

LOWCOUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
February 25, 2010
6:30 p.m.

MINUTES

PRESENT:

ABSENT:

BEAUFORT COUNTY:

Donnie Beer
Gerald Dawson
Bill Ferguson
Brian Flewelling
Herbert Glaze
Mary Beth Heyward
Bill McBride
James Outlaw
Jerry Stewart
Lisa Sulka
George Williams

Joseph McDomick

COLLETON COUNTY:

Esther Black
Joseph Flowers
Burley Lyons
Vic Nettles
Gene Whetsel
Bill Young

Evon Robinson (Proxy to E. Black)
George White

HAMPTON COUNTY:

Frankie Bennett
Jimmy Bilka
Lloyd Griffith
Pete Hagood
Buddy Phillips
Nat Shaffer

J. L. Goodwin

JASPER COUNTY:

Gary Hodges
George Hood
Henry Lawton
Gwen Smith

Roy Powell (Proxy to G. Hodges)

GUESTS:

Jim Bequette, Beaufort County School Board; Mayor Bronco Bostick, City of Hardeeville; Ted Felder, Interim Hardeeville City Manager; Craig Forest, LRTA; Michael Foskey, Hardeeville City Council; Andy Fulghum, Jasper County Administrator; Babe Hutto, Edisto Beach Town Council; Bill Masterton, CEO, Coastal Carolina Hospital; Glen McCaskey, Community Visions; Josh McCann, reporter for *The Island Packet*; Celia Price, guest of Esther Black; Greer Scoggins, Director of Construction, Sembler Co.; Paul Shepherd and Diana Salazar, Partnership Specialists with the U.S. Census Bureau; Paul Sommerville, Beaufort County Council; Keith Waldrup, Beaufort County Senior Leadership Program

STAFF:

Chris Bickley, Michelle Knight, Ginnie Kozak, Tracey Queen, Sherry Smith, Carol Stonebraker, Jamie Wood

Chairman Hood called the February 25, 2010 Lowcountry Council of Governments regular board meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Pete Hagood gave the invocation. Introduction of guests and staff followed. Minutes of the January 28, 2010 meeting were unanimously approved on motion by Bill Young with a second from Mary Beth Heyward. Proxies presented by the Executive Director included a general proxy from Evon Robinson to Esther Black and one from Roy Powell to Gary Hodges with voting instructions regarding a resolution in support of state tax incentives for the Okatie Crossings/Sembler Company project. The meeting proceeded after determining a quorum was present.

Chairman Hood called for Presentations and recognized U.S. Census Partnership Specialist Paul Shepherd to present information about the 2010 Census. Terry Seabrook was unable to attend. Dr. Shepherd spoke about the importance of achieving an accurate population count in South Carolina and reviewed efforts undertaken to educate everyone about the 2010 Census. Informational posters, fliers and sample questionnaires were distributed. Dr. Shepherd introduced Diana Salazar, who works with the Latino population. Ms. Salazar emphasized the need to count all demographic groups and offered help. She said bilingual material would be available where needed. By law, information reported on the Census questionnaire cannot be shared. The regional Census office is in Beaufort, and its phone number is 843-982-5400. Chairman Hood thanked Dr. Shepherd and Ms. Salazar for the information.

The Chairman recognized Bill Masterton, CEO of Coastal Carolina Hospital, who had asked to introduce himself to the LCOG Board. Mr. Masterton joined the hospital as its CEO in December. He gave brief biographical information and reviewed services offered at Coastal Carolina and in conjunction with its partners at Hilton Head Regional Medical Center on Hilton Head Island and MUSC in Charleston. Mr. Masterton stressed Coastal Carolina's commitment to serving its community with excellent medical services and professionals, public health educational programs and with its 24/7 emergency room. Chairman Hood thanked Mr. Masterton and welcomed him to the Lowcountry.

Chairman Hood addressed Old Business and recognized Hardeeville Interim City Manager Ted Felder for introductory remarks about the Okatie Crossings project. The board had voted at its last meeting to hear presentations for and against the project prior to considering a resolution in support of state tax incentives for the project. (A bill allowing state tax incentives for the retail industry was working its way through the South Carolina Legislature.) Most of the 280-acre site is located in Jasper County with about one third in Beaufort County. The portion in Beaufort County had been annexed into the City of Hardeeville. A draft resolution was mailed to board members prior to the meeting and copies were in meeting packets.

Jerry Stewart moved to indefinitely table discussion and action on the resolution. George Williams seconded the motion. The motion failed 14 to 11 during a show-of-hand vote.

Ted Felder thanked supporters of the project and said it was a jobs-creation effort projected to create 2,500 new jobs in one of the poorest areas of the state. He said that the Sembler Company—the Atlanta-based project developer—estimated its investment at \$400M. Mr. Felder introduced Sembler's Director of Construction Greer Scoggins to present project specifics.

Mr. Scoggins gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Okatie Crossings project that he described as two shopping areas, one targeting local consumers and the other primarily for tourist-driven luxury item buyers. He explained why tax incentives were needed for the project to

be economically feasible and said they would help create 800 construction jobs immediately and 2,000 permanent jobs long term. Tax incentives would not kick in until after specific targets of \$100M minimum developer investment and 1K jobs created were met and would sunset after five years. Mr. Scoggins thanked those who had already added their support and addressed several concerns that had been raised. He denied Sembler had sought to pirate retail tenants from a nearby competing mall and said the project would complement, not take over, tourist business. Mr. Scoggins also spoke about successful projects that had been developed with state tax-incentives in other areas of the country. Discussion followed.

Beaufort County Council Vice-Chairman Paul Sommerville was recognized to present an opposing view of the Okatie Crossings project. Mr. Sommerville explained why Beaufort County Council had passed a resolution asking the Legislature not approve state tax incentives for the project. Major reasons cited were unfair competitive advantages that state retail tax incentives would give the Sembler Company over other businesses at Beaufort County taxpayer expense; under current and projected economic conditions, the project could be expected to move jobs from one area to another with no net benefit to the regional economy and jobs creation; objection to diversion of multi-millions of dollars in tax revenue that could be used for schools, law enforcement, transportation, and other tax-supported efforts, but would instead benefit one developer; and significant environmental concerns regarding the already-compromised Okatie River.

A lengthy discussion followed with points made in support of and in opposition to state incentives for the project. Pete Hagood moved to end debate, and the motion was seconded. Chairman Hood addressed some parliamentary questions, after which the motion to end debate failed. Gary Hodges moved to adopt a resolution in support of state tax incentives for the Okatie Crossings project. Esther Black seconded the motion. Chairman Hood asked if there were additional comments, and others wanting to express their views were allowed to do so. Afterwards, Jerry Stewart gave summary remarks in support of Beaufort County's position, and Gary Hodges did the same on behalf of Jasper County and its municipalities. Many points/counter-points were made. An unchallenged point was the importance of everyone working together for the good of the entire region because what happens in one area affects the whole. A motion to end debate was made, seconded and approved.

Chairman Hood called for a vote on the resolution. Jim Outlaw moved to decide the motion by roll-call vote, which carried without objection after being duly seconded. The motion to adopt the resolution in support of state tax incentives for the Okatie Crossings project carried by a 16-8 majority with Frankie Bennett, Esther Black, Gerald Dawson, Bill Ferguson, Lloyd Griffith, Pete Hagood, Mary Beth Heyward, Gary Hodges, George Hood, Henry Lawton, Buddy Phillips, Nat Shaffer, Gwen Smith and Bill Young along with proxy votes by Roy Powell and Evon Robinson voting in favor. Donnie Beer, Brian Flewelling, Joe Flowers, Bill McBride, Jim Outlaw, Jerry Stewart, Gene Whetsel and George Williams voted against the motion. Herbert Glaze, Vic Nettles and Lisa Sulka abstained.

There were no items of New Business on the Agenda. Chairman Hood called for Reports and recognized Sherry Smith for the Finance Report. Copies were in meeting packets. Sherry submitted the report as written, and it was unanimously received as information on motion by Pete Hagood with a second from Henry Lawton.

Michelle Knight was recognized for the Community and Economic Development Report. Michelle submitted the report as written and made brief comments. She reminded everyone that the request deadline for infrastructure projects is March 19, and everyone interested in

submissions should contact her very soon. Needs assessment public hearings were underway in some communities. The report was accepted as information.

Chris Bickley was recognized for the Director's Report. He submitted the report as written and asked if anyone had questions. There were none, and the report was accepted as information.

Chairman Hood called for a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss a contractual item and a personnel item. Bill Young moved to enter Executive Session, and Henry Lawton seconded the motion. It carried with all in favor. Afterwards, the meeting returned to Open Session with no action taken.

No additional comments were heard during Council Time. With no additional business to address, and on motion duly made, seconded and approved, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m. Copies of the agenda were distributed prior to the meeting. A notice of the meeting was posted on the LCOG bulletin board at least twenty-four hours prior to the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

L. Chriswell Bickley, Jr.
Executive Director

Attachments