

MINUTES
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
September 13, 2021

The September 13, 2021 Regular meeting of the City Council was held at the City of Dillon Wellness Center, 1647 Commerce Drive, Dillon, SC. Notices of this regular meeting of City Council was provided to the media and individuals requesting a copy of the agenda informing them of the date, location, and time of the meeting.

Councilmembers in attendance:

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Phil Wallace
Councilmember Timothy Cousar
Councilmember James David

Councilmember Douglas Jackson
Councilmember James Washington
Councilmember Johnny Eller

- I. **Call to Order** - Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Wallace called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Everyone recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Benny Genwright gave the invocation.

- II. **Approval of Agenda**
Councilmember Cousar made a motion to approve the agenda with an addition of Ordinance #21-14 annexing the 1600 Block of Highway 301 N into the city limits of Dillon. Councilmember Jackson seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

- III. **Approve minutes of the August 16, 2021 Regular Council Meeting**
A motion was made by Councilmember Jackson and seconded by Councilmember Washington to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

- IV. **Mayor Pro Tem's Report**
Dr Wallace started by saying he didn't have a lot to report and we are moving forward on fines for vacant buildings. We will have an opportunity to pressure some of these buildings to upgrade. If you have your building up to code and it's vacant, I don't know what we will do. Glen stated once we get an attorney, we will handle that. Dr. Wallace continued saying we as a council might be a little more vested with an Agenda on what we want to do in the next year. Looks like the 2% money is coming in well and we have Zaxby's that has begun renovations. Also, he said he understands that we have possibly some funding for downtown development that Todd Davis alluded to at the last meeting. If funds are out there, we need to take advantage and do a block at a time. Councilman Eller stated that he mentioned something to Glen to get with the county to do something with Main Street to see if they will be willing to throw in any money to help us with downtown.

City Manager's Report

Glen Wagner began his report saying DHEC wants to use the Wellness Center to start doing drive through Covid testing on a daily basis from 9am-4pm. Probably within the next two weeks, Dr Wallace said around our community the delta variant is much more aggressive and the next new variant will be more aggressive. That just means it's more contagious, in personal practice everyone is being overrun but it's not happening in my practice because most of my patients are

vaccinated. Glen went on to say he received a letter from Chief Lane and the State has awarded a \$65,000 grant to upgrade body cameras which leaves the city \$10,000 to pay. We have vehicles budgeted for this year but we can't get them right now because no one has them. Water and sewer budgeted a mini excavator. Glen continued his report saying we finally hired someone for the Downtown Coordinator position. We have hired Lisa Moody. She is originally from Dillon and has moved back to be closer to her family. No one that I interviewed had previous grant experience. Dr. Wallace appointed a committee of three to start having meetings with the Downtown Coordinator and Dillon Community Alliance. Dr. Wallace asked what are we doing on the First Bank building. Glen responded he is putting the Downtown Coordinator there temporarily. The upstairs has to be renovated. There is nothing wrong with downstairs we just have to take the counters out. We think we can build a wall and use partitions to give us office space. Hopefully we can find grant money to help us with this. This building has no elevator but being a public building, it needs to have an elevator. We are looking at probably around \$50,000 for the elevator. I would love for you guys to call me or Chief Lane so you can do a walk through.

Finance Report

Finance Director, Janet Bethea gave copies of the Financial Report to the Mayor Pro Tem, City Council, and the City Manager.

Stephanie Mitchell – Dillon Community Alliance

Stephanie Mitchell began her report saying she just got back from the Main Street directors conference. She said to please call and talk to the other cities that have splash pads because DHEC treats it like it's a pool and they will have to have a life guard out there. Glen responded if you recycle the water you will have to have a lifeguard and if you send the water to the storm drain you will not have to have a life guard. Glen said it's due to having to treat the water. Stephanie went on to say she hopes the city is pleased with everything that the DCA has done. You all have a packet that went through the formulas on how much it cost to have an empty building on main street. She said based on the formulas the cost of an empty building on Main Street is \$75,000 per year. She explained, we have 60 buildings in our historic building and 27 are vacant we are losing almost \$2M because these buildings are vacant. She said she wanted to come Council because our Main Street is failing, we have to do something to put it back in order. In the past, you all have used upfit grants but I'd like to look at the possibility of a stabilization grant. She said the buildings on main street need things to stabilize our community from going down further than what it is. Stephanie continued her report saying we want people that have children and work here to have things to do. We have one restaurant that is getting ready to open up where the Kentyre house use to be. We are doing the best we can to help her alone but there is nothing that we can do to speed up DHEC. DCA is a non-profit. When you apply for a non-profit you have to have a reason to apply for non-profit. Our specifics were to promote community development and tourism so whatever we do have to be within that scope. I am asking for the city to make an investment in the downtown area. In the past we have done \$15,000 I think we only gave away \$3000 in the façade grant last year but we have been hearing that we need much more than that. I am asking the council to commit to \$100,000. Hopefully we will break these grants down to \$30,000 but to get this they have to put in \$60,000. She said this is going to make people either sell the building at a decent price or they can put their \$60,000 to fix it and get \$30,000 back once

they have it up to code. They will see a return in that investment within 10 years. We are asking the council to dedicate \$100,000 to us for these grants. I am also going to the county next week to ask for the same thing. The reason that I didn't say \$200,000 is because I want \$100,000 from you and \$100,000 from the county. I want to do some street scape and start looking forward to our masterplan. Once the project is completed the stabilization grant must be occupied by a rent paying business that is licensed by the city of Dillon for a minimum of 24 months. I feel like with this amount of money something should be expected in writing. Dr Wallace said he likes the idea but if we make the backend of that punishable then you will have people not wanting to be a part of it. Councilmember Eller asked for a list of all of the business owners downtown and also a list of owners that are willing to put the money into their buildings. Councilmember Eller what are your plans for the \$100,000? Stephanie responded that is the money that we will be using for the \$30,000 match. Councilmember David said take the 27 properties and do research. He wants to know who owns them, why aren't they using them, and the expected cost of renovations. There is something that we can do with these buildings. Stephanie said we can do this but we volunteer to do this we have full time jobs. We have to have some investments because these services aren't free. Councilmember David said we need to know the history behind these properties. If the buildings are up to code and they can't get a tenant, are you still going to charge them for the building being vacant. Dr Wallace said we will find them until we get the building up to code. Glen said the building can be in tip top shape but you still have to find someone to rent. Councilmember Eller said what bothers him is none of the buildings on Main Street are ready to rent. Sara Rogers, Dillon Realty said she has investors but no one wants to sell buildings.

V. Citizen's Report

None

VI. Old Business

Ordinance #21-11 Annex 1600 Block of Commerce Drive MPN# 049-00-00-063 – 2nd Reading

Councilmember Jackson made a motion to annex the property into the City limits. Councilmember Cousar seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance #21-12 Annex Trinity Behavioral Care 1719 Commerce Drive MPN# 049-00-00-174 - 2nd Reading

Councilmember David made a motion to annex the property into the City limits. Councilmember Jackson seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance #21-13 SRF Loan – 2nd Reading After some discussion, Councilmember Cousar made a motion agreeing to the terms of the SRF Loan. Councilmember Washington seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

VII. New Business

Ordinance #21-14 Annex 1600 Block of Hwy 301N into the City limits of Dillon – 1st Reading

Councilmember Jackson made a motion to annex the property into the City limits. Councilmember David seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution #17-21 Authorizing submission of an application by the City of Dillon to the Division of Community Grant Programs of the South Carolina Department of Commerce – Lucious Road and 18th Avenue Pump Station Upgrades Councilmember Washington made a motion to authorize submission of the application. Councilmember Cousar seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

A-Tax Appointments Glen Wagner stated the A-Tax Committee is appointed by Council with recommendation from him. There are two open seats that should be filled by someone on the food industry. The recommendations are: Richie Talbert (Breaking Bread) and Joan Meekins (Southern Fried). Councilmember Washington made a motion to accept the recommendations. Councilmember Jackson seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Planning and Zoning Appointments District #2 Councilmember Cousar will come back next month with recommendations.

VIII. Councilmember's Reports

Councilman Eller said I-73 has come back into the news lately. If we don't keep them from bringing this it will dry up Dillon. Can we do a resolution to keep them from bringing this through Dillon? Glen said we can do a resolution next month. Councilmember Eller continued saying I would like to give the volunteer Fire Department a bonus because they worked through the pandemic. Glen stated we will have to hear back from our auditor and yes, they should be included. Councilmember Eller asked about the padding for the free weights, Glen responded they will be fixed this month. Councilmember Eller ended his report asking about a status on the building behind the finance company. Glen said it never went into probate. There are several that say they are the owners but no one knows who really owns it. Councilman Eller said he would like to make that a priority to address that building.

Councilmember Jay David began his report saying that he strongly agrees with widening the roads downtown. He went on to say it's hard to imagine that 8 or 9000 cars per day go down our Main Street. The guy from Benchmark Planning said to him that on one Friday over 28,000 cars went through our downtown. Glen said hopefully they got that information from DOT. I know we have changed our complexity of downtown and I think that we made decisions that we shouldn't have but the way that Dillon is designed we have squeezed it tight. Councilman David said he thinks we need to keep our wide streets. Next, Councilman David explained people are not willing to invest money in buildings that they can only rent for \$300 or \$400 per month. Dr Wallace said Walmart killed downtown because it's hard to compete when you can go to one place and get everything that you need. Councilmember David said the more cars that come thru Dillon the better we will be. Stephanie Mitchel responded the point of making narrower streets is to get people to slow down and look at Main Street. It's all about numbers

Councilmember Washington asked about roads needing to be resurfaced. Glen responded to let Tina know by the end of this week. Next, Councilmember Washington said Rownds property and a property on 3rd Avenue and Pine Street, the grass is grown up so high that Burt can't do anything with it. He asked why can't we hire someone to clean that area up. Councilman Washington ended his report saying the thinks the alliance is doing a great job.

Councilmember Jackson asked Glen did he talk to SCDOT about making Commerce Drive a no 18 wheelers? Glen responded yes, but we have to give them an alternate route. Glen said he will ask again. Councilmember Jackson went on to say he think it's dangerous because you have that curve right here at the Wellness Center. Glen said he's going to ask for a stoplight at Commerce and Highway 301.

IX. **Executive Session**

Councilmember Cousar made a motion to go into Executive Session. Councilman Jackson seconded and the motion passed 6-0. After discussion Councilman Jackson made a motion to go back into open session. The motion passed unanimously.

X. **Adjourn**

With no further business to discuss, Councilmember Jackson made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Washington seconded and the motion passed 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:58pm.

Approved: _____

Dr. Phil Wallace, Mayor Pro-Tem

Attest: _____

Tina Scott, Council Clerk

Date Approved: _____

October 11, 2021