



GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

Committee of the Whole

Minutes

September 21, 2021

4:02 p.m.

County Square - Council Chambers

Council Members

Mr. Willis Meadows, *Chairman, District 19*

Mr. Dan Tripp, *Vice-Chairman, District 28*

Mrs. Xanthe Norris, *Chairman Pro Tem, District 23*

Mr. Joe Dill, *District 17*

Mr. Mike Barnes, *District 18*

Mr. Stephen Shaw, *District 20*

Mr. Chris Harrison, *District 21*

Mr. Stan Tzouvelekas, *District 22*

Mrs. Liz Seman, *District 24*

Mr. Ennis Fant, Sr., *District 25*

Mr. Lynn Ballard, *District 26*

Mr. Butch Kirven, *District 27*

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place and agenda was posted online and on the bulletin board at County Square and made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Council Members Absent

None

Staff Present

Joe Kernell, *County Administrator*

Mark Tollison, *County Attorney*

John Hansley, *Deputy County Administrator*

Regina McCaskill, *Clerk to Council*

Jessica Stone, *Deputy Clerk to Council*

Shannon Herman, *Assistant County Administrator*

Bob Mihalic, *Governmental Affairs Officer*

Nicole Wood, *Assistant County Administrator*

Meredith Papapieris, *CARES Program Director*

Others Present

None

Call to Order

Chairman Willis Meadows

Invocation

Councilor Ennis Fant

Item (3) Approval of Minutes

Action: Councilor Ballard moved to approve the minutes of the September 7, 2021, Committee of the Whole meeting.
Motion carried unanimously.

Item (4) Human Relations Commission / Tie Breaker Ballot

By ballot vote, Shantell Smith was elected to the Human Relations Commission in a tie breaker vote.

Item (5) Board and Commission Interviews

a. Board of Tax Assessment and Appeals (9 vacancies)

The following individuals appeared before the Committee of the Whole and gave their personal presentations.

1. Denise Cassano - District 17
2. Steven Currie - District 21
3. Jeff Davis - District 22
4. Christopher Prince - District 24

Action: Vice-Chairman Tripp moved to close nominations and elect by acclamation **Jo Anne Armstrong, Denise Cassano, Steven Currie, Jeff Davis, Shawn Miller, Richard Poremba, Christopher Prince, James Robinson and Bill Young** to fill nine vacancies on the Board of Tax Assessment and Appeals.

Motion carried unanimously.

b. Greenville County Redevelopment Authority (4 vacancies)

The following individuals appeared before the Committee of the Whole and gave their personal presentations.

1. Brett Brocato - District 22
2. James Hammond - District 17
3. Charlotte Osmer - District 23
4. Tanisha Owens - District 28
5. Michael Roth - District 22
6. Jeanne Vernon - District 25
7. Tikeeta Wallace - District 23
8. Lawson Wetli - District 20
9. Allen White - District 18

By ballot vote, **James Hammond, Charlotte Osmer, Lawson Wetli and Allen White** were elected to fill four vacancies on the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority Board.

c. Thrive Upstate (2 vacancies)

The following individuals appeared before the Committee of the Whole and gave their personal presentations.

1. Laura O’Laughlin - District 22
2. George Rabanal - District 27
3. Autumn Shearin - District 19

By ballot vote, **Christy Bright and Autumn Shearin** were elected to fill two vacancies on the Thrive Upstate Board.

Item (6)

County Council Rule V(C) / Removal of Finance Committee Chairperson

Chairman Meadows stated County Council operated under a Code or Rules in order to operate in a smooth and efficient manner; problems were created when Council did not operate in that manner. Mr. Meadows stated those problems could not be ignored.

Mr. Meadows cited a portion of Council Rule V(C)(1) and Council Rule V(C)(2) verifying his authority as Chairman to take the proposed action:

The Chairman of County Council shall appoint the Chairman for each Committee. After the appointment, a committee chairman can only be removed as Chair and/or reassigned to another committee by the Chairman of Council with the approval of six (6) additional Council members.

The Chairman may change committee membership as merited with the exception of the committee chairman as provided for in subsection (1) above.

Chairman Meadows stated Council Rules did not indicate that a reason had to be given in order for the Chairman to request a vote regarding the removal of a committee chairman. However, he felt that a reason for a removal was in order.

Mr. Meadows stated Council Rule III(D)(2) had been violated and cited the rule as indicated below:

Decorum in Speaking – When speaking, no Council member may indulge in personalities, use personally offensive language, arraign the motives of other Council members, charge deliberate misrepresentation, or use language tending to hold Council or a member of the Council in contempt. The members shall confine themselves to the question under consideration.

Chairman Meadows requested Council Members support his decision to remove the Finance Chairman (Dan Tripp) from the position.

Action:

Councilor Stan Tzouvelekas moved to approve Chairman Meadows' removal of the current Chairman of the Finance Committee as provided under Council Rule V(C).

Councilor Seman requested a roll call vote.

Councilor Ballard stated he was in his eighth year on Council. Over that time, there had been a number of difficult votes. There had been only three (3) that really "got to" him; the item in question was one of those. When he lost sleep at night and agonized over votes, it was not done lightly. Over the years, Council had its differences but always worked together. Council tried to make decisions based on facts, situations and merit. Mr. Ballard stated he always tried his best to not allow personalities to be involved. He spoke to Mr. Tripp and advised him that he did not approve of some of the things that were said on the dais. Mr. Ballard stated he was reminded of a passage of scripture that read, "Let he who has not sinned cast the first stone." Mr. Ballard stated while the incident in question was not the first time, he hoped it would be the last. It was his opinion that Council had gone astray; everything appeared to be for retaliation purposes. He had been told by people in the community that Council could not operate that way. People were asking him what was wrong with Council. Mr. Ballard stated he did not condone what had happened; however, he could not support Mr. Meadows' request to remove the Chairman of the Finance Committee.

Councilor Kirven stated he had served as Chairman of Council for a number of years; he was well aware of the situation and the weight that fell on Mr. Meadows' shoulders. If Council followed through on the recommendation, he could think of nothing that would divide Council even more. They had an opportunity to learn from the incident, come together in the spirit of forgiveness and realize that Council was designed under State Law to work as one body, not as individuals. Council could reach its fullest potential only when all members were given the opportunity to participate in the processes and the decisions being made. It would be detrimental to Council's credibility with the public if they followed through with the Chairman's request.

Action:

Councilor Fant called for the question.

Chairman Meadows stated he wanted to comment before Council voted on the issue. He agreed that either way, the vote would be detrimental to some Council Members. It would be detrimental if Council voted to approve such behavior. Mr. Meadows stated it had occurred a number of times, not just once. The last time it happened, Mr. Tripp had stated there would be “no peace” on Council. If Council Members were willing to support such behavior, he was willing to live with it.

Councilor Shaw stated as a new member of Council, he would have never thought a colleague would walk out of a meeting. That struck him along with the “no peace” comment. A Council Member could not break the rules and then try to punish the person attempting to enforce the rules.

Councilor Harrison stated he was also a new member of Council. He fully respected Chairman Meadows for bringing up the issue. He did not agree with how some things were said; however, each person on the dais had said or done things that were against the rules. The fact that they were having a conversation about removing the Chairman of Finance showed where Council was; they should be discussing issues that affected Greenville County and its residents. Mr. Harrison stated the “punishment did not fit the crime.” There had been incidents of similar behavior by other Council Members with no punishment. Mr. Harrison stated he wanted to move on; he could not support the Chairman’s request.

Motion as presented was denied by a roll call vote of six (Barnes, Meadows, Shaw, Tzouvelekas, Norris and Fant) in favor and six (Dill, Harrison, Seman, Ballard, Kirven and Tripp) in opposition.

Item (7) Adjournment

Action: Councilor Kirven moved to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Regina G. McCaskill
Clerk to Council