

**MINUTES
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 2013
6:30 P.M.**

{Summary minutes of City Council meeting. Audio tapes of the meeting are on file and are included by reference as part of this meeting. An agenda of this meeting has been either mailed or made available to persons, organizations and local news media as per their request. The agenda gives the date, time and place of the meeting as well as the order of business. This disclosure is in compliance with the South Carolina Code of Laws of 1976, Section 30-4-80 (e).}

The regular meeting of City Council was held on Tuesday, June 18, 2013 at 6:30 P.M. in the City Municipal Building with the following present:

COUNCIL: Mayor Pro Tem Robert Garner; Councilmembers Tommie L. Hill, Sr., Yates Giles; Ricky Todd Harris and Jim Wilson. Mayor Harold Thompson was absent due to attending a business meeting. Councilmember Orangelow Ruff was absent due to illness.

CITY ATTORNEY: Billy Whitney

DEPARTMENTAL STAFF: Gloria Rogers, Municipal Clerk/Personnel Director; Sam White, - Public Safety Director; Joe Nichols – Utility Director; Perry Harmon – Public Service Director; Sam White – Public Safety Director; Gregg Pickens – Captain; Mike Petrie – Maintenance Shop Director and Laura Hembree – Accounting Supervisor. Walker Gallman – Finance Director was absent (annual leave).

NEWS MEDIA: Graham Williams – Union County News, Mike Stevens – WBCU and Charles Warner – Union Times.

OTHERS: Greg Parker, Will Boyles, Bob Love, Howard Gibson, Brooks Carwile, William Rochester, Gloria Carwile, Rose Chewning, Jean V. Harris, Marsha Jordan, Ray Treadway, Joanne Parris and Pete Berry.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Garner called the meeting to order. Councilmember Hill gave the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was given by all present. The roll was called by Municipal Clerk Gloria Rogers.

2. MINUTES

A. Tuesday, May 21, 2013 Public Hearing

MOTION by Councilmember Wilson to approve minutes.
SECOND by Councilmember Harris.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Tuesday, May 21, 2013 Regular Meeting

MOTION by Councilmember Harris to approve minutes.
SECOND by Councilmember Giles.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- C. Tuesday, June 4, 2013 Public Hearing

MOTION by Councilmember Harris to approve minutes.
SECOND by Councilmember Wilson.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- D. Tuesday, June 4, 2013 Special Council Meeting

MOTION by Councilmember Harris to approve minutes.
SECOND by Councilmember Hill.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. **COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Monthly Reports

MOTION by Councilmember Wilson to accept monthly reports.
SECOND by Councilmember Harris.

Councilmember Giles asked what does “aircraft standby” mean in the Public Safety Department’s report. Chief White states that this is the number of times the fire department goes to City Park for helicopter landing, that flies patient from Wallace Thomson Hospital.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- B. Union Events Center Update – Bob Love/Gregg Parker

Bob Love, Chairman of the Board of the Union Events Center gave an update on the Events Center. Mr. Love states that the original goal to build the center was a little over 3.6 million dollars. The Board has increased its goal to 3.8 million dollars. The purpose of that increase is to offset the expenses that First Community Development is costing to help raise the money for the center. The update as of today is pledges in excess of 3.2 million dollars (80%) of goal. Mr. Love next discussed the structure of the campaign and where they are in each segment. First Community is a three-prong fund raising approach. The first approach is called the advance division. The division asks for support from larger corporate citizens from Timken, Dollar General, Haemonetics and BMW and all industries like that. The large industries have shown great support and the Board has had promising meetings with AT&T, International Paper and with BMW and upcoming meetings with Dollar General and Haemonitics. That will complete the large industry portion. The second layer of the campaign is called the “Leadership Division” and that is what First Community calls Main Street Businesses or maybe calls them Duncan By-Pass businesses. It is restaurants, stores, hotels, body shops; the medium to small size businesses that are located here in Union County and that campaign is underway. A meeting was held last week with 18 volunteers and they have each agreed that they would help set up appointments to go to some of the mid-size businesses and ask them for support. The third part of the campaign is called “Friends and Family” where they will go to individuals in the community and ask them to support the Center. Two socials have been held so far and there are five more planned. That campaign is well underway also. The Union Events Center Board has visited with six different Event Centers throughout the upstate. They are Tryon, Mauldin, Greenwood, Fountain Inn, Abbeville and Newberry. The Board has taken the best practices from the Centers such as what are they doing right that Union can emulate. The

second thing is that the Board has asked them to share their financial information and they been very supportive of what they are trying to do. The Union Events Center Board has created a pro-formal income statement, their best forecast based on what information was obtained from other centers and the board's best estimate. The Center will serve as an economic driver for this area. The population of this area has decreased by 3,000 persons since the 2000 census. Mr. Love feels that it is a good time for growth. The Events Center will help Union compete with others. The closing of Greenwood Events Center was briefly discussed. He states that Greenwood Events Center was not able to sustain the center because it was basically built to large and was built in the wrong place. Mr. Love discussed a letter and fact sheet to Council from concerned citizens in the area. The citizens are asking City Council to suspend funding of the Union Events Center project until a solid business plan is presented and public support of city taxpayers is established. Mr. Love addressed issues that were mentioned in the letter. Parking for the Events Center and the downtown merchants being open at night during events at the Events Center were briefly discussed. Personnel cost for the center was also discussed. Mr. Love states that the person who runs the Union Events Center is critical because the successful Centers have outstanding managers. Mr. Love concluded by stating that he has been involved in the project for two and a half years and he has had important positions with large corporations across America and he knows how to run a PNL. He also states that he has worked hard making sure that what they show the citizens is completely transparent.

Gregg Parker of First Community Development addressed Council regarding Councilmember Giles comment about the Greenwood Civic Center closing. Mr. Parker states that there were four things the board learned about Greenwood Civics Center in not being successful. The things are as follows: center being the wrong size, being built in the wrong location, bad management and poor programming.

Councilmember Wilson asked Mr. Love whose responsibility it would be to pay the bills if the Event Center doesn't make a profit or break even. Mr. Love states that the first thing for the Events Center would do is change the programming such as taking out all possible cost in order to break even. The City has "The Hospitality Tax" which is not listed as a source of income in the Union Events Center in their pro-formal. Mr. Love states that Mayor Thompson has been clear in informing the Union Events Center Board that there would not be any tax increases relating to the Union Events Center.

Councilmember Harris asked Mr. Love to explain the twenty-four (24) weddings on the handout. Mr. Love states that he had a professional usage study done, a lady from Winston Salem come down and met with event planners and asked those types of questions specifically. The latest information is that one wedding planner came and commented that she had four (4) weddings planned for June. All four couples will be married in Union Churches; all four couples went or will go to Spartanburg for their receptions. That is just one wedding planner. Councilmember Harris and Mr. Love also discussed using the High School for dance recitals vs. the Union Events Center. Most of the numbers on the handout came from the usage study.

Gregg Parker again addressed Council by answering a previous question asked by Councilmember Wilson as to whether the Events Center is in the red. Mr. Parker states that if population continues to decline and something is not done to reverse that trend, the burden just gets heavier on the folks that are here. The purpose of business is not to turn around the economic condition of a community. When businesses come to locate, they want to locate where there is a good quality of life for their employees so their employees will stay, so there is not a revolving door. Mr. Parker also states

that these are the challenges that Council faces and will face until things start to turn around which is on the mind of the Board. Mr. Parker states that in his opinion, there needs to be a comprehensive plan to take all the great assets of the community such as the Arts Council, the Museum, the Tourism Commission, the City and County and different groups because they all are great assets in Union. There could be an exhibit of art relative to the Civil War Reenactment at night pertaining to the Civil War enactment and plays by Boogaloo at this facility as well as different dance recital groups performing each night. Mr. Parker states that tourism is going to be the driver and the Union Events Center is an opportunity for Union.

4. **BUSINESS**

A. DISCUSSION/MOTION – PUBLIC SAFETY PATROL CAR

Chief Sam White states that during the 2013/2014 City of Union Budget Meeting the Public Safety Department asked Council to consider adding one patrol vehicle to the fleet for the next six years. Several benefits were presented to Council in support of this request. Council decided that if the Public Safety Department was under budget in the current fiscal year by the requested amount, council would consider funding the vehicle out of the 2012-2013 Public Safety Budget. The estimated cost for the vehicle is \$38,900.00. Staff recommendation is to table item until staff can reconcile the year end (June 30, 2013) and then bring the request back to council.

MOTION by Councilmember Wilson to table item until all the numbers are finalized.

SECOND by Councilmember Harris.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. DISCUSSION/MOTION – BOARD VACANCY – MUNICIPAL ELECTION COMMISSION

Mayor Pro Tem Robert Garner states that there is one (1) vacancy on the City of Union Municipal Election Commission Board due to the unfortunate death of Marion Fant. The opening was advertised in the Union Daily Times on May 1st and 4th, 2013 and one letter of interest was received. Staff recommends that we appoint Melissa Brown the vacancy to the City of Union Municipal Election Commission Board.

MOTION by Councilmember Hill to accept recommendation.

SECOND by Councilmember Giles.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. **ANNOUNCEMENT BY MAYOR & COUNCIL**

Councilmember Harris states that he is glad to see so many people at the council meeting tonight.

6. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

A. Please address the Mayor and Council from the lectern and state your name and address for the record. (Please limit your comment to 3-6 minutes)

Louis Jordan, Sr., 100 Eastwood Avenue addressed Council. Mr. Jordan states that he is the person who distributed the letter regarding the Union

Events Center. He delivered the letter to each councilmember. He states that he is really surprised the downtown merchants were not consulted in the discussion about the Events Center. Mr. Jordan states that he is not against the Events Center; however, he feels this project will have a difficult time supporting itself. He also states that there is no plan in our city and county as to how change the direction that we are going. Mr. Jordan asks City Council to put together some type of strategic plan or some sort of development so that the citizens can all buy into the project.

Ray Treadway, 404 Toney Road addressed council. Mr. Treadway states that he is not against the Union Events Center; however, he is concerned about the Events Center and the steps that the City needs to take in order to turn Union around. The Events Center looks like a great opportunity for Union but at this point, is it the right move that council needs to take to turn Union around. He also states that he agrees with what Mr. Jordan said. Mr. Treadway urges council to come together and not listen to someone on the outside to try to tell the City what it needs. He suggest talking to the people who are in attendance today that were never consulted, that never was asked the question about the Union Events Center or how their businesses is doing. He also states that there are businesses that have been in business over 20 years who are looking to shut their doors. He states that as a business owner, he urges council to take the project under strict scrutiny and that he would love to have an Events Center but is it viable at this particular point. Mr. Treadway states that the decisions that council makes will affect the entire community and that the citizens voted for council to make the right decision.

Brookes Carwile, 301 Glendale Road addressed Council. He states that he wants to bring out a few facts which are economic indications. Mr. Carwile states that recently the City recycling center, which is controlled by the County, shut down because of poor participation and that is going to reflect on the Union Events Center. Poor participation with the recycling center means you are going to see poor participation with the Union Events Center. Mr. Carwile states that Greenwood was mentioned. He states that Greenwood has over 70,000 people and they shut down their Events Center in 2009. He also states that he went on the BI-LO Center's website and for 5 months, they have a 6% usage rate. He is also concerned about the parking for senior citizens. Mr. Carwile states that from what he can see, there is not adequate parking for them. He states that the Events Center will increase taxes and force more people out of Union. He suggest that the City and County and the citizens of Union use existing facilities as we have been using over the last 50 years. The facilities are the Elks Club, the National Guard Armory, the Veterans Park and the Jonesville Auditorium as well as nice churches. He feels that the Union Events Center will not be a positive asset for Union.

Marsha Jordon, 418 East Main Street addressed Council. She states that Mr. Love keeps bringing up studies that have been done in the past. Ms. Jordan states that things changed for her in 2008 when the economy took a bad turn. She state that the Charrette, which was done in 2003 is the basis for the Union Events Center. She also states that Mr. Love actually headed up a group on the economic indicators report in 2006. She does not think the numbers have improved; if anything, they have actually declined. She would like for Council to consider this information while looking at the Union Events Center Project.

Joanne Parris, 104 Parris Lane addressed council. She feels that the citizens in the City needs to have some type of vote for the Union Events Center in the form of a referendum. She states that she has talked to some of the dance studios and that they will not need several nights for performance, but only one night because of the decorations and props. She does not feel that the Union Dance Companies are going to use the Union Events Center. Also Ms. Parris feels that the Events Center will cost the taxpayers.

7. **ADJOURNMENT:**

MOTION by Councilmember Wilson to adjourn.
SECOND by Councilmember Giles.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Council meeting adjourned at 7:42 P.M.

Gloria J. Rogers, CMC
Municipal Clerk

Minutes approved _____ 2013

