

**GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
JUNE 3, 2014
4:38 p.m.
County Square - Conference Room D**

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place and agenda was posted on the bulletin board at County Square and posted on the County's web page for all media and concerned citizens to access and review.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

CHAIRMAN BOB TAYLOR
VICE CHAIRMAN WILLIS MEADOWS
SID CATES
JOE DILL *arrived at 4:40 p.m.*
XANTHENE NORRIS
JIM BURNS

FRED PAYNE
LIZ SEMAN
BUTCH KIRVEN
JOE BALDWIN
LOTTIE GIBSON

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

NONE

STAFF PRESENT:

JOE KERNELL, County Administrator
MARK TOLLISON, County Attorney
JOHN HANSLEY, Deputy County Administrator
THERESA KIZER, Clerk to Council
REGINA MCCASKILL, Deputy Clerk to Council
PAULA GUCKER, Assistant County Administrator, Public Works
SHANNON HERMAN, Assistant to the County Administrator
BOB MIHALIC, Governmental Relations Officer
SANDRA YUDICE, Assistant to the County Administrator
JEFF WILE, Assistant County Attorney

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bob Taylor

INVOCATION

Councilor Sid Cates

Item (3)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

ACTION: Councilor Norris moved to approve the minutes of the Committee of the Whole meeting of May 20, 2014.

Motion carried unanimously by all County Council Members present.

Item (4)

SUNDAY ON-PREMISES ALCOHOL SALES REFERENDUM

The motion on the floor called for a referendum to determine whether the South Carolina Department of Revenue may issue temporary permits to allow for the sale of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption on Sundays in the unincorporated area of the County of Greenville.

Councilor Baldwin asked for clarification on whether or not incorporated and unincorporated voters would vote on the referendum

Chairman Taylor stated all Greenville County citizens would vote on the referendum. He then asked if a fee was set up for the establishments.

Mr. Tollison stated the Department of Revenue would govern the costs and the revenues from the temporary permits.

Councilor Burns stated during a recent hospitality group presentation pertaining to the amount of employees and the economic impact of those individuals, it was determined that Greenville County was at an economic disadvantage because of Sunday alcohol sales. He stated if the referendum passed, each business could decide if they wanted to sell alcohol on Sundays. He stated every municipality in Greenville County had already passed the Sunday alcohol sales by referendum. If passed, the growth of the Hospitality and Accommodation Taxes would increase by the growth of sales. He stated Sunday alcohol sales were one of the main drivers for annexation within the municipalities. Councilor Burns encouraged everyone to vote in favor of the referendum to allow businesses the opportunity to sell alcohol on Sundays.

Chairman Taylor stated over 10,000 people were killed by drunken drivers in South Carolina every year. He stated in 2010, there were 211 children between 0 – 14 killed in South Carolina, and that number had remained constant. Although some people may benefit economically, he felt Greenville County probably paid more in supporting individuals addicted to alcohol and society as a whole paid much more than that. He stated prohibiting sales was more important than monetary gain. He stated he would vote in opposition to the proposed.

Councilor Burns stated although he agreed with the concern of drunk drivers, alcohol was already available in every municipality.

Councilor Payne asked if convenience stores were currently able to sell alcohol in the County on Sundays.

Mr. Tollison stated currently there were two temporary permits: one for on premise consumption (e.g restaurant) and one for off-premise (e.g. convenience stores).

Councilor Payne asked was there a prohibition for alcohol sales on and off premises.

Mr. Tollison stated on and off premises alcohol sales and temporary permits were currently prohibited in the unincorporated areas of Greenville County.

Councilor Payne stated although he would not serve alcohol at his home, he knew if people wanted to drink they would find a way.

Councilor Kirven asked would the proposed item allow alcohol sales in grocery stores.

Mr. Tollison stated the proposed item was for on premise consumption only.

Councilor Kirven asked what the requirements were for approval of off premise alcohol sells.

Mr. Tollison stated a separate question on the ballot would allow for the option to sell alcohol at off premise stores.

Councilor Kirven stated it would make sense to include off premise alcohol sales too.

Councilor Dill stated he had a hard time supporting Sunday alcohol sales. The State was considering a law to prohibit alcohol sales on Election Day; if passed, he questioned if the item would supersede the State's law. He stated he was not in favor of the proposed item.

Mr. Tollison stated the item on the table was only relating to Sunday alcohol sales.

ACTION: Councilor Kirven moved to hold the item to explore the options of off premise alcohol sales.

Councilor Seman asked what was needed to make the November ballot deadline.

Mr. Tollison stated the item required two more readings and a public hearing. He stated there were two County Council meetings scheduled (June 17th and July 8th) before the August 15th ballot deadline.

Councilor Seman stated it would make sense to include off premise alcohol sales too.

Councilor Gibson stated no one forced anyone to drink alcohol and she did not agree with prohibiting Sunday alcohol sales.

ACTION: Councilor Gibson called for the question.

Motion to call the question carried unanimously by all County Council Members.

Motion to hold the proposed ordinance in committee carried unanimously by all County Council Members.

Item (5) ADVISORY REFERENDUM ON COUNTY OPERATING MILLAGE

The motion on the floor called for an Advisory Referendum on the question of reducing the Ad Valorem Property Tax Millage Rate levied for Greenville County Government Operations.

Chairman Taylor stated this was a resolution not an ordinance.

Councilor Meadows stated each year the County had an excess of funds over what was actually needed. He stated if the County collected more than what was needed, the amount charged should be reduced. Although the approximate \$2 million impact on the budget was not an excessive amount, a reduction of the millage was a modest way of giving back to the citizens. He stated the issue at hand would not affect the County's surplus.

Councilor Kirven stated he did not see a logical correlation between this proposal and the roads referendum; in that the Roads Referendum paid value to value. He felt it was not fiscally responsible to adopt the proposed item.

Councilor Cates stated he voted in opposition to Councilor Dill's previous two mil decrease motion a few months ago, however, if the road referendum passed, reducing the Ad Valorem Property Tax Millage Rate levied in Greenville County would be a great treat for taxpayers. He stated by efficiency in the government, the County had saved taxpayers about 18% over the past 22 years. Councilor Cates felt allowing citizens the opportunity to decide what they want was the best option.

Councilor Seman asked if a referendum was needed to lower millage.

Chairman Taylor stated a referendum was not needed to lower millage.

Councilor Seman suggested strategizing before the next budget cycle to look into the possibility of lowering the County's millage.

Chairman Taylor stated he mentioned to the County Administrator about looking into the possibility of lowering millage over a period of time, particularly if the road referendum passed. He felt the proposed item would not accomplish anything if they had already determined to look into the possibility of lowering millage.

Councilor Baldwin stated the proposed was purely an advisory election. He stated an extra \$1.7 million had been extracted from taxpayers over the past year without a millage increase.

Motion was denied by a vote of five in favor (Norris, Dill, Baldwin, Meadows, Cates) and six in opposition (Burns, Taylor, Seman, Gibson, Kirven, Payne).

Item (6)

ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: Councilor Dill moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

Motion to adjourn carried unanimously by all County Council Members.

Respectfully submitted:

Theresa B. Kizer, Clerk to Council