

November 1, 2021

CITY OF CONWAY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CONWAY CITY HALL
229 MAIN STREET, CONWAY
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2021 - 4:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Mayor Barbara Blain-Bellamy, Jean Timbes, Mayor Pro Tem
Council Members: William Goldfinch, Shane Hubbard, Justin Jordan, Larry White
ABSENT: Alex Hyman (out of town)

STAFF: Adam Emrick, City Administrator; Mary Catherine Hyman, Deputy Administrator; John Rogers, Deputy Administrator/ Grants & Special Projects Director; Jeff Leveille, Technology Services Director; Allison Hardin, Planning & Development Director; Allison Williams, Finance Director; June Wood, Public Information Officer; Dale Long, Police Chief ; Wayne Calhoun, Police; Steven Pearce, Police; Reggie Jenerette, Solid Waste Director; Robert Cooper, Building Official; Katie Dennis, Code Enforcement; Ashley Smith, Recreation Director; Timmy Williams, Grounds & Maintenance Director; Le Hendrick, Fire Chief; Kayla Fleming, Associate Judge; Brandon Harrelson, Public Works Director; Kent Bitting, Public Utilities Superintendent and Alicia Shelley, City Clerk.

OTHERS: Rev. Jerry Faulk, Orton Bellamy, Julie Hardwick, Beth Helms Devin Parks and approximately 10 others

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Blain-Bellamy called the meeting to order. Rev. Wallace Evans, Jr., A Father's Place gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The requirements for posting notice of this meeting under South Carolina's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) were met.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: **Motion:** Goldfinch made a motion, seconded by Timbes, to approve the November 1, 2021 meeting agenda. **Vote:** Unanimous. Motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A. **Special Event – 4th Annual Rivertown Regatta – December 4, 2021**
- B. **Acceptance of Bid for Crane Truck for Public Utilities (budgeted item)**
- C. **Selection of Contractor for Fourth Avenue E/C/T Phase 2 Project**
- D. **Special Event – Annual Veterans Day Celebration – November 6, 2021 – Horry County Courthouse**
- E. **Approval of October 18, 2021 Minutes**

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA: **Motion:** Hubbard made a motion, seconded by Jordan, to approve the November 1, 2021 consent agenda. **Vote:** Unanimous. Motion carried

PUBLIC INPUT:

Rev. Jerry Faulk asked Council to explain what form of government that the City of Conway operates. He spoke about the Whittemore Elementary School community meeting and asked who approved the Whittemore Elementary School funds to be used to repair the Smith Jones pool. He said that he thought the members of the community were being belittled and disrespected at the meeting as the Mayor or no council members addressed them. He said that the community still has concerns about WES, as there are many questions that remain unanswered.

Blain Bellamy said that you have a right to get answers to your questions and they can be gained many ways. She said she would be glad to sit with him or he could write them and get written answers. Faulk then asked if the City could go ahead and gather all of the minutes and expenses related to the Whittemore Elementary School. Blain Bellamy said yes, with a FOIA request.

There was no further public input. **Motion:** White made a motion, seconded by Timbes, to close public input. **Vote:** Unanimous. Motion carried.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION:

- A. Presentation of Longevity Awards – October 2021 - 15 years: Jerry Bellamy, Public Utilities; 10 years: Joel Heath Watford, Police.** Emrick and Jordan presented Heath Watford with his Longevity Award for 10 years of employment with the City of Conway.
- B. Recognition of Employee for the Completion of International Designation Process –** Rogers recognized Le Hendrick, Fire Chief for successfully completing the process that awards him the professional designation of Chief Fire Officer (CFO). Chief Hendrick becomes one of only 1,568 CFO's worldwide, one of 40 in the State of South Carolina, and one of only four in Horry County. The Designation program is a voluntary program designed to recognize individuals who demonstrate their excellence in seven measured components including experience, education, professional development, professional contributions, association membership, community involvement and technical competence. In addition, all applicants are required to identify a future professional development plan. The CFO designation program uses a comprehensive peer review model to evaluate candidates seeking the credential. The Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC) awards the designation only after an individually successfully meets all of the organization's stringent criteria. Achieving this designation signifies Chief Hendricks commitment to his career in the fire and emergency services.
- C. Discussion of Open Carry Ordinance –** Long informed Council that the South Carolina Legislature enacted the "Open Carry with Training Act" in May 2021. The subsection proposed to be added allows the City of Conway to prohibit open or concealed carry of weapons at certain city sponsored special events. He stated that staff recommends adding subsection four to the ordinance to read as follows: It is unlawful for any person, whether or not that person has been issued a concealed weapons permit, to enter a city-permitted event held on public property while armed.

White asked why does subsection 2 differ from subsection 3 in that it does not include with the approval of city council. Emrick said that this ordinance predates him but he thinks it may be because some details of an event may not come before council and then need approval later in the process when they are determined. White stated that the applicants should get the information to council sooner.

Blain-Bellamy suggested that we have a set schedule and enforce our own rules with special events. Emrick said that the policy would need to be changed.

Emrick said that this Open Carry Ordinance would come back to them for approval at a later meeting.

D. Discussion on Adoption of the 2019 Revised Preliminary FIRMS – Dennis informed Council that on June 16, 2021, the City of Conway received formal notification that the proposed flood hazard determinations affecting the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) and Flood Insurance Study (FIS) report for Horry County, and incorporated areas would become effective as of December 16, 2021, and will revise the FIRM and FIS reports that were in effect prior to that date. Our Community is required, as a condition of continued eligibility in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), to adopt or show evidence of adoption of floodplain management regulations that meet the standards of Paragraph 60.3(d) of the NFIP regulations. These are the minimum standards and do not supersede any state or local requirements of a more stringent nature. Dennis then said that staff recommends adopting the 2019 revised preliminary FIRMS in accordance with NFIP, FEMA and SC DNR regulations.

Emrick stated that this would be on Council's next agenda for approval.

E. Presentation of Recreation Funds - Orton Bellamy, Horry County Councilman – Orton Bellamy, Horry County Councilman presented the City of Conway a check for \$52,185 for their portion of the Recreation funds.

FIRST READING:

A. First Reading of Ordinance #2021-11-15 (A) adopting a revised Business License Ordinance – Williams informed Council that in September 2020, the South Carolina General Assembly adopted the South Carolina Business License Tax Standardization Act. The Act requires all municipalities and counties to utilize the Act's standardized business licensing requirements and class schedule. All cities and towns will now have a standard license year and due date, a standard application, and a standard class schedule. This new law becomes effective January 1, 2022. Williams stated that staff recommends first reading of Ordinance 2021-11-15 (A).

Motion: Goldfinch made a motion, seconded by Hubbard, to approve first reading of this request. **Vote:** Unanimous. Motion carried.

- B. First Reading of Ordinance #ZA2021-11-15 (B) to annex approximately 1 acre of property located at 3158 Cultra Rd (PIN 337-03-02-0037) and request to rezone from Horry County Residential (SF40) to City of Conway Low/Medium Density Residential District (R-1)** Hardin stated that this annexation request was approximately 1 acre of property located at 3158 Cultra Road and is being made to allow an existing residence on the property to tie into City water utility services. This property is contiguous to the Conway city limits and other properties on this street have been previously annexed. The future land use map of the Comprehensive Plan identifies this parcel as Low Density Residential and that staff recommends approval of first reading of Ordinance #ZA2021-11-15 (B).

Motion: Hubbard made a motion, seconded by White, to approve first reading of this request. **Vote:** Unanimous. Motion carried.

CONSIDERATION:

- A. Consideration of a request for Selection of Firm to Develop the City of Conway Stormwater Master Plan** – Harrelson said that the City of Conway received CDBG-MIT Grant funding in the amount of \$305,000 to perform a Stormwater Master Plan for the Public Works Department. This plan will identify current issues that require repairs or replacement while also providing the City data to apply for future grants. Staff reviewed and scored the submittals. Based upon these reviews, Davis & Floyd scored the highest. Should City Council approve the hiring of Davis & Floyd, the City would enter into negotiations for a contract for services immediately.

White asked if any of the firms were out of town. Harrelson said that none of them was local except Hanna Engineering that has a satellite office in this area.

Motion: Goldfinch made a motion, seconded by White, to approve the selection of Davis & Floyd to develop the City of Conway Stormwater Master Plan. **Vote:** Unanimous. Motion carried.

- B. Consideration of Road Resurfacing Options for Fiscal Year 21-22** – Harrelson stated that recently, the South Carolina Supreme Court issued a ruling on the collection of the Road Maintenance Fee. Horry County Government has since stopped the disbursement of this fund to local governments until a final ruling has been issued. The City of Conway typically requests a 50% match of CTC funds to assist with resurfacing City and State maintained roadways. Due to local funds not being disbursed at this time, the City has three options available for the purposes of resurfacing streets: (1) Continue to wait for the final ruling of the South Carolina Supreme Court in regards to the collection and utilization of the Road Maintenance Fee. (2) Reduce the approved resurfacing list. (3) Utilize a portion of the funds to repair City roads on the list by performing full depth patching within a 100' overlay for a smooth transition.

Hubbard asked if the streets were rated. Harrelson said yes, a list was created and they were ranked 1-4 with four being the worse.

Blain-Bellamy recused herself as she has property on the streets listed.

Goldfinch stated that so, #1 is to do nothing, #2 is resurface half the roads and #3 if to repair/patch city roads. Harrelson said yes, this is temporary until the Supreme Court issues a ruling.

- C. **Motion:** Goldfinch made a motion, seconded by Hubbard, to approve Option 3 and utilize a portion of the funds to repair City roads on the list by performing full depth patching within a 100' overlay for a smooth transition. **Vote:** Unanimous. Motion carried.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

Emrick informed Council of the following:

- Halloween was yesterday, so... Merry Christmas. While staff started working on the Celebration of Lights three weeks ago, today starts the official decorating season for Christmas and we will be decorating all the way through December.
- The Recreation Department hosted a disc golf event on last Friday night. 34 people attended and had a great time. This is a growing sport and we have been fortunate to have some very active community volunteers leading the charge.
- On Saturday, the Police Department and Fire Department played a softball game to raise funds for the Christmas Remember event that we hold each December. The Police Department squeaked by the Fire Department this go round.
- Also on Saturday, the Recreation Department held the Monster Mash. Candy, a maze, a haunted trail, games, food and more welcomed 1500 to 2000 kids and their families.
- The City Christmas Tree Lighting Celebration is scheduled for December 2 at 6 p.m. The location has moved from Third Avenue to Laurel Street in front of the Town Green.
- Tomorrow is Election Day. Good luck to all of the candidates.
- Wednesday, at 7:30, CCU is hosting a screening of SC7 a documentary about some of the amazing natural wonders of South Carolina. This will be at the Theater of the Republic.
- On Thursday evening, CCU is presenting Dr. Freeman Hrabowski in their Distinguished Speaker Lecture Series. This will be at Wheelwright Auditorium at 6 p.m. Dr. Hrabowski will discuss shared leadership and culture change on campus and in the community.
- On Saturday, November 6, there will be a Veteran's Day Celebration at the old County Courthouse.
- Sunday, November 7, is the Holiday Open House downtown. It is a great chance to get a jump on holiday shopping.
- Our annual City Christmas Card competition is open right now and closes on November 8. If you have any children, aged 5-12, now is their chance to show off their creativeness and help the City celebrate Christmas.
- We will have the dedication of the Mural on Scarborough Alley on November 10 at Noon. The Mayor, City Council and City Employees who have worked on the mural are invited to attend.

- The City is closed on November 11 for Veteran's Day. There will be no residential garbage collection this day. There will be a double route on Friday the 12 to make up.
- On November 13, we will host Coastal Carolina University's Homecoming Parade, for I think, the first time ever! It will line up on Marina Drive and follow the Celebration of Lights route backwards. The best viewing areas for the public will be along Third Avenue from Shelley's Seafood to Laurel Street and then down Laurel Street to Elm. We will have the vintage firetruck in the parade for the Mayor and City Council to ride on.
- December's calendar is even crazier than November's. Follow our Social Media channels and Access Channel to stay abreast of what is going on in Conway!
- The Riverwalk in front of the Lower River Warehouse is currently closed. Tripp Nealy is set to begin demolition of the existing building to make way for the new building to take its place.
- I had a question recently from a councilperson about the Code Red system. I wanted to give a brief update. As you know, the Code Red system is used for in-progress events to notify specific areas of major issues. We use it for "shots fired" calls to notify an area of possible gunfire. If we are chasing a subject on foot, we give a description via Code Red and ask the public to call if they see anything suspicious. On rare occasions, we do a general public safety notice of why we are in their area and if necessary ask the public to shelter in place until potential danger has passed. Then we issue an all clear via Code Red as well. Code Red is an opt in system and we ask any interested members of the public to subscribe. Details are on the City's website. There are currently just under 2000 people enrolled.
- Finally, I wanted to brief you quickly on fire and police hotspots. As you know, we track all calls and map them every week showing areas of concentration of calls, etc. First, I want to show you the month of October for Police and where the concentration of their calls come from. As you can see, Walmart, Conway High School, 9th Avenue and Church Street, Fourth and Third Street area, Janette and 701S and student housing near Coastal. These are not just criminal complaints, but also traffic accidents, etc.

Just looking at Traffic Accident data, you can see what once was the most dangerous intersection in the City, East Cox Ferry and 501, is no longer the hot spot. SCDOT made intersection improvements there after consulting with Chief Long and the intersection has improved tremendously. The biggest area of concern is the stretch of Church Street between 16th and Mill Pond. This section of road has continuously been one of the most dangerous. There are far too many curb cuts providing ingress and egress points, the center turn lane created conflict points with every turn, and there is limited frontage road availability to avoid these conflicts to reach traffic signals. This is a section of road to next work with SCDOT to improve.

For Fire, the majority of calls come from areas of student housing and secondarily from the same area that police noted in the area of Fourth and Third streets.

Using data like this, we can identify areas to focus efforts of enforcement and improvement.

COUNCIL INPUT:

Jordan congratulated Smith and the Conway Sports and Fitness Center for a job well done on the Monster Mash event this past weekend with 2000 people attending. The golf cart parade had a huge crowd and the carts were over the top. He then wished all the candidates good luck in the election tomorrow and encouraged everyone to get out and vote.

Timbes seconded Jordan's motion and encouraged everyone to get out and vote. She then said that it takes strength and courage to have your name on that ballot and hoped everyone goes out to support their choices.

White asked who authorized so many vape shops to open in our area, as they are located at Ninth Avenue, Sixteenth Avenue, near the High School, on 544 and Mill Pond. Emrick said Council as that is what is stated in our ordinance and state legislature, who prevents us from being able to limit it. They are commercial businesses, we have no way of separating them from a cigar shop, and that makes it difficult to limit. White encouraged the Chamber to bring a Save A Lot Grocery store to Conway, like in Florence on 103 E. Darlington Street. White recommended that we utilize Mr. McQueen of World Community Magazine and Radio 1330 to get information out to everyone in the city. White stated that in reference to Whittemore Elementary School (WES) that we need to have more of these community meetings, possibly in the four areas of the city as we used to do. He said we needed to do better with a PA system, as it was hard to hear. He would also like to have more conversations around the public/private discussion regarding Whittemore Elementary School. White said that we need to get the asbestos out of WES as soon as possible, as that has to be done before the building can be torn down. He then stated that the City of Conway was a council form of government where Council deemed to do what is necessary for the community and then that is sent on to Administrator. He said that he got that from the City's webpage and that not everyone is going there to get the information that they need so whenever we can get information out to the public for clarity then we should be doing that.

Goldfinch said that while being out in the community within the last few weeks, that we do have a need for more transparency and more communication. He said that we are not perfect and there are not seven perfect people that will sit in these seats. He said that sometimes when you get into this role you take things for granted and assume that others know. He said that is an error and he was guilty, many others are guilty and those that come after him will be guilty of the same thing. He said that he was at the meeting last Wednesday and heard a lot of concerns and he was thinking in the back of his mind that we are not doing that, we are doing this, but he said that you didn't know that and that is our fault. He then said he was sorry and that we can do better. He said that several weeks ago he talked about how he wanted the city to be more proactive as it relates to Conway High School. Another vision he has is how we can better communicate what is going on, what are visions are, what our beliefs are. People want information. Whether they like it or dislike it and that is fair. He said that we all have room to grow in that area. After leaving that meeting Wednesday and talking to folks around Conway that seems to be placed on my heart. He said that we have a great city, with lots of people with vast cultural differences that we can tap in to and we should. Regardless of what it looks like after tomorrow, I feel that we should move in that path.

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Hubbard invited everyone to attend the Veterans Day Celebration this Saturday. He then congratulated Chief Hendrick on another award. He then reiterated for everyone to get out and vote and to vote for him.

Timbes then piggy backed on the vape shops and asked that there must be rules and regulations against all the lights that are up around the outside of these buildings. Emrick said that staff would look into them.

Blain-Bellamy said that she has been sitting her seeking words of wisdom and looking for words to calm tempers and make people feel better about each other. She said that we live in a complex society, many things to be considered, often times reasonable people will disagree, and she believes that is why God gave each of us a brain and a heart. She said that as we move forward and all consideration for the Whittemore Elementary School and everything else that comes before this Council, she thinks we can just be gentler with each other. She said that not every word that is said that is opposite of what one person believes is intended in any harmful way but just as one person has a right to say what they think is best, the other does too. She hopes we can all work together and there is room for some compromise and she thinks this is a chance for us to show that we are Conway strong. She hopes that we can take a deep breath, approach each other with the expectation that we will tell the truth and it will make for a better community for us all. She said that she loves Whittemore Elementary School but \$14 plus million is too much to invest to save a building. She said she has a right to think that way and that you have a right to fight to keep what you believe is important enough to spend that kind of money. However, she hates that so often questions that come before Council tend to divide the good-hearted people of Conway. She said that she doesn't think it has to be that way and that we can agree to disagree and then we can work together to see what makes the most sense for everyone involved. She just asks that we all work to satisfy a legacy, history, a certain culture and she believes that we will show the world who we are.

Blain Bellamy said she is proud of Conway, how fall was presented, and the way Christmas will be presented, and that we are getting past Covid 19. She then said that she was reminded today of what a little bit of kindness can do for someone as young Robert Cooper walked in through this door today. She said that they had an encounter when he was six years old. She said that she had suddenly become a widow and she was so distraught and at the City Christmas Party that he came up to her and said Mrs. Barbara you could use a hug. She said that changed her life. She then said that we need to give more hugs and pray for people who ultimately make the decisions and we need impress upon them what we believe in strongly but we do not have to hate them when they feel differently than we do.

ADJOURNMENT: **Motion:** White made a motion, seconded by Hubbard, to adjourn the meeting. **Vote:** Unanimous. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Minutes approved by City Council this 15 day of November 2021.



Alicia Shelley, City Clerk