

**NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL  
CAPITAL PROJECT SALES TAX WORK SESSION  
FEBRUARY 16, 2010**

Newberry County Council met on Tuesday, February 16, 2010, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at the Courthouse Annex, 1309 College Street, Newberry, SC, for a special called CPST Work Session.

**PRESENT: Henry H. Livingston, III, Chairman**  
**William D. Waldrop, Vice Chairman**  
**Kirksey Koon, Councilman**  
**John E. Caldwell, Councilman**  
**Edgar Baker, Councilman**  
**Leslie (Les) Hipp, Councilman**  
**Steven C. Stockman, Councilman**  
**Wayne Adams, County Administrator**  
**Laurie Renwick, Clerk to Council**

**PRESS: Heather Hawkins, WKDK**  
**Cindy Pitts, Newberry Observer**

The meeting was duly advertised as required by law

Chairman Livingston called the meeting to order followed by the invocation led by Mr. Edgar Baker.

**1. Additions, Deletions and Adoption of Agenda**

Mr. Hipp motioned to adopt the agenda as presented; seconded by Mr. Koon. The vote was unanimous.

**2. Discussion of Project Prioritization**

Mr. Adams stated that Council had approved a form by which it will score the projects. Each member has been provided a copy of the proposals to review and tonight you are going to hear six (6) presentations. Mr. Adams reminded Council that the scoring sheets were not due until March 2, 2010.

Chairman Livingston thanked Mr. Adams and staff for their efforts to make this happen.

**3. Village Cemetery CPST Presentation**

Edith Greisser made the presentation on behalf of the Village Cemetery requesting \$25,000.00 to place a steel black fence around the south and east side of the perimeter of the cemetery. They would also like to place a sign with a short history to allow people to know about the property, encourage pride, and bring attention to the cemetery. She said

she did not believe that people were aware that this was a cemetery and it has been here 207 years.

Chairman Livingston asked if there were any questions or comments from Council members.

Mr. Koon asked if they had researched other avenues for obtaining funds to complete this project.

Mrs. Greisser said Ms. Tucky Taylor had applied for a grant which was turned down. She also applied with a foundation that just does historic cemeteries and they came up with a sum of about \$110,000.00.

Mr. Koon thanked Mrs. Greisser for bringing this to Council's attention and to the people of Newberry County. It needs to be looked at and studied and hopefully something can be done to help the committee do their job.

Mr. Waldrop said Mrs. Greisser mentioned that the headstones would be given by the government.

Mrs. Greisser stated that she has 15 headstones on order. She can only order them when she gets their service records and that is hard to do because so many of the records were lost.

Mr. Baker asked if the locations of the graves are known.

Mrs. Greisser said they were not. All they know is that they were buried in the Newberry Village Cemetery. They do know that one was buried in Rosemont Cemetery and they already have a bronze plaque for him to be placed there.

Mr. Baker asked if there was a set pattern of where these stones will be placed.

Mrs. Greisser said she had played around with a pattern and was told she could not do it that way. There is something about burying the Confederate boys separately from the Union boys with the stones and she was told that military formation was shoulder to shoulder.

Mr. Baker commented that someone is still going to have to decide where to place these stones but was glad that someone was trying to fix up the cemetery.

Chairman Livingston thanked Mrs. Greisser and the committee and said this cemetery shows the historical value of Newberry. He noticed the dates and age of a lot of these people; there were many young deaths in this cemetery. There are a lot of standard Newberry names and he would be interested to see who they related back too.

#### **4. Newberry County Memorial Hospital CPST Presentation**

Ron Vigus, NCMH Chief Financial Officer, made the presentation on behalf of the NCMH Emergency Room project requesting an additional 15 rooms for a new emergency department at a cost of 5.4 million dollars to accommodate the increase in volume. Mr. Vigus stated that 63% of admittance to the hospital itself comes through their emergency department. This addition should create 5-10 extra jobs within the hospital. Their goal is to increase their service accessibility and the timeliness of care by increasing the turnaround time for a patient and their satisfaction.

Mr. Caldwell asked how many rooms they currently have.

Mr. Vigus reported that they have 9 rooms in the emergency department. The increase in volume has taken over three additional rooms that were used by other services outside of their emergency department. They have looked at other options to try to expand their capacity within their current facility and they have concluded that it would cost almost as much as a new one. The space configurations would be very convoluted and not very efficient from a patient care point of view and felt this was the best option to pursue the expansion of the emergency department.

Mr. Caldwell asked the average number of patients that visit the emergency room.

Mr. Vigus stated it is approaching 22,000 a year which is just under 2,000 per month.

Mr. Baker wanted clarification for the record and asked Mr. Vigus what was the total amount they were asking for.

Mr. Vigus stated they were asking for \$5,444,682.00.

Chairman Livingston asked what their current wait time was.

Mr. Vigus reported that the current wait time is just over 2 hours from the time the patient shows up until the patient leaves. They would like to get the wait time for non-emergency patients down to 60 minutes and 1/1/2 hours wait time for emergency patients.

Mr. Hipp asked if they projected an increase in revenues due to the new addition.

Mr. Vigus stated that with a volume increase of 10%, he would anticipate revenues going up 10% as well.

Mr. Hipp asked where the projected net margin of \$915,000.00 would go.

Mr. Vigus said it would go back into the general operating fund and be used to offset departments in the hospital that lose money. He said they deal with their finances just like the County; on a bottom line basis. When they have a positive bottom line, the excess is evaluated to address all their needs not just a particular one.

Mr. Baker asked if they would have the bed capacity if these patients were admitted with the new addition.

Mr. Vigus said absolutely; they have far more beds than are in demand right now.

Mr. Waldrop said at one time there was a problem with collections and asked if this was improving.

Mr. Vigus reported that they are making significant progress and are moving in the right direction on the billing and collection process.

Mr. Hipp asked what the profit margin was for the last two years.

John Boozer said it was in the neighborhood of one million dollars.

Mr. Koon asked Mr. Vigus what he contributed the volume increase to.

Mr. Vigus said the two biggest drivers are the shortage of primary physicians in the community and the hospital's continuation of providing good quality care.

Chairman Livingston asked were there some alternative funding measures they could obtain to fund part of it if it were not possible to fund the entire project

Mr. Vigus said they would have to look for other options.

Chairman Livingston asked is they would entertain funding some or part of emergency room with their projected net of \$915,000.00.

Mr. Vigus said they could talk about that but their net income was not excessive and not where it needs to be.

Mr. Baker asked who would be responsible for the funding of the equipment.

Mr. Vigus said the hospital would fund the equipment.

Mr. Hipp said that there was a Building and Grounds Committee meeting held at the hospital on Nov.17, 2009. At that time there was discussion about the emergency room department expansion prior to CPST funding and you were estimating the project at \$756,000.00. We have made a quantum jump from \$756,000.00 to 5 million.

Mr. Vigus said the \$756,000.00 was an effort to look at potentially renovating some of their internal facilities to free up more rooms and some other minor changes which would only be a patch. The CPST funding would allow us to do it right.

Chairman Livingston thanked Mr. Vigus for the information.

Chairman Livingston asked Council if they would be willing to change the order and let Mrs. Stockman with the Council on Aging go now.

Council agreed to let Mrs. Stockman proceed with the Council on Aging presentation.

## **5. Council on Aging CPST Presentation**

Lynn Stockman, NCCA Executive Director, made the presentation on behalf of the Council on Aging requesting an addition of 5,600 sq. ft. to expand their multipurpose room to accommodate 125 people daily and make improvements to the freezer and refrigerator space for a total cost of \$1,112,707.00.

Mr. Baker asked if they did in house cooking now.

Mrs. Stockman said they did not. Their meals are prepared by a company called Senior Catering and as long as they are reasonably priced, they will continue to purchase with them.

The freezer space is needed for frozen meals. They currently deliver 60 frozen meals a week and could increase that capacity but they do not have the storage space.

Mr. Koon commented that they have activities going on at the Senior Center everyday.

Mr. Hipp asked what other funding might they be able get to supplement this in case they do not get the full amount.

Mrs. Stockman said there was a pot of funding at the Lt. Governor's Office that was earmarked for Senior Centers and they could possibly get some from there. She said she would call and check; however, they have applied for it before and lost out to Lexington County, Rock Hill and Charleston County and the amount is limited to \$350,000.00 per project.

Mr. Hipp asked if there was a possibility for some stimulus money.

Mrs. Stockman said they have been eligible for some stimulus money through the Transit Association and she thought there was stimulus money available for meals.

Mr. Baker asked if any of the money requested was for upgrading the existing building.

Mrs. Stockman said it was not. This project was for the new addition; however, they could go back and address some of the upgrades that are needed to the existing building.

Chairman Livingston commented that if they were to get this particular space, and if they applied to the state and was fortunate enough to receive the \$350,000.00, they could use the \$350,000.00 on the upgrades to the building.

Mrs. Stockman said that would be ideal.

**6. Break: 7:45 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

No break was taken.

**7. Whitmire Library CPST Presentation**

Mr. Sam Ziady, Newberry County Library Director, made the presentation on behalf of the renovations to the Whitmire Library and said this branch was last renovated in 1976. In order to bring it up to ADA compliant will take away space from the library so they would like to add an additional 1,628 sq. ft, add a security system, and increase internet stations for a total of \$831,092.00.

Chairman Livingston asked if the library was being used more now for internet purposes for job searching with people filling out resumes due to the high unemployment in that area.

Mr. Ziady said there are a lot of people using the computers at the library for job searching.

Mr. Baker said he has been in the library several time during the day and there is always a waiting line to get on the computers. They do not have enough up there. He asked Mr. West if he had looked at the overall layout of this plan.

Mr. West said that he looked at what their architect provided on the cost and it looked good.

Mr. Waldrop asked if they had some people crossing the line from Union County using the library.

Mr. Ziady said they have been pretty lenient because there is no library in that area.

Mr. Waldrop said one way to handle that would be to charge a fee.

Mr. Ziady said this issue was going to be presented to the board to set up some type of reciprocal agreement with neighboring counties.

Chairman Livingston said he did not have a problem with people outside of our county using the library. Sometimes when you are kind to people and let them into your community they might decide to relocate which would help with vacant housing in

Whitmire. He asked if there was an increase of young people coming into the library after school lets out.

Mr. Ziady stated there has been an increase of younger people in the library because they are the ones who feel more comfortable with computers and they spend more time on them. He said he would like to have wireless at the Whitmire facility to accommodate those who do not have this service at home.

Chairman Livingston said he felt this would be valuable to the residents of Whitmire.

Mr. Baker said he would hate to see a fee started at The Whitmire Memorial Library and would like to see reciprocal county agreements instead. He said that before the new library was built in Newberry, Whitmire's library did more in genealogy than the Newberry library.

Mr. Ziady said he has been pleasantly surprised at the number of people researching their family records.

## **8. Hazmat Bay Addition CPST Presentation**

Mr. Jerry Koon, Chief of Hazmat, made the presentation on behalf of the Hazmat Response Team for the proposed Hazmat Bay Addition. He said they would like to attach a bay onto Newberry City Fire Station #21 on Wilson Road to house the hazmat truck. It is currently stored at Station #20 on Nance Street after they rearranged and stored some of their equipment outside. Having the hazmat equipment stored at several different locations causes some difficulty during training and emergency response. They would like this addition to store their equipment in a safe and secure environment that will give them space to function and store their equipment properly.

Mr. Hipp asked Mr. Koon to summarize the last two or three incidents where the hazmat team has responded.

Mr. Koon said there was one several weeks ago on Benedict Street where someone decided to flush a radiator out of an old car with a garden hose. It ran down the road and went into a wet weather ditch between some houses. They responded to a train and logging truck collision in Prosperity and to a chlorine leak at Thomas and Howard.

Mr. Hipp commented on the potentials with County funding being used to build on City property. He said municipalities could also request Capital Project Sales Tax funding and asked if they talked with the City prior to submitting it as a County project.

Mr. Koon said it was mentioned to the City and the reason he was given was the City did not want it counted against them as a Capital Project Sales Tax Project. We are sort of "married to the City" and the City firefighters usually have the Hazmat truck rolling before he gets out of his house.

Mr. Hipp asked if it would be possible to build their hazmat facility on County property as part of an attachment to Station 14 vs. the City's station.

Mr. Koon said he did not think it would work too well. Their working relationship with the City works great and he would hate to see it changed.

Chairman Livingston asked if the proposed amount to complete the project met the requirements the City placed on this addition.

Mr. West said the costs reflex the external construction required by the City.

Councilman Koon asked what the City would do 10 years from now for more space if this additional was completed.

Mr. Koon said the City's plans were to build another station at the Industrial Park and Station 21 would be used for one truck and administration; however, they have decided this is something they cannot do without raising taxes.

Mr. Adams shared that the millage limitation caps that the legislature enacted in 2006 would enable the City raise taxes enough to pay for additional fire fighter positions.

Chairman Livingston commented that he would rather have sticker shock up front with lower cost at the end than what happened the last time. He thanked Alliance and Mr. West for their assistance in getting Council some realistic figures.

## **9. Opera House Renovation CPST Presentation**

Deborah Smith, Executive Director, and Dr. Wiseman made the presentation on behalf of the Opera House Renovations. Dr. Wiseman stated that the Opera House has been the catalyst for economic growth in Newberry County bringing in 100,000 people a year. He said the Opera House has had a lot of traffic and needs refurbishing. In order to keep her percolating, we need some support.

Ms. Smith said they do all they can to survive each year and repairs have been neglected. These renovations and repairs will keep us competitive with the Kroger and Peace Centers and the places we compete with for leisure dollars. This is an opportunity for us to make the needed repairs and keep the Opera House a major draw for the Midlands.

## **10. Public Comments (by those who signed up at meeting)**

No. Comments

## **11. Comments from County Administrator**

No Comments

**12. Comments/Request from Council Members**

Chairman Livingston and members of Council thanked the presenters and stated that this was going to be a very hard decision for Council and the Commissioners.

**13. Vote to Adjourn**

Mr. Waldrop motioned to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Baker. The vote was unanimous.

**14. Adjournment**

Chairman Livingston declared the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

**NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL**

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**Henry H. Livingston, III, Chairman**

**APPROVED:**

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**Laurie N. Renwick, Clerk to Council**

