

**Minutes**  
**Economic Planning and Development Committee**  
**March 4, 2019**  
**1<sup>st</sup> committee meeting**

Members present were Chairman Taft Matney , Committee members Scott Crosby and Terry Merritt . Van Broad, Community Development Director and Brandon Madden, City Administrator were also present.

1. Call to Order- Chairman Matney
2. Public Comment

Ben Culbreth: My name is Ben Culbreth and I represent Audubon South Carolina. Audubon South Carolina works to protect birds and the places they live. The two educational centers in the state see 16,000 visitors each year. We also provide programming for 6,000 students annually. Audubon South Carolina owns 22,000 acres of land that we actively manage and restore. We are invested in shaping conservation outcomes in our state. I appreciate the committee taking up the issue of solar reform.

House bill 3659, the Clean Energy Access Act, passed the House of Representatives unanimously two weeks ago. Our organization and others with vested interest in the continuation of solar whole heartedly supports this bill and are proud of our Representatives for demonstrating strong leadership with its passage. The legislation will ensure a more competitive utility market in South Carolina, protect jobs and create new ones, and allow customers more choice in their energy options.

We are hopeful the companion bill, Senate bill 332, will receive a Senate vote very soon.

I am here to ask that committee support solar expansion. This industry employs nearly 3,000 people across the state- many of which are in the upstate. In fact there are 10 solar companies in Greater Greenville alone.

The solar energy progress in South Carolina has captured national attention because it is a growing sector that stimulates economic investment in our state to the tune of \$766 million. We have the opportunity to continue this tremendous solar growth which is one more driver to push us forward as a place of economic prosperity. Audubon has joined this cause because it benefits South Carolinians. Beyond the economic impact, solar energy is better fro the 400 species of bids we work hard to protect in our state. What is good for birds is good for people. A cleaner energy solution will protect the mountains we all enjoy in he Upstate and all of our beautiful lands and waterways. Protecting the natural resources is what makes South Carolina a special place to call home.

I hope you will support solar reform and express that support to the general assembly.

3. Reading and Approval of Minutes

- a. EPD Committee Meeting: February 11, 2019  
Councilman Crosby made a motion to approve the minutes with Councilman Merritt seconding. The vote was unanimous (3-0).

4. Reports or Communications from City Officers

- a. Budget Review- The budget looks good.
- b. Department Reports- Staff is continuing to meet with development groups on opportunities in Mauldin. Cultural center renovations are moving forward. Chairman Matney asked if there have been any surprised. Van answered no. Brandon has asked for an update on the project which will be given to council soon.

5. Unfinished Business- None

6. New Business

- a. Potential Grant for Autonomous Vehicles- Fred Payne was present to talk about this grant. Clemson University is applying for a grant for automated driving systems. Fred Payne works for a company that has a memorandum of understanding with Greenville County, the City of Mauldin, the City of Greenville and the City of Clemson to write grants. The federal government can be asked for up to \$10 million dollars for automated driving systems and data collection. The primary objective is to collect safety data. This proposal would be for multiple autonomous vehicles. This would be a four year grant. Before the cars are brought to Mauldin, they will be tested in other areas such as SCTAC. The vehicles will have a safety officer on board at all times to take control of the vehicle if necessary. There is no cost share for this program and the City is only being asked for a letter of support. The grant is due March 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Payne said Mauldin is a integral part of this grant and would like to have the letter. Mr. Payne asked for a draft letter before the council meets on March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Councilman Crosby made a motion to send this item to council with a recommendation of approval and Mr. Madden work on a draft letter of approval. Councilman Merritt seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (3-0).

- b. Solar reform- Bill S332 is the companion of H.3659, a Consumer Solar Energy Bill working its way through the SC Senate and recently referred on 2/7/2019 to sub-committee for further discussion. The purpose of the bill is to enable residential, commercial and large utility users the following rights under the Clean Energy Access Act. This omnibus solar, reform and energy independence act may provide more choice, more jobs and lower electric bills.

The bill proposes the following:

Residential Solar Action Plan

Remove the net metering cap and solar leasing caps and allow ratepayers freedom to choose their own energy source

Ensure fair compensation for what solar users generate and use by calculating the net energy used over the course of a month

Prevent non-solar customers from paying for revenue lost by a utility because of solar.

Prohibit utilities from setting discriminatory rates specifically for solar customers.

#### Corporate & Industrial Solar Action Plan

Allow big companies to negotiate and contract directly with renewable energy suppliers, establishing the purchase price and contract length directly with the renewable energy supplier.

Ensure that the price and length of independent renewable energy contracts are honored by the utility monopolies, while compensating the utilities for transmitting the power.

Credit the purchasers of independent renewable energy using wholesale power rates that are set in a fair, open, and transparent proceeding.

#### Large Scale Solar Action Plan

Create a fair, open, and transparent rate setting processes for large-scale solar facilities in front of the Public Service Commission that is separate from the rubber-stamp fuel proceedings.

Ensure rates paid to large scale solar facilities are reflective of costs a utility would have paid to produce a unit of energy on their own.

Reduce utility delays for connecting to the grid and in contract negotiations.

Prevent utilities from killing large scale solar projects simply by ignoring them and refusing to connect them to the grid.

#### Solar Access for All South Carolinians

Allow solar developers to create “neighborhood community solar programs” that allow low and moderate income customers to take advantage of solar savings.

Remove the cap on solar leasing to maintain an important tool to make solar and its bill-reducing benefits available to customers who don't have the funds to buy an entire solar power system.

Van said the Municipal Association is tracking this legislation.

There is no action needed on this item.

Councilman Merritt asked if a motion should be made to send this to council for development of a letter of support from our city council. Chairman Matney said that could be done if it is the will of committee, but he would rather the support come from individual council members and not from council as a whole for precedent.

Councilman Merritt made a motion to send this item to council to develop a letter of support or proclamation for solar reform. Councilman Crosby seconded the motion and the vote was 2-1 with Chairman Matney opposing.

- c. Motion to enter into Executive Session for the consideration of a contractual matter involving Family Dollar and Chicora Alley as allowed by State Statute Section 30-4-70 (a)(2)

Councilman Crosby made a motion to go into executive session for all three matters with Councilman Merritt seconding. The vote was unanimous (3-0).

Chairman Matney called the meeting back to order at 7:39 p.m. Councilman Crosby reported no votes were taken and no decisions were made in executive session.

- d. Motion to enter into Executive Session for the consideration of an Economic Development Matter and to receive legal advice as allowed by State Statute Section 30-4-70 (a)(5)
- e. Motion to enter into Executive Session for the consideration of an Economic Development Matter involving Project Square and Project Circle as allowed by State Statute Section 30-4-70 (a)(5)
- f. Possible action on item(s) discussed in Executive Session

Councilman Crosby made a motion to send the Chicora Alley and Family Dollar contractual matter to full council. Councilman Merritt seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (3-0).

7. Public Comment- None

8. Committee Concerns-

Chairman Matney said he received a forwarded email today about the potholes that are all over the City. He sees this as an economic development problem. We have a large pothole in front of the Social Security Building and up and down East Butler. These potholes will keep people from coming through Mauldin. There is also a safety concern so they need to be taken care of. Chairman Matney said DOT is not doing what they need to in Mauldin so we need to repair the potholes. Councilman Merritt said he strongly supports this as well. East and West Butler Road has some bad potholes. He would like someone proactively to drive around and report these issues so that council is not the ones bringing it up.

9. Adjourn- Chairman Matney adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy Miller  
Municipal Clerk