

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, February 4, 2019

9:00 a.m.

Municipal Complex, Committee Meeting Room, 3rd Floor

100 Ann Edwards Lane, Mount Pleasant, SC 29464

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Guang Ming Whitley, Chair, Kevin Cunnane, and Tom O'Rourke

STAFF PRESENT: Eric DeMoura, Town Administrator

ALSO PRESENT: Maryanne Albrecht

1. Approval of Minutes from the [December 3, 2018](#) meeting

Mr. Cunnane stated that he would like to speak on this for a moment. He said that in the minutes there are a couple of mistakes and he does not want to take thirty minutes to re-write them but wanted to make note on the record that these somehow do not come out very clear and leave it at that.

Mr. O'Rourke asked if they were mistakes or are they things Mr. Cunnane may feel are omitted that should be in.

Mr. Cunnane stated that one of them – really there are a couple of places where it just looks fuzzy and it does not make sense and it is just the way they are transcribed. He does not know why that is, but it is not material to anything major and does not want to spend thirty minutes re-writing the minutes here today.

Ms. Whitley thanked Mr. Cunnane for raising this issue and knows that there are other committees that are looking at how we can maybe solve this problem with regards to the minutes and have it go towards the audio transcript so that people can hear exactly what was said.

Mr. O'Rourke stated that this is not going to be cheap. He stated that this is being discussed in Police, Legal and Judicial (committee).

Ms. Whitley said, not today.

Mr. DeMoura said a meeting or two ago, there was discussion. He said the Town records every meeting, so instead of transcribing the votes and all the content, just the votes would be transcribed and attached to the recording of the meeting. That way, it gets rid of all clarity issues and saves a lot of time.

Mr. O'Rourke stated that he knows this is not the meeting for this and this will be the last thing he says, and that it makes sense, because then anyone can see every single thing that is said. He gets this. One of the issues that concerns him though is that it will then eliminate the opportunity for any citizen to go on the website and pull up a synopsis of what really went on. He thinks this is kind of important for the citizens to be able to see an overview, and then if they want to go into the elaborate minutes, he gets it. Again, this is not the meeting for this, but it was brought up. He said this is just his two cents and he will leave it to the Committee, because we have smart Council members.

Mr. Cunnane said, for example, it says that he said he is not on the Transportation Committee. He said he is, in fact, on the Transportation Committee. He said it is all about this Long Point and the bike-ability. He just wants to make clear, because somewhere in there (the minutes), it sounds like he is not in favor of it, I think. He made clear at the Council Retreat and will make clear again at this meeting that he is in favor of making sure that we have bikeable access to Beckham. So, if the kids, especially the kids in Mount Pleasant, who are in biking distance to that school should be going to that school and that helps those families and it helps all the people who have to suffer through the traffic problems of Long Point and 17 every day. He just wanted to make that clear and there is no need to go through and re-write the minutes.

Mr. O'Rourke made a motion to approve the minutes; seconded by Ms. Whitley.

Mr. Cunnane was opposed. Ms. Whitley and Mr. O'Rourke were in favor. Motion carries 2-1 to approve the December 3, 2018 minutes.

2. Public Comments

Bobby Simmons, 1305 Woodlock Road, Laurel Lakes, stated that he just found out about this meeting right before the weekend and how Council is going to send a letter for the (Lucy) Beckham (High School) zoning. He heard this morning that this letter was going to specifically cut out neighborhoods by name; Belle Hall. He said while he does 100% think that Belle Hall should be zoned for Beckham, he thinks that Council showing favoritism to any one neighborhood is wrong to other people like them who had to fight to get zoned to Moultrie. He would hate to have to go to the meetings, especially the meeting this Wednesday and then have a letter saying that Belle Hall should go and everyone else should just pray. He said if it is a thing about crossing (US Highway) 17, then there is a whole lot of area in this Town that should not go, including the islands (Isle of Palms and Sullivan's Island). He said that those are his thoughts.

3. Presentation regarding Saving Our Youth Seminar

Will Haynie, 316 Mallard Court, said last year, Maryanne and a group of people came to the Town and wanted to know if the Town would be interested in a public forum about opioid abuse, bullying and teen suicide, child sex abuse and human trafficking. He said that both the Governor of South Carolina and the President of the United States have declared a State of Emergency on opioid abuse and it is a health issue, a police issue, a public safety issue and all of those things. He said he thought it would be a good thing for the Town of Mount Pleasant to be involved and to put this on, and it turns out that many of the experts we need are right here on our own Police force. He said that Chief Ritchie has provided a great amount of help, and any expenses for this has been approved by Council with the Mayor's discretionary fund that is already budgeted. He said he can think of no better expense than something that saves our next generation. He said he will talk a little bit about the setup. It is on Saturday, March 9, 2019 and it will be in one hour segments so

that you do not have to sit all day. He said you can pick which segment you want to attend. He said you will need to register. "Wake Up Carolina", which is Nancy Shipman's group, has been a leader from the private sector in community awareness about this issue. He said they will handle the registration not the Town. He said the Cooper River Room will be the venue and some of the Town's Police Department will participate. Some of the Town's police experts on mental health issues, danger signs for what apps you may find on your teenager's cell phone and those types of issues. He said there are panel members who can provide the information the public needs. He said they are trying to build community. He added that there will be food trucks there, a break for lunch, and they want people to get to know each other, share their experience or what their needs are, or where to get resources. He said it will be a great day for Mount Pleasant. He said the Governor has been invited as well as Representatives from other cities. He said this event succeeds simply by the community having this conversation and admitting in public that this conversation needs to be had. He said all the other outcomes pale in comparison to the community standing up and doing this.

Maryanne Albrecht, 6429 Come About Way, Awendaw, stated that she still considers Mount Pleasant her town. She stated that she was raised in Mount Pleasant, graduated from Moultrie High School, and came back to teach East of the Cooper for 33 years. She said you can imagine what she has seen over the years and it breaks her heart to see what is happening to our youth. She is here to ask for the Town's support and hopes that she will not be preaching to the choir. She said we must talk this out in the community. She asked for the Town to please help them invite residents, especially those that have problems or problem children. She said they want them to know they are not in this alone and there is help. As the Mayor said earlier, we have some wonderful panel guests and will have an informal discussion. She said instead of having a table up front, they are hoping to have a sofa and several chairs and possibly a coffee table. She said there will only be a few minutes at the end for public questions and hopes that most of them will be answered within the discussions from the moderators. She said on Human Trafficking, Brooke

Mosteller Burris, who was a Miss South Carolina, is very involved in Human Trafficking. She said if the Town thinks there have been no incidences of Human Trafficking here East of the Cooper, think again. She knows that Council does not have their heads in the sand. She asked Committee members to help them reach out. She said it is a long day, but there is a nice lunch break with food trucks. She said a Saturday is worth saving a child. She asked to help support this worthy cause.

Ms. Whitley stated that this will be a great opportunity for the citizens in the Town to learn about what they can do to provide support.

4. Approval of letter to Moultrie District 2 concerning Beckham High School zoning

Mr. O'Rourke asked the previous speaker (Bobby Simmons), where he resides.

Mr. Simmons stated that he is in a neighborhood off of Venning Road. He said they are .6 miles away from Beckham, on the other side of US 17.

Mr. O'Rourke stated that Mr. Simmons point, which he believes is valid, is that the Town should not be singling out individual subdivisions or neighborhoods. He said if we want to talk about the effects of traffic, or talk about proximity or things such as this, that is one thing. However, the letter that this Committee has in draft form reads as if this Committee is saying, "neighborhoods on Long Point". He said they do signify Belle Hall as one individually. He was wondering if the letter could be written to say the same thing without Belle Hall being in there. He stated that if the issue is traffic and not having the Long Point residents go to US17, he believes it makes sense. He said perhaps stating, "the Long Point subdivision" would be acceptable. He would caution the Town telling the School Board what to do. He said what is definitely the Town's jurisdiction is the alleviation of traffic in our Town. He thinks that as they are about to change something that is certainly going to affect traffic in this Town, that the Town should be able to be involved. However, he agrees with Mr. Simmons that we should not be singling out an individual subdivision.

Mr. Simmons stated that it makes perfect sense that Belle Hall would be zoned for Beckham. He said no kid should have to drive past a high school to go to another high school. But at the same time, in the last zoning for the middle school, when you have homes on Ben Sawyer Boulevard get zoned originally to go all the way to Laing instead of right down the road to Moultrie, that made no sense. He said we are going to have both the islands (Isle of Palms and Sullivan's Island), come out and they will have their people write letters in support of them. He said Whitesides is getting left behind with the first maps last time. He said their fear is that they will have people driving past their house from the island heading to Beckham while their kids drive twelve times further away to go to Wando, which would be insane. He said anyone who is in close proximity should be going to Beckham. He said there are going to be winners and losers and they built the school too small for the area.

Mr. Cunnane said he thinks an easy way to address this is, this basically started from Belle Hall Elementary School parents, not necessarily the Belle Hall neighborhood. He said this may be where the confusion is. He said the Belle Hall Elementary School serves an area which is almost entirely bike-able to Beckham, so it is really about that Belle Hall zone, as opposed to the Belle Hall neighborhood. He said it is not singling them out and giving them the benefit. As far as the issue of island traffic passing Mr. Simmons' house on Venning, he has that same concern. He said the way to solve this is to have the Isle of Palms head up to Wando in a reverse commute that does not affect our commuters every day. But, we are not here to tell them what to do. We are here to say, we have two failing roads. He lived with one of their bad decisions approximately three years ago, rezoning River Towne into Jenny Moore. He said they dumped all those cars onto failing (Highway) 41 and the Town did nothing. He said while it was going on, they (the Town), just acted like this was not happening. He said this happens a lot when you live up on that end of Town. He feels for these people, and it is not going to affect his family, because his kids are going to go to Wando no matter what. He stated that we are defending the people in our Town. The people on Sullivan's Island and people on the Isle of Palms had their elected representatives fighting

tooth and nail for the last year over these zones and the Town did not engage. He said on the High School, we need to engage. He said it is time. We should not allow the larger municipality to be bullied by two islands that want their kids with all the wealthy kids together or whatever their agenda is, while our residents are getting screwed by the system. He said they (residents) came to him and to Town Council and they are asking for help on the traffic issue and the bike-ability of the zone. That is all this is about, not about picking sides or anything else, but about common sense. He said the other elected officials that have constituents affected by this, have engaged and it is time for the Town to engage.

Ms. Whitley stated that the concern she had from the beginning was that she did not want to pit Mount Pleasant neighborhoods against one another. She did not want this letter to generate that kind of controversy of putting Belle Hall versus Whitesides. She did not want that to happen. She said she knows Mr. Cunnane had said this was not the purpose of the letter and her concern is that the letter, as drafted, actually does create that sort of impression. She said she does not know if there is a way to adjust the letter and update it and talk more about the issues that Mr. O'Rourke raised as well as about bike-ability, and close proximity.

Mr. DeMoura stated that if it is okay with the Chair and members of the Committee, staff can simply remove a reference to Belle Hall and just make reference to nearby neighborhoods, closest in proximity to the new Lucy Beckham High School. He said staff can rearrange the language in the sentence of the first paragraph, as well as the first sentence in the last paragraph to have more of a proximity approach to it rather than a specific neighborhood approach. He said they can have this ready for signature sometime today.

Ms. Whitley stated that this would be great and thanked staff. She stated that because this letter was already approved by Council at the Council Retreat, she does think this Committee needs any sort of motion or anything on the table regarding that.

Mr. DeMoura responded in the affirmative.

Mr. O'Rourke asked Mr. Cunnane if this works if we do this; to leave the letter the same but take out the Belle Hall reference and talk about all communities.

Mr. Cunnane said it is okay with him, because he wants the letter to go out. He thinks it is a little bit absurd to have thirty emails asking for this and we have the Mayor saying, "Well, I do not know if somebody is going to be upset. We do not know what they are going to do", and we are throwing doubt on this. He said this is such an easy decision. He said, yes, the proximity is fine, because this gentleman (Mr. Simmons), brings up a valid point about Venning Road and he thinks he brings up a valid point that we might want to do one specifically about the traffic from the islands. He said if that traffic on (US Highway) 17 is going in the opposite direction, the commuting traffic does not have to sit in the same traffic with them. Is it three miles longer, yes, but they (islands), are not impacting the choke-hold that is Boone Hall, US 17 bottleneck every day. So, Long Point to 41 on 17 is stopped and it is stopped in accordance with traffic direction. He said the commuting mornings, it is stopped going southbound and commuting afternoons, it is stopped going northbound. He said his (Mr. Simmons) point is a valid one, but at some point, we have to take a stand and say, "well, it makes more sense for the people close to the school and it makes more sense for Isle of Palms to go to Wando". He said everybody seems to be walking on eggshells about taking a stand. He does not understand it. He said this is about our citizens, not about pitting one against the other. It is about common sense and a group from outside the Town who has disproportionate representation on the Constituent Board. He stated that they have the same voice on the Constituent Board in a Town of, I do not know what their population is, but we are probably five or ten times larger than they are and we have the same representation. He stated that it is undemocratic. He said we are a voice for our people and we can do this letter and take a stand and do the right thing.

5. Adjourn

There being no further business, meeting adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Ashe
February 4, 2019