

**TOWN OF IRMO
COUNCIL WORKSHOP
May 3, 2022**

The Irmo Town Council held a Workshop on Tuesday, May 3, 2022, in the Municipal Building. In attendance was Mayor Walker, Mayor Pro Tem Danielson, Councilmen Busch, Sickinger and Councilwoman Waldman. Others present were Mr. Courtney Dennis, Town Administrator; Police Chief Bobby Dale; Mrs. Renee Caviness, Finance Director & Municipal Clerk; Mr. Rodney Tucker, Assistant Town Administrator; Mr. Will Edwards, Town Attorney.

The agenda was published and posted on Friday, April 29, 2022, to meet FOIA requirements.

Mayor Walker called the workshop to order at 7:04 p.m.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. DISCUSSION ON CRIMINAL/CIVIL CODE VIOLATIONS (SICKINGER):

Mr. Sickinger stated that he believes putting people in jail for not cutting the grass is wrong because the punishment does not fit the crime. He wants Council to consider changing code enforcement fines from criminal to civil. Mr. Edwards mentioned that civil cases are processed by the county. He stated that towns and cities handle code enforcement issues different ways. He explained that the City of Charleston allows violator (if they do not correct the problem) to get 30 days in jail or pay a fine. Mr. Edwards further explained that he could put a lien on the property, but the Town will not get the fines until the property is sold, or it is foreclosed on and takes longer to settle. Mayor Walker mentioned that he was in a meeting where a law is in the works that if the issues is not corrected, the law would allow for municipalities to put the fines against the violator tax refunds. This would allow the Town to get the fines sooner. Council agreed to research this more.

B. DISCUSSION ON COMMUNITY PARK IMPROVEMENTS (MAYOR):

Mayor Walker stated that the newly purchased property near the Community Park of Irmo must be cleared with gravel or mulch by July and he does not believe it will be ready in time. He explained that he knows someone right now who will get it done in the next week or so for \$55,000 and can start next week. Mr. Dennis explained that the property is currently being cleared. However, they cannot remove stumps and level the land until they get a Land Disturbance Permit from the County. Mr. Sickinger confirmed with Mr. Cline that they had approximately 300 parking spots which were used during the recent Irmo International Festival. Mr. Cline explained that they are taking the mulch from the trees that have been cut down to create a parking area. After a short conversation, Mayor and Council asked Mr. Dennis to instruct the Engineer to proceed to get the Land Distribution Permit from the County.

C. DISCUSSION ON ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR THE COMMUNITY GARDEN:

Mayor Walker stated that Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority has been working diligently on the community garden at Rawls Creek Park. He explained that they have spent significant amount money to get the garden started and have only built approximately 20 beds of the 60 they had planned to build. Due to the increase cost of materials, they would like to receive an additional \$13,000 from the Town of Irmo for the rest of the materials that is needed to complete the project. Mr. Cline stated that they should have water by

the end of the week. Mayor Walker wants to put this on the next agenda as an action item. Mr. Danielson wants to help but voiced his concerns about giving the group more money thus setting a precedent where other groups will want more funds as well. Mr. Busch stated that the group can come back when the Town receives the next set of funds. Council wants the group to show them what they budgeted for the material, the current cost and show the difference before going on the next agenda. Both Mr. Danielson and Mr. Busch agreed to donate \$1,000 from their personal account to get the needed materials. Dr. Waldman also suggested that the group contact the recently closed nursery to see about getting some of their materials.

D. DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL BUS SERVICE IN IRMO (WALDMAN):

Mr. Sickinger wanted to discuss the results of the recent survey that was about increasing the Comet Bus Service in the Town. Mr. Sickinger would like to revamp the survey and put it out again. He is concerned that people were persuaded by a Facebook post from people who do not live in the Town. Mr. Sickinger and Dr. Waldman want more organic answers where they can look closer at the data to determine which areas want or need the additional service. Council agreed to run it for another week.

E. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON THE TOWN FLAG COMMITTEE (SICKINGER) :

Mr. Sickinger stated that he met with the Town Flag Committee, and they are ready to make an announcement that they are accepting submissions from now to June 6, 2022. In the announcement they will give some general parameters such as colors and other general guidelines and framework that you must live, work or play in the Town of Irmo and include a disclaimer that the winner is releasing all rights to their work to the Town of Irmo. All of Council agreed and wants it to be announced as soon as possible.

F. OPEN DISCUSSION:

1. Mayor Walker stated that shots were fired near the Harbison Garden area and is being investigated. They do know it is coming from the Harbison Garden area. Mayor Walker wants the City of Columbia as well as the County to address the problem in the area. He explained that he has been contacted by many citizens stating they are scared because of the violence. Council agreed that something needs to be done and believes that another meeting needs to be setup to discuss the issues with City of Columbia, Richland, and Lexington County to see what can be done to address the citizen's issues.

2. Mr. Danielson stated that he went to the Planning Commission meeting and stated that the meeting was unprofessional and lacked structure. Mr. Dennis is planning to discuss with Mr. Edwards about the possibility of attending the Planning Commission meetings going forward.

3. Mr. Dennis let Council know that the Comprehensive Plan & Zoning manual is a living document that has some discrepancies in it and with Mr. Tucker's help they are working through them. Mr. Tucker stated that he is reviewing the Comprehensive Plan. He explained that the Comprehensive Plan is Council's vision for the Town. He discussed that the Plan is used to establish a set of guidelines and procedures that will serve as a tool for Council in making informed decisions about land development, economic growth, infrastructure improvements, housing, and transportation needs, and protecting natural and cultural resources. Mr. Tucker mentioned that the State Law requires that the plan be re-evaluated every five years to reflect changes in growth or direction of development. The Irmo Planning Commission must prepare and recommend a new plan every 10 years. However, the Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed regularly and make changes as necessary.

4. Mr. Danielson asked Chief Dale if he felt he had Council's support and wanted to make sure they are getting the tools they need. Chief Dale explained that they are getting the support they need and that the police officers feel the same way. He stated that it is a huge morale booster when Council stops by to talk to the Police Officers and when Council vocalizes their support for the officers. Chief Dale ended by stating that they are doing good and feel supported by the Community, Council and Management.

5. Mr. Dennis mentioned that he had received a request to have all the workshops start at 6 p.m. and stated that if Council want to proceed with the requestion to let him know so it can be added to the next agenda.

6. Mr. Dennis let Council know that MASC Annual Meeting is scheduled for July 14th – 17th in Charleston and to be on the look out for more information in the coming weeks.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further items to discuss, Mr. Sickinger made a motion to adjourn, and Mr. Busch seconded it. The motion was approved unanimously; therefore, the workshop was adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry A. Walker, Sr.", written over a horizontal line.

Barry A. Walker, Sr., Mayor

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Renee Caviness", written over a horizontal line.

Renee Caviness, Municipal Clerk