a real conversation in depth about each of the items on the list to not only understand the problem, but to really reach an agreement on the recommended solution. He said he and the Mayor agreed that ultimately a sub-committee should be established with Councilmembers on it and also some of the Commission members. It is important that they bring all the influencers and everyone that is invested to get unified support in the process.

Mr. Bedenbaugh noted that we do not have a Planning Director, but the Planning Department is fully staffed. He felt that the Committee should go ahead with their work and not wait on a new Planning Director. He said he would be advertising again for a Planning Director so it will be a few months before we have a new Planning Director.

Mr. Merry stated his feeling is to present the problems with the proposed solutions and also present as much as possible in a package to City Council. Mr. Bedenbaugh felt that probably many of the items on the list for improvements could be done at one time, with a few others requiring more review.

Mr. O'Briant pointed out from a staff perspective he was available as a resource for the Sub-committees. He said he had not been involved in any of the sub-committee meetings. He stated for each of the sub-committees, with notice, any of the subcommittees could turn this into a committee of the whole, meaning if there is substantial work that needs to be done together, it can be scheduled and produce the work together.

Mr. Wood suggested that the list from Mr. Merry and his committee could be emailed to the Commission to review. The Commission members could email responses back and forth and determine if they want to make it a full-fledged list to go to City staff and Council. Mr. Merry stated he wants everyone's input. He said he believes everyone got a version of the list several years ago. He said the list was a starting point and they have added more to it.

Mr. Wood stated that he and Mr. Merry would talk about the matter with the idea that we will get the communication out to the entire Commission or to a subset so the Commission can get started and have a path forward.

Target Potential Areas for Redevelopment/Investment.

Entrances to City

Ms. Broadwater stated her committee is tasked with identifying target areas for new development or investment. She said they have identified some areas that may roll into some of the other sub-committees. She said they had particularly talked about the entrances to the city that need to be enhanced to encourage development in the areas.

Ms. Broadwater reviewed five areas of entrances to the city that should be improved. The first area was the west Richland Avenue gateway off of Vauclose Road and near the old hospital. That area is one of the major thoroughways into and out of the city. They would like to support investment of some money there to make the area more inviting. She pointed out a drawing of an entrance sign that the committee liked. Mr. Bedenbaugh pointed out the entranceway improvement was a staff CAD drawing. He noted that at one time it was proposed to do a multi-county park in the area and through that there would be money to fund the entrance improvement. He said he did not know if the County is still interested in doing a multi-county park at this time. He pointed out that the entrance improvement proposed would probably cost \$1 million. Ms. Broadwater stated the committee would like to push the corridor improvement farther out near the Walmart if funding is available. If that much funding is not available, the Committee would like for the entranceway improvement to be at Richland and Vauclose Road.

Ms. Broadwater stated the second entranceway for improvement is the north entrance gateway at York Street and Columbia Highway near the KJ's Market going to the downtown. She pointed out the private investment for the Rack and Grill on York Street at Hampton Avenue. The Committee thought it was important to capitalize on that investment and clean up the area so it would be marketable for other things in the area, particularly at York and Hampton. It would open up the area the same way as coming from the Walmart on the west side into Aiken. It would open up the area all the way down to the Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Broadwater stated the third entranceway for improvement is Highway 19 into the city starting at Hahn Village to Hampton Avenue and Laurens Street. She noted that Hahn Village which consists of 19 acres is vacant now. That area could be beautified and developed.

The fourth entranceway is east Richland Avenue at Williamsburg Street. She noted that area is fourth only because we already have Mr. McGhee who is looking at beautifying some of that area, and the City is already putting development dollars into that area. There was a question as to whether the Steeplechase area should be included on the east side.

Ms. Broadwater stated the Committee listed the SC 78 corridor into the City as their fifth corridor to improve and that includes the Steeplechase area.

Ms. Broadwater stated in addition to the five entranceways, there are some other long-term targets and goals that the Committee discussed, including Mitchell Shopping Center, the Citizens Park area, the commercial property around Cracker Barrel, the industrial area of East Park Avenue, City investment in streets and buildings in the underserved areas that are in the city limits. She pointed out that York Street and Highway 1 all the way to I-20 Exit 22 was a large discussion point for the Committee because they know that part of that is in the County and is outside of their jurisdiction, but we do have Generations Park and Second Baptist Church. Highway 1 is a throughway into our City, and we need to put some development dollars there. She stated maybe the City can expand out a little bit to meet some of the goals. They talked about developers could be engaged to help add to these key properties to offset some of the costs. It was noted that Steve Floyd was added to the sub-committee.

Mr. Wood stated the sub-committee had done a lot of work. Some of it was touched on in the AECOM report, but the committee did a lot more detail work. He said the question now is what is next. He pointed out that he knows money comes into play.

Ms. Broadwater stated a question was how much money would be needed to go forward with the entranceway projects. She felt the next step would be to identify developers who would be willing to go in with the City to develop these areas and to get a cost estimate for each entrance.

There was a question on the status of the Hahn Village property. Mr. Bedenbaugh stated presently the Housing Authority is planning to redevelop this area. He said he had asked Chanosha Lawton, the Director, to brief Council in a few months on their plans for the 19 acres on which the Housing Authority is located. It was noted that this area is in a key gateway to the city. Mr. Bedenbaugh stated we could follow up on their plans and possibly Ms. Lawton could talk to the Commission or Aiken Corporation regarding their plans.

Mr. Bedenbaugh pointed out that regarding the cost for the entranceway on Richland Avenue at Vaucluse Road, he had stated the cost to be \$1 million. He pointed out that was just for the area from Vaucluse east to Pendleton. He said no price had been discussed to go back west towards Walmart. He said to go back to Walmart, the cost would probably triple this or more.

The Committee members continued to discuss the proposed entranceways to the city and the cost involved and how starting improvements at the entrances could spur some economic development from individuals or developers. They noted the improvements to Toole Hill as an example of improvements in an area that encouraged other development. It was pointed out that an investment of \$1 million might generate into \$100 million if it looks right and people get a feeling that it is an up and coming business area. Part of the challenge will be identifying and working with properties or businesses in the areas to improve the areas to create the economic

development and growth that we are looking for. It was pointed out that individuals are buying houses in the area of York and Hampton and renovating them.

Ms. Broadwater stated a lot of the sub-committee discussion involved the Six Points area, and the question was what do you do with that area. Mr. Bedenbaugh pointed out that corridor as you move west on Hampton weaves in and out of the City and that is problematic. He pointed out that the area of Six Points is out of the City. He noted that the County's property and maintenance codes are more lenient than the City's. The Committee discussed the Six Points area with the various businesses with appliances out front and antiques displayed. It was felt that the Committee will probably have to take on some of those battles if they really want to create economic development. Mr. Bedenbaugh stated if the County property maintenance code could mimic the city code in areas close to the city limits that would help.

It was pointed out that Six Points and other areas are hubs. There was concern as to what would be the right approach. It was pointed out that perhaps areas could be selected and something could be done such as what is being done in the Farmers' Market area. It was noted that as someone comes into the city first impressions are key, and we need to improve the entrances to the city.

It was pointed out that the entrances are project oriented. Spartanburg has been successful with several projects. They pick areas and have made a TIF. They created a mechanism by which they might have a funding source and then engaged in project revitalization. They identify a target area and recruit a developer for the project. Through use of a TIF, they did not have to take money out of their operating budget. It was felt that the Committee could identify areas, and that they have to think in terms of projects and not the atmosphere. It was pointed out that the area at York and Hampton is a diamond area. If some land could be acquired and figure out the right occupancy for some of the land, maybe a developer could be recruited to make the project happen.

Mr. Wood stated he believes there is a consensus on the list. Perhaps the path forward is that the committee study and discuss the list and come back with a recommendation.

Ms. Broadwater asked other than City funds, what other ways do cities raise money to target areas for development.

Mr. MacVean asked if there is anyone within the Planning staff that specializes in grant research. Or, does the City have someone who looks for grant programs and watches for announcements that there are grant programs available.

Mr. Bedenbaugh responded that the City does have someone who works as a Project Manager out of the City Manager's Office who monitors and looks for grants. He noted that grants are probably the other source for funds. He pointed out that tax revenue is used basically to fund operations. He pointed out one source of funds that has been used to help with road projects and matching funds, the Supreme Court just declared unconstitutional on June 30—that being the Road Maintenance Fee. He said we have to figure what to do now. That fee generated about a half a million dollars a year that we used for matches for programs. He said grants and earmarks help us with funding projects since we do not have a lot of funding sources and don't have

partners that are willing to do a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or that type of tax abatement mechanism.

Mr. Merry noted that state law regulates all of this and there are a few basic things permissible under the law where you can specifically collect earmarked tax revenues for certain projects. One of the most common is TIFs. He pointed out that a TIF is controlled by the County, and it takes a partnering with the School Board, the County and the City. He pointed out that a TIF is what Spartanburg had done with success for their projects. He noted that if we could get County Council on board for a TIF that would be great.

Mr. Verenes stated he wondered if the approach should be to decide what we want to do, what's good for the community, figure out the cost and try to get some help. We have to have a plan and the cost to be able to sell it to the people.

Mr. Slaughter asked if it would be possible for us to have some City staff to create some concepts for some of the projects that we are interested in. He said he had found that if people can see what you are trying to do, they are more likely to support it. Then we could follow up with the funding source.

Mr. O'Briant stated the answer is, that is a lot of the thrust of the Commission. The budget is available, but it is not limitless. That is some of the expertise that we want to match up whether that is in-house or not. The grant funding and funding opportunities, are one thing that was left out. In the 80s and 90s there was more money being put into beautification and community improvement projects. That is now kind of locked down. A lot of it comes through HUD now. A lot of it is related to blight and lower income areas. That is not to say there's no grant funding out there or special purpose grants. He noted that when Council formed the Commission, they wanted the Commission to be looking, as many communities have done and as Aiken did with the Aiken 20/20 program years ago, at the private foundation of funding. Many communities have family foundations that contribute to these kind of projects. As we build that vision, we also need to look into the private sector and charitable foundations, that could be family based or corporate based, and try to get private and community involvement.

Mr. Wood stated that was a good report on Targeting Potential Areas for Redevelopment. There were a lot of great suggestions. A lot of work needs to be done. It will be a combination of City staff and other resources that will be available to use. He said we can come back with our priority list and what we will do. There are state earmarks going on now. He said there are some monies available.

PROGRAM MANAGER REPORT

Dr. Tom Hallman

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was a report from Dr. Hallman, Program Manager.

Dr. Hallman stated his plan is to spend the next 30 days just talking to the Chair of the committees. He said he had met with some already. As appropriate, he will make people aware of the Development Commission and make sure they are aware of the other working groups. He pointed out throughout the plan, it references engagement with people beyond the membership of this Committee, whether that be Neighborhood Associations, people where appropriate, and

other organizations, a mixture of people that are in the development business and neighborhood associations and that sort of thing. He said to some degree, he was going to test that theory out to see if it is appropriate. He said so far it seems that folks are open and even enthusiastic about having more voices at the table. Not to create a large crowd, but trying to be sure that when we get to the next point and start talking about this project, you have at least diminished the prospect of somebody who will say that is an inbred idea. You didn't talk to anybody outside of your circle to come to that conclusion. He said he felt that is an important thing for this Commission to do. Once he has talked to the key players, then he will be in a better position to say going back to the plan and here are the things that are already in motion and here are the things that remain to be done. This is a first priority of those and this is secondary, etc. All of those things probably need to move forward. Moving forward at this moment means doing the research and finding out what is possible and what sorts of ideas put the lightbulb on. All of these ideas probably need to be and some need to be at different stages. He said he would be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. Wood stated one thing they all came to a consensus on was to go back and take a look at the AECOM plan and the hard work that Dr. Hallman did for us in cross cutting analysis and look for low hanging fruit, not just within the Commission, but outside of the Commission for things that need to be done and can be accomplished because we want to show progress.

Mr. Slaughter stated he would like to make a comment. He noted that this past week there was a funeral for Ms. Ossie Lloyd who was on the Community Development Committee for many years. One of the stories told was when they started developing Hampton Avenue with sidewalks and streetscapes the neighborhood residents came to the City Council meeting. There was a series of listening tours where people from the Planning Department met with people within the community to hear their voices. Their voices stopped a traffic circle from happening at Laurens and Hampton Avenue. Some other suggestions came out of that meeting that really shaped the Hampton Avenue and York Street corridor. He said he felt it will be important for the Committee as they begin to develop projects to make sure there is a lot of community buy in. He noted that he thought about Wade Brodie and how a lot of what we enjoy now that makes the City great were public/private community partnerships. He said the Committee needs to keep that idea in mind as we move forward if we really want to see some great success with what we are trying to do. He felt that will be important as we move forward.

COMMENTS FROM STAFF

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated in addition to a funding request for the Powderhouse Road Connector, Lindsay Graham has requested \$2.5 million for the Northside Sewer Enhancement Project. This project would increase capacity and additional lines that would provide greater sewer access along the Edgefield Highway corridor. Essentially the line would loop our sewer line which presently terminates to a lift station in the Industrial Park near the airport and would come down Highway 19 and tie back into an existing line. It would open up sewer service for development and individuals who currently have septic tanks. The project is another \$2.5 million earmark that Senator Graham has requested.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Wood stated the Municipal Development Commission needed to go into executive session as advertised.

Mr. Jameson moved, seconded by Mr. Slaughter, that the Commission go into executive session as noted by Mr. Wood. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Commission went into executive session at 4:05 p.m.

After discussion by the Commission Mr. Merry moved, seconded by Mr. Slaughter, that the Commission come out of executive session. The Commission came out of executive session at 4:55 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned. The meeting adjourned at 4:56 P.M.

Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk