

Special Called County Council Meeting

August 22, 2019

1:34 PM

County Council met in special session at Alliance Pickens, with Chairman Roy Costner presiding. Agendas, bearing date, time, and location of meeting were mailed to members of council and local news media on August 21, 2019.

Council Members in Attendance:

Roy Costner, Chairman

Chris Bowers, Vice Chairman

Wes Hendricks, Vice Chairman Pro-Tem

Ensley Feemster

Carl Hudson

Trey Whitehurst (Absent)

Staff in Attendance:

Ken Roper, Acting County Administrator

Meagan Bradford, Clerk to Council

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Roy Costner called the meeting of August 22, 2019 to order and welcomed those in attendance.

ENHANCED RECRUITMENT PLAN – PICKENS COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE

Mr. Roper stated as a review, several years back, the Sheriff came to County Council and expressed a need for a new jail to be built. That County Council made the decision to authorize that to move forward. He stated this County Council found a way to finance that new jail, without having a tax increase. Mr. Roper stated the jail was authorized, financed, bid out, constructed and is now near completion. He stated this County Council was also approached by the Sheriff’s office last fall and was asked to create new positions to staff this jail. The County Council acted appropriately and quickly to create those positions. Mr. Roper stated in the budget that was passed this year, Council funded those positions at the level the Sheriff’s office requested.

Mr. Roper stated since this time, market condition has changed. He stated we have seen some of our neighboring counties change their level of detention pay. He stated we are in a situation where we are not as competitive as we would like on pay, and at the same time, we need to recruit a large number of officers at once. Mr. Roper stated once Council realized this, they instructed staff to find some solutions and staff comes back to Council today to present those solutions. Mr. Roper stated Sheriff Clark has been helping staff.

Mr. Roper advised one thing they are trying to do is expand their job advertisements. He stated usually, we would just post a job on the county website, post it on the county internal job bulletin board and advertise it on social media. Mr. Roper stated with a competitive job market, we aren’t able to do that. He stated Lisa Bryant, Human Resources Director, has come up with other ways we can advertise this position. Mr. Roper advised that the County is advertising the job postings on the following:

- Pickens County Internal Job Posting Board
- Pickens County Website
- Pickens County Sheriff’s Office Facebook
- Pickens County SC Facebook/Social Media Accounts
- Clemson University

- SC Association of Counties
- SC Works
- Tri-County Technical College (in process)

Mr. Roper stated we are also using paid advertising, such as indeed.com to try and advertise these vacancies. He stated we are also going to do a short recruitment video or step-by-step to be posted on Facebook (in process). He stated this will be to show there are three things about this position:

1. Upward mobility/opportunity for advancement. The current Sheriff started out in Law Enforcement as a Detention Officer.
2. Brand new state of the art Jail – latest and greatest
3. Live, work, play in the beautiful upstate of SC near mountains and lakes. Pickens County is your natural destination.

Next, Mr. Roper discussed that while working with the Sheriff, staff came up with a proposed reasonable increase in salaries for Detention Officers. He stated we are not going for what they pay in Greenville County, as they cannot afford this, but we are going to try to market the things we have that Greenville County does not have. He stated in Option 1, they are looking into bringing the Detention Officer's salary up to \$37,423. He stated staff believes this is competitive with neighboring counties. Mr. Roper stated staff does not recommend option 2, which would bring the detention officers and deputies up to what they are making in Greenville County. Mr. Roper stated they do not believe this is realistic in our budget constraints and the nature of our job positions here in Pickens County.

Lastly, Mr. Roper stated there are still punch list items needing to be done for the jail to be complete. He stated the SC Department of Correction has approved/cleared the building (structure) as of this past Friday, August 16, 2019. The next step is to complete the final punch list and move/order supplies, linens, etc. into the new jail. After this is complete, staff will begin moving into the building. Mr. Roper advised there will be training that has to occur in the new jail and will continue this process as staff moves in. He stated they are still several weeks away from the jail opening. Mr. Roper advised not only has the Sheriff offered to work a shift himself in the detention center, but he also has had road deputies take shifts in the jail. Mr. Roper stated the sheriff has consulted with the SC. Department of Corrections to request permission to continue using Deputies to fill in for Detention Officer Positions in the jail until our vacancies are filled. This will require Deputies to receive onsite specific Detention Training that can be performed by our local staff, and will allow them to move inmates in. Mr. Roper stated the Sheriff endorses this plan and asks Council to consider adopting it.

Chairman Costner stated he agrees with majority of Council, stating just throwing away money at something is not a way to fix it. He stated he feels it is really important how we message out to potential candidates.

Councilman Ensley Feemster stated we need to be thankful that Gerald Wilson was able to come up with a way to save 14 positions. He stated if it had not been for the fact that we moved the stockade in, we would have had to have 14 additional positions.

Chairman Costner asked how staff will come up with the funding for this.

Mr. Roper stated we will have options. He stated one of the options is to delay capital purchases. Mr. Roper stated the reason they would try to do it this way, is because this is reoccurring money that is in the budget, so we will not be coming back to Council to ask for a tax increase. He advised we would supplement those capital purchases as needed to occur from the general fund. Mr. Roper stated there are other savings that have occurred because the vacancies still exist. He stated he is confident that in this

budget cycle, we will not have any budget impact. He stated in the next budget cycle, Council will have to be careful with the funding.

Councilman Wes Hendricks stated he would like to commend staff and the Sheriff for coming up with this plan to where we will not have to ask for tax dollars. He stated after researching and looking at this plan, this number is in line with the research he discovered when he did it on his own. He stated he is confident that Sheriff Clark will continue to have a culture to where people will want to come from other counties to work here.

Vice Chairman Chris Bowers asked Mr. Roper if the capital funding was something Council bragged about when we passed the budget, that we finally have a capital fund that's recurring. Vice Chairman Bowers stated it would still be recurring, but we would no longer have capital funding that is recurring.

Mr. Roper stated we can do this and supplement it with one time money from the general fund so we do not delay things such as purchasing trucks, etc. He stated we do not need to delay these types of purchases so we may need to come back and ask for funding for the general fund. He stated this will be an issue that this Council and staff will have to address in the long term because we can get through this budget cycle by doing this, but it is not a long term plan for capital. Mr. Roper stated we are reaching into next year's budget already by doing this.

Chairman Costner asked if would make sense to go ahead and move the money from the general fund.

Vice Chairman Bowers stated he thought about this, and we approved these positions a year and two months ago. He stated we have a year on the books where we did not hire anyone for these positions. He asked how much is there.

Mr. Roper stated the Finance Director is still closing out the books for FY 2018-2019. He stated the Finance Director stated this amount of money at the end of June would convert to the general fund to be available for Council to reallocate, but to keep in mind that the Sheriff's Office has significant overtime and is using a lot more in their fuel budget than normal. He stated the proposal is staff's recommendation to Council for a way to recognize that this is not going to be easy for us to do. He stated where we are currently is going to cause us to make decisions in the next budget cycle. Mr. Roper stated after this, it will be up to the Sheriff to get the jail open. Council has done all he asked you to do.

Vice Chairman Chris Bowers stated if he remembers correctly, March was supposed to be the opening date of the new facility. He stated he remembers one of the first tasks asked of Council was funding and pay raise for all County employees across the board. He stated we were the first county in the upstate to do a major pay raise and since then, Greenville, Oconee and Anderson County has caught up with us. He asked why we are in this position if we were supposed to be fully staffed by March, and that is what we funded for. He stated we weren't underpaid in March. He asked how money is going to fix this situation, if money was not the problem then.

Mr. Roper stated the proposal they have in front of them is not just stating they need a check. He stated we have to be more comprehensive in our approach. Mr. Roper stated Human Resources Director has been working on this for a couple of weeks now and they believe they have come up with a plan to help. He stated he cannot speak to what has happened with the Sheriff before and he believes we need to broaden our efforts because we are in a unique situation, and we need to raise our market and get the best employees.

Chairman Costner stated he thinks there are a lot of people in Pickens County that do not know, believe, or understand what it means on these jobs because we are not marketing these jobs like they should be.

After more discussion, Vice Chairman Chris Bowers stated if you want to pull people away from other counties/facilities, then we are going to need to pay people better than they are making currently. He stated he does not think raising the salaries will fix the problem.

Councilman Wes Hendricks stated the culture and recruiting has got to be better.

Councilman Carl Hudson stated having a past career in Law Enforcement, he knows what the people face. He stated our current jail is in terrible shape. Having said this, he stated he has to believe when this new facility is open, and through pay incentives, he believes the moral will be better for working at the jail. He stated he can understand why the Sheriff has lost some people and a lot of people come in to see the current condition of the jail and are scared to death. He stated there are a lot of moving parts to this. He believes it is a perfect storm of circumstances.

Vice Chairman Chris Bowers stated he believes this is an emergency at this moment because we do not have enough staff to open the new jail. He stated he doesn't believe that is this Council's fault. He stated the Sheriff's budget is close to 100% it has grown since current Council has been in office. He has had the newest capital in a long time, and Council has bent over backwards to try and accommodate more than another other Elected Official. He stated it is not just the sheriff; we have done it for Fire, EMS, etc. because Council got together and decided Public Safety is a priority to do. He stated that is why the Sheriff's budget has grown, and that's why the EMS Depts., Fire Depts., etc. are doing better because Council had goals. He stated we have done so much over the last couple of years that this is an emergency today because we do not have enough people to open it. He stated they have given staff, all kinds of resources, etc. and his concern is it is ultimately up to the Sheriff. He stated it is not the Administrators, Human Resources Director, to bring Council this plan today and state this is what is needed to be done. He stated Council has had the vision and goals since day 1. Vice Chairman Bowers stated he does understand they are underpaid at this moment, and understands we have to address this issue, that is the only thing that can be addressed is that they are underpaid at the moment. He stated he did speak with Councilman Whitehurst and he believes he would agree with everything he has said so far. He stated he is not in support of pay increase.

- Councilman Ensley Feemster made a motion to accept Option 1 as presented. Motion was seconded by Councilman Wes Hendricks. Chairman Roy Costner asked if there was any other discussion.
 - Vice Chairman Chris Bowers asked if Option 1 is where the recruitment piece comes into play, or is finance all we are voting on.
 - Mr. Roper stated he just need approval from Council on the financial part.
- Motion carried 4-1, with Vice Chairman Chris Bowers opposed.

ADJOURN:

Hearing no further Council business, Chairman Roy Costner called for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Vice Chairman Chris Bowers, seconded by Councilman Wes Hendricks and carried unanimously. Pickens County Council stood adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Respectively Submitted:

Approved:

Meagan Bradford, Clerk to Council

Roy B. Costner, III, Chairman of County Council