



County Council Committee Minutes

Public Safety and Judiciary Committee June 15, 2020

The Public Safety and Judiciary Committee of Spartanburg County Council met on Monday, June 15, 2020, in County Council Chambers of the County Administrative Office Building. In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, notice of this meeting was provided in advance to the local news media and other interested parties. The following were in attendance: Honorable Michael Brown, Chairman; Honorables Whitney Farr and Bob Walker, Committee Members; along with Honorables Manning Lynch, Jack Mabry, David Britt, and Roger Nutt, Council Members. Also attending were Cole Alverson, County Administrator; Earl Alexander, Deputy County Administrator; John Harris, County Attorney; and Ginny Dupont, County Attorney.

I.

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order.

II.

- A. Mr. Murray Glenn, Administrator, 7th Circuit Solicitor's Office, presented information in reference to a request from the **Solicitor's Office** to apply for a grant titled, "Operation Safe Courtroom." Mr. Murray stated the Solicitor's Office is starting to look ahead to the reopening of Court. They have found some federal money. It is a one-year grant application with no local match. They are hoping to get reimbursed about \$10,000 for large televisions they put in each General Sessions Courtroom. The second part of the proposal is Trial Director Software. The advantage of this will be electronic submission of evidence to minimize the trading of paper between the involved parties in Court matters. The third element is an enhanced version of Westlaw Edge. It is legal software that Attorneys can depend on every day. The enhanced version is unique in that it has thousands of hours of continuing education on it. Motion made by Mr. Walker to approve submittal of the grant application. Motion seconded by Mr. Farr and carried.
- B. Motion made by Mr. Farr to authorize the Commission of **Zachary D. Taylor**, Building Codes Department, as a Spartanburg County Building

Codes Enforcement Officer. Motion seconded by Mr. Walker and carried.

C. Updated information received regarding activities of Building Codes

- III. Mr. Brown asked the Chairman if he could make some comments about recent times. Public Safety has obviously been at the heart of a lot of potential perceived, but not in this community, actual unrest. Mr. Brown stated that he does appreciate the number of phone calls he received from various Council Members. We are in times that it becomes unfortunate that yet again at the loss of another person's life in a way that we would never anticipate from those who are sworn to protect and serve, but it also gives an opportunity for a broader conversation. Mr. Brown stated that he appreciates those who came out and were able to share his comments when they had initial comments and did a joint statement with the City in terms of what they knew would be upcoming protests. It becomes unfortunate, because often times the white community does not know how to react when black and brown people get mad over something that has gone on since color to this country. You keep hearing the number 401, four hundred and one years, 1619, Roanoke, Virginia, when the first recognition of people of color being in this country bought to do service, and indeed that expanded to channel slavery, and the messages of that remain. People can debate in terms of progress that has been made by communities of color, but things unfortunately have not changed when it comes to systemic racism. No matter where you find yourself in this country, it is just an unfortunate thing that we have to find ourselves in a position where there is position perception that for many people in this country cannot be overcome.

Mr. Brown stated that he has heard it said in many different ways, but it is a common refrain that he has heard even a recent friend of his repeat that the safest or the most dangerous place, depending on how you flip that coin, for a black man to exist in this country is in the minds of white people, because it is perception. Perception in terms of what you do not see here in Spartanburg. Yes, we have things that occur, and we do have the necessary interactions of law enforcement, but that perception becomes something that spills over to whenever there is an interaction, the first thing that could go on in someone's mind is what is going to happen in this situation. All too often we see with the advance of technology in recent times, but it has been going on since the time of slave patrols which is the history of policing in this country or the beginning thereof, people, unfortunately, in the most terrible manner are losing their lives. This country is literally on the fringe of being pulled apart over issues that relate to something that we all know we do have a God given right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We respect our constitution. We know the time in which this country was coming together was different, but we know

we can move forth as a nation. Each and every one of us is in this together. So, it is something we have to respect.

Mr. Brown stated that for those people who did contact him about comments that came from another Constitutional Officer, he has had many conversations with an Elected Official that may not make the right comments, in his opinion, at times. Fanning the flames is what Mr. Brown heard. They certainly do not condone anything that would make people feel some notion of unease in this community. Mr. Brown stated that he is so very thankful that as members and leaders of the black community promised, there was not any type of violence. They promised there would not be any type of spillover. You would not see situations happen in Spartanburg that unfortunately, out of anger, out of total disgust, justified disgust, would happen here in Spartanburg. It reminded Mr. Brown of something he heard General Colin Powell state. General Powell stated that he had a conversation right after the Rodney King riots with then President George H. Bush, who wanted to respond, and his first speech seemed to be very on point about law and order and the need to go out and restore things, and how we have got to be heavy handed and there are certain things we have to say, and thank God during that time period the President was able to listen to General Powell in terms of adopting some things to let America know he was listening. He was able to recognize the pain. He was not being dismissive yet again with something else that occurred in the black community when a person, at the hands of law enforcement, not as an example, but unfortunately a reality of what systemic racism has become for each and every one of us. When you go out your front door as a black person, you do not know what your day is going to be like, but you know that you are going to be perceived in a certain way. It is a great burden to carry in this country that the majority of people in the sound of Mr. Brown's voice or the majority that are in this nation, does not have to live with. It is a great burden to think you pay the highest price potentially just because of the color of your skin.

Mr. Brown stated that he was not talking about just notions of discrimination. We can talk about policies that have been put in place to try to right those things, but the thing that has to be righted is the heart. You can see him and look at him in terms of a color, but you have to recognize that he is not different than you. He is God's creation. He does not care what a person's background is that makes them feel a certain way that they have to have hatred in their heart. Recognize that there is pain, and it is time that we move on in this country, and we come together. That is the whole point of this movement. It is not for people to be afraid and think something is going to happen to them, and oh, it cannot happen here in Spartanburg, and we have to go shutter our doors, border our businesses. This cannot be the case. We have to move beyond it. This is a different time. Spartanburg should not be any different.

Mr. Brown further stated that he knows this gives us opportunity to rise to our best moments as citizens of this County. He asked that we not take it lightly. Do not wait until, in your mind, something is going to happen. Do not anticipate that something is going to happen. Come together. Have an opportunity to sit down with someone that you normally would not sit down with and engage someone that you may see every day, but you rarely interact with them. Do not take people for granted just because of the color of their skin. Truly know that we are more than just what is betrayed in a sound bite. Thirty seconds, sixty seconds, what you see on the news is not the reality of the good people day in and day out that exist and thrive under the heavy burden, the heavy mantle, of systemic racism. Work on your hearts. See him as an individual; see us as a community of people that are just like any other community. There can be different situations in each and every community, but we all want to have an opportunity to exist and to thrive and to live.

It is not a condemnation of law enforcement, because there truly is black and blue in law enforcement. Mr. Brown so appreciates the words of Chief Alonzo Thompson in every round that they have been involved in this community, because it is very hard and very difficult for an African American to tow the line as a person that also has to protect and serve. This is another thing that goes on in our community that often goes unchecked and unappreciated. Mr. Brown appreciates his leadership, and he appreciates the candor that he can have in his own manner with Chuck Wright. He appreciates the fact that Sheriff Wright did keep his word to him, and he did extend a lane going up Highway 9 and allow marchers to protest in peace.

Mr. Brown stated that he wanted to share this. He apologized for being emotional, but he is emotional every day over issues like this. He is emotional every day in which he sees, yet again, another life being cut short in many different manners. Not only in terms of life just literally being snuffed out like George Floyd and so many others that happens in this country, but people that are not given the true opportunity to live out the best of what we know this country is.

Mr. Brown thanked Chairman Lynch for the moment to speak, and he expressed his appreciation for those who are out on the lines keeping us safe, and he also appreciates those who really know that this is a reality, and this is a different time, and we must come together.

Meeting adjourned.