

**Aberdeen City Council Meeting
April 2, 2007**

OPENING:

Roll Call: The Aberdeen City Council Meeting roll was called with the following results:

Present: Mayor Simmons, Council President Hiob, Councilwoman Elliott, Councilmen Kupferman and Yensan

Absent: None

Also Present: Mr. Miller, Ms. Grover, Mr. Jack, and Chief Rudy

Mayor Simmons called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The prayer was led by Chief Rudy and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilwoman Elliott.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of the March 26, 2007 meeting were approved as submitted.

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Proclamation – 2007 Maryland Chiefs’ Challenge Campaign – Aberdeen Police Department

Sgt. Severn reported that this was the 6th Annual Maryland Chiefs’ Challenge for *Click It or Ticket*. This campaign promotes awareness for automobile and seat belt education and enforcement. It also enforces the use of child safety seats. Currently, there is 91.5% average for seat belt usage in Maryland; the goal is 100%. This program helps save lives of automobile passengers and children and reduces serious injury and death.

Mayor Simmons noted that the current campaign will run from April 3, 2007 through June 3, 2007. This program promotes public awareness and education for organizations and private citizens. Mayor Simmons presented a Proclamation for the campaign to Sgt. Severn for the City.

2. Proclamation – Andre Sconion (Student Athlete) Aberdeen High School Wrestler

Mayor Simmons noted that Andre Sconion lost his sight at the age of four. Currently, he is wrestling for Aberdeen and has compiled a record of 6 wins and 4 defeats. He is a great asset to the team and the City as well as an outstanding example to others with disabilities. In addition, Andre is an outstanding scholar, athlete, and is greatly respected by his peers. Mayor Simmons named April 2, 2007 as Andre Sconion Day in the City of Aberdeen.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Ms. Karen Heavey, 634 W. Bel Air Avenue

Ms. Heavey said there are problems on the west side of the City as well as on the east side with infrastructure. She experienced a sewer backup at her home recently. The City Employees were commended for their prompt response to her call. Ms. Heavey asked if an after hours telephone number could be made available for emergency water and sewer problems.

Ms. Heavey received an answer to her Public Information Act request which indicates that the Aberdeen City Charter requires members of the Council and the City Staff be sworn in. On March 6, 2007 she filed the Public Information request that the City Staff follow this directive. Ms. Heavey received a letter from Ms. Correll, City Clerk, stating that the oath was administered on March 23, 2007 in the Mayor’s office. She felt that this event should be done publicly at a City Council meeting in the future.

2. Staff Sgt. Rodney Sprull, 409 S. Juniata Street

Staff Sgt. Sprull said he came to the area in 1986. He noted that he “hated the police and stayed away from the City”. Recently, he was stopped by Officer Alexander and, as a result of the officer’s professionalism, wrote a letter of commendation to Chief Rudy. This letter was read by the Chief at the last Council meeting. Staff Sgt. Sprull congratulated Chief Rudy on the change of attitude of the entire Aberdeen Police Department.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

None

BUSINES OF THE COUNCIL:

1. Unfinished Business – None
2. New Business – None
3. Business from the Director of Planning and Community Development

Ms. Grover informed the Council that the Draft Property Maintenance Code has been completed and forwarded to the City Manager and the City Attorney for review on legal issues. She is prepared to present it to the Mayor and Council after the 30-day review period.

Mayor Simmons said this will be a big development for a City the size of Aberdeen with 40% rental properties. He commended Ms. Grover and her department for their work on this issue.

Ms. Grover announced that the Planning Commission meeting has been changed to April 4th and has a large agenda.

The Council was also informed that the Board of Appeals Hearing is scheduled for April 18th.

No meetings will be held on April 11th.

4. Business from the Chief of Police

Chief Rudy said the Elkton Police joined with the Aberdeen Police on an operation March 30th which focused on prostitution in the City. Nine arrests were made for solicitation, drugs, etc. There were four officers at these arrests from Elkton.

Chief Rudy reported that there was a fatal house fire at 756 Cambridge Avenue. The victim was Ms. Edna Dennison.

Chief Rudy informed the Council that one of his officers is leaving May 29th to return to the military and be sent back to the Middle East.

5. Business from the Director of Finance

Mr. Jack had no report.

Mayor Simmons said the Council and Staff are currently holding sub-committee meetings on Budget issues.

6. Business from the Director of Public Works

None

7. Business from the City Manager

Mr. Miller said the Budget would be delayed two weeks for the Council to address Ripken Stadium issues which will impact the Budget. Meetings will be held with the Mayor in late April and in early May with the entire Council. The completed Budget will be available in late May or early June.

Mayor Simmons noted that parity issues must be addressed due to substantial increases being awarded by Harford County. These are trying times with budget issues.

Mr. Miller announced that City Hall will be closed on Friday, April 6th; and there will be no Council meeting on Monday, April 11th. City Hall will be open on Monday. The meeting format will be changed. Every third meeting will have a more relaxed agenda similar to the Wednesday meetings which were held last year. The Council meeting on April 16th will follow the formal format, the next meeting will have the relaxed format.

8. Business from the Council

Councilwoman Elliott reported that lights are out on the Senior Center flag pole and there is water in the lights in the building.

Councilman Kupferman reported on the following issues:

- intense Budget issues in the next few months
- final Matrix report due in April, preliminary work has been completed
- sale of the Swim Club and acreage is being pursued
- plans to move the Senior Center and Community Building to Beards Hill Road are being explored
- Beards Hill Road improvements are taking place
- activity at the Colonel's Choice Restaurant
- the OPUS has been sold and activity should take place soon so the City will benefit from taxes on several million square feet of office space
- no firm plans from Nottingham Properties, increased publicity on Ripken stadium due to lack of revenue – income revenue is 3 – 4 years away
- B & O complex has been sold and building should take place in the near future
- an April meeting will be held with the Army to help move the plans for moving the water plant forward and deciding on details
- he will present a plan for a tax decrease at the appropriate time even though the Budget is difficult
- residents are encouraged to ask questions and submit suggestions to help with a favorable process
- the Annexation Committee will hold several more meetings to get a comprehensive package – procedures will be changed for the better.

Councilman Yensan has received calls and complaints regarding the City Voice Mail System being full. He asked that the Staff check on this because the residents are “customers”.

Councilman Yensan has also received inquiries regarding confusion on Stadium issues. The Stadium was a good plan when it was enacted but due to unforeseen problems, it is losing money. If there is a sale, the City will still receive the A & A Tax.

Councilman Yensan attended the Hall of Fame Induction at Aberdeen High School. He was honored to present awards to the inductees: Ms. Cronin, Mr. Petit, and General Stevenson.

Council President Hiob said he has made no “grandstanding accusations”. There will be no promises made on the Budget; the numbers will tell the story.

Council President Hiob spoke with the City Manager and Mr. Dukes and the pool will remain open under the same management for the next three years.

9. Business from the Mayor

Mayor Simmons noted that it was known that the revenue stream from the Stadium would never pay all debts and expenses. Additional revenue was needed from A & A Taxes, property tax, and residential real estate taxes. If all of these issues were met, the Stadium would be in black ink. Currently, the City is exploring a sale to Tufton Professional Baseball, LLC with the help of the County and State. Mayor Simmons and the Council are excited by the prospect of selling the Stadium. This will be a good step for both sides.

Mayor Simmons held a meeting with the Governor and Lt. Governor on 220 Main Street to discuss BRAC. They are knowledgeable, holding meetings, and offering help. Currently, the City is asking for help on reallocation of funds which were designated prior to the initiation of BRAC.

Meetings are being held with the Department of Business and Economic Development regarding a Grant going to the Office of Economic Adjustment for 8 or 9 million dollars. Those attending the meeting will be Ms. Grover, Mr. Miller, Mayor Simmons, and some City Staff members.

Mayor Simmons referred to Ms. Heavey's reference to sewer backups. This occurs frequently with older homes. The current Budget has many challenges and is currently limited. The City of Aberdeen has some of the largest financial problems with BRAC in the history of BRAC. Also, the City has the lowest median income in the country of an area involved with BRAC. A mandate from Congress for 2011 exists with no financial assistance. Aberdeen's failing infrastructure will definitely be tested with BRAC.

Mayor Simmons mentioned the following needs which must be met: employees taken care of financially, a new water system, and upgrades to the water treatment plant. He wants input from everyone. Large problems must be addressed before the finite ones; relief will be coming down the road, but not in this Budget. Future development will provide relief.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Pastor Melvin Taylor, Word of Faith Outreach Ministries

Mayor Simmons thanked Pastor Taylor for all of the work his organization has furnished. Pastor Taylor apologized for his lateness and said he enjoys working with the City of Aberdeen.

2. Ms. Ruth Ann Young, 445 Doris Circle

Ms. Young asked if OPUS had sold the corporate office trust area. She was told that the multimodal area was sold to Black Oak Construction Company.

Ms. Young asked if the sale of the Stadium would include the sale of land. The sale will include the land and structure. Chief Rudy was asked when his Annual Report would be available. He said it would be submitted within the next few weeks.

2. Mr. Robert Price, P.O. Box 279

Mr. Price said the 2005-2006 Audit showed approximately 2 million dollars left. Where did the money go? Was it spent to solve other problems? Mr. Jack indicated that some was used in the General Fund Operations. Mayor Simmons suggested that Mr. Price contact Mr. Jack for further detailed information.

3. Mr. Bob Hartman, 226 Paradise Road

Mr. Hartman asked the amount of ground rent for the Stadium. Mr. Miller will check on that information.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None

Pastor Taylor offered a benediction for the closing of the Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Statement of Closed Session

On April 2, 2007 at 5:00 p.m. at Aberdeen City Hall in Room 203, a closed session was held by unanimous vote of the Council. The session was held pursuant to the Open Meetings Act, Section 10-508 (3) to consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto, and (7) to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice. The Mayor and Council were in attendance. In addition Elwood Stark, City Attorney; Douglas Miller, City Manager; and Monica Correll, City Clerk were in attendance. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m. There was no action taken during the session.