

GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MARCH 29, 2021

4:00 P.M.

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

The Finance Committee met on-site and remotely to handle requests submitted to the committee for consideration.

Committee Members Present:

Dan Tripp, Chairman
Liz Seman, Vice-Chairman
Joe Dill
Willis Meadows
Butch Kirven

Committee Members Absent:

Staff Present:

John Hansley, *Deputy County Administrator*
Mark Tollison, *County Attorney*
Kim Wunder, *Assistant County Attorney*
Regina McCaskill, *Clerk to Council*
Jessica Stone, *Deputy Clerk to Council*

Others Present:

Kimberly Witherspoon, *Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd P.A*
Chase Willingham, *LEAD Academy*
Sonny Surkin, *Chairperson, LEAD Academy Board of Directors*
Bo Campbell, *General Counsel for the City of Greenville Housing Authority*
Drew Schaumber, *Douglas Development*
Holly Schaumber, *Douglas Development*
Lynn Ballard, *County Council*
Xanthe Norris, *County Council*

Call to Order:

Chairman Tripp

Invocation:

Councilor Kirven

Item (3) Approval of Minutes

Action: Councilor Dill moved to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2021, Committee on Finance meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

Item (4) Board and Commission Applicants

a. Greenville Area Development Corporation (3 vacancies)

- i. Christopher Brice - District 21
- ii. John Mark Buchanan - District 20
- iii. Ethan Carbaugh - District 27
- iv. Patrick Epps - District 21
- v. Beverly Haines - District 27
- vi. Joy Hemphill - District 26
- vii. Sherry Jackson - District 24
- viii. Kelly Jones - District 19

By ballot vote, Patrick Epps, Beverly Haines and Joy Hemphill were elected to fill three vacancies on the Greenville Area Development Corporation.

Action: Councilor Meadows moved to forward to full Council the names of Patrick Epps, Beverly Haines and Joy Hemphill to fill three vacancies on the Greenville Area Development Corporation.

Motion carried unanimously.

Item (5) Appointment of 2021 Proposed Grievance Committee Members

a. County of Greenville Grievance Committee Pool Roster

A request to approve the appointment of five new members to the Greenville County Grievance Committee Pool.

The Grievance Committee hears complaints by regular County employees who feel they have been treated unfairly or had a violation of their rights. The committee provides an impartial forum for the consideration of grievable matters. Members of the committee serve a period of three years, with staggered terms. The individuals before the Finance Committee were recommended by their Department Heads.

- Danane Wright, CPDPW
- Furmesia Rosier, Public Safety
- Andrea Costa, Public Safety
- Steve Austin, Strategic Operations
- Shelvis Gambrell, General Services

Action: Vice-Chairman Seman moved approval of the Grievance Committee Pool Roster as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

Item (6) Community Projects Applications

a. Sterling Community Center Parking Lot Repair and Extension Project - \$13,196.69 (Norris)

A community project to assist with the refurbishment and extension of the parking lot serving the Sterling Community Center. The funds would help provide additional parking for the center.

b. River Falls Fire Department Paint Project - \$3,792 (Dill)

A community project to assist with the cost of the painting of exterior walls, roll-up doors, window frames, fascia, gutters, and downspouts of the fire station. The funds would ensure the continued maintenance of a community asset.

c. Simpsonville Downtown Art Project - \$7,500 (Kirven)

A community project to finance the City of Simpsonville's downtown art project which would be centered in downtown and promote the local arts and increase foot traffic in the area. The public art and interactive nature of the artwork would encourage residents and tourists to visit downtown and patronize local shops and restaurants.

Action: Councilor Meadows moved to approve the Community Projects Applications.

Motion carried unanimously.

Item (7) LEAD Academy Educational Facility Revenue Bonds

A resolution to approve the issuance of the LEAD Academy Educational Facility Revenue Bonds not exceeding \$9,000,000 by the Public Finance Authority, a Wisconsin political subdivision.

Kimberly Witherspoon stated *Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd P.A.* was the Bond Counsel for LEAD Academy. The item in question was a revenue bond to be issued by the Public Finance Authority, which was very similar to the South Carolina Jobs Economic Development Authority, the statewide insurer for charter school bonds. The Public Finance Authority was different in that it was located in Wisconsin; however, it had authority to issue bonds throughout the nation. Greenville County would have no liability for repayment of the bonds; LEAD Academy would be responsible for repayment.

Sonny Surkin stated LEAD Academy, a public charter school with grades K5 through 8, was located on Mauldin Road. The school had been chartered for approximately ten years. About four years ago, the school undertook the same type of financing for the construction of a building. The bond in question would help pay for a lot adjacent to the school to build a gymnasium as well as a parking lot area.

Chairman Tripp asked about the amount of the bond.

Mr. Surkin stated the amount of the bond was a little more than \$7 million.

Councilor Kirven inquired if the bond would count against the County's bonding capacity.

Ms. Witherspoon stated it would not count against Greenville County's bonding capacity and the County would have no liability for repayment.

Councilor Meadows asked if it was a revenue bond.

Ms. Witherspoon confirmed it was a revenue bond and would be repaid with revenue from LEAD Academy.

Councilor Meadows requested information about the previous bond used for construction.

Mr. Surkin stated the previous bond was issued in 2016 for a little more than \$10 million with two portions, one taxable and one non-taxable. The taxable portion of the bond had already been repaid; there were a number of years left to repay the remainder of the bond. Mr. Surkin stated repayment on the bond had been exemplary. The combined total of the two bonds would be approximately \$16 million.

Councilor Meadows asked if LEAD Academy was part of the Greenville County School District.

Mr. Surkin stated LEAD Academy was a public charter school and was originally part of Greenville County Schools; they have since moved to the State of South Carolina Charter School District.

Councilor Meadows asked why LEAD Academy did not go through Greenville County Schools for its bonding.

Mr. Surkin stated Greenville County Schools did not provide funding for facilities; LEAD Academy had always gone privately to obtain bonds.

Councilor Meadows inquired about the terms of the bond.

Mr. Surkin stated the bond would be for a 20 - 25 year term.

Councilor Kirven stated the last year had been very volatile. He inquired about the school's enrollment and added that the school was reimbursed for tuition at the same per capita rate as students in public schools. He asked Mr. Surkin to provide information about the school's revenue outlook, student capacity, if the bond would allow the school to expand its capacity and how the money would be used.

Mr. Surkin stated the school's current capacity was approximately 420 students. The outlook for student participation was strong; the school had a very long waiting list that continued to grow. From a funding perspective, the last year with COVID-19 had been very unnerving; however, the school's finances remained strong. The contribution for "per head reimbursement" also remained strong. LEAD Academy had also received COVID-19 related

funding through the school network from the Federal Government and/or State Government. The funds would be used to construct the gymnasium with a portion of the funds being used for classrooms, enabling the school to move from roughly 420 students to 460 students. The addition of approximately 40 students would offset the increased cost of the loan.

Councilor Meadows inquired if the school specialized in any area.

Mr. Surkin stated LEAD Academy had somewhat smaller class sizes than typical public schools. There was an emphasis in expeditionary learning attributed to an entity in Chicago, which gave the students a broad-based look at projects, using both Math and English. The student body was comprised of children from throughout Greenville County.

Councilor Meadows asked the name of the school in Chicago that LEAD Academy was associated with.

Mr. Surkin stated it was not an actual school, but rather a company called Exploration Learning.

Councilor Meadows asked if LEAD Academy was similar to a Montessori School.

Mr. Sorkin stated it was not similar at all.

Action: Councilor Kirven moved to approve a resolution approving the issuance of the LEAD Academy Educational Facility Revenue Bonds not exceeding \$9,000,000 by the Public Finance Authority, a Wisconsin political subdivision.

Motion carried unanimously.

Item (8) **Resolution Approving and Authorizing the Housing Authority for the City of Greenville to Issue Multi-Family Revenue Bonds within the Unincorporated Area of Greenville County**

A resolution to approve and authorize the Housing Authority for the City of Greenville to issue multi-family revenue bonds within the unincorporated area of Greenville County.

Bo Campbell stated there was a previous request by the City of Greenville Housing Authority to issue multi-family revenue bonds within the unincorporated area of Greenville County in order to finance affordable housing. There had been jurisdiction expansions in the past but not specifically with respect to bonding authority.

Chairman Tripp asked how the proposed project at Sulphur Springs would be affected.

Mr. Campbell stated the project at Sulphur Springs was the impetus for the original request. The developer approached the Housing Authority for assistance with financing the project with its bonds. The Sulphur Springs project would be the first project financed in that manner, if approved.

Drew Schaumber stated there had been some changes made to the project since the initial request was made. The proposed second phase of the project was removed with a total of

180 units. The deletion of the second phase allowed for some natural tree buffers to remain in place. Otherwise, the proposed project was very similar to the original.

Councilor Meadows thanked Drew Schaumber for his input. The project would be good for the area. Mr. Meadows stated he had been a critic of low income housing but he did not consider the Sulphur Springs project low income housing. If the expanded jurisdiction was denied by the Committee, another developer could build something on the site with no feedback from Council, as it was already zoned multi-family. He felt it was best to work with a developer who would put a good product on the site.

Action: Councilor Meadows moved for approval a resolution to approve and authorize the Housing Authority for the City of Greenville to issue multi-family revenue bonds within the unincorporated area of Greenville County.

Motion carried unanimously.

Item (9) Five Year Exemption Extended to Unrelated Purchaser – Illinois Tool Works

Approval of a five year County property tax exemption extended to Illinois Tool Works as allowed in Section 12-37-220(c) of the SC Code.

John Hansley stated that state law provided a new or existing company that made a new capital investment of \$50,000 or more, a five year tax break from non-municipal or non-school property taxes. The abatement eliminated Greenville County property taxes when the assets are booked at their highest value. State law also allowed companies that purchased a facility, in an arm's length transaction between unrelated parties keeping existing jobs intact, to apply for an additional five year property tax abatement; Illinois Tool Works had requested such an exemption using Form PT-444. Previously, the Finance Committee had determined there was no desire to extend abatements for an additional five years for requests that were not part of a negotiated package through GADC. The item in question was not part of a negotiated package and denial of the request was recommended.

Action: Councilor Meadows moved to deny the request to approve a five year County property tax exemption to Illinois Tool Works as allowed in Section 12-37-220(c) of the SC Code.

Motion was denied unanimously.

Item (10) Adjournment

Action: Councilor Kirven moved to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Jessica M. Stone
Deputy Clerk to Council