



Town of Hilton Head Island
Intergovernmental Committee Meeting

Monday, October 7, 2019 at 10:00 am
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers

Meeting Minutes

- Present From the Committee:** Tom Lennox, David Ames, Marc Grant
- Present from Town Council:** Tamara Becker
- Present from Town Staff:** Josh Gruber, Assistant Town Manager; Faidra Smith, Administration Manager
- Present from Media:** Joseph Croley, Lowcountry Inside Track
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1. Call to Order

2. FOIA Compliance

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. A motion to approve the minutes of the August 5, 2019 Intergovernmental and Public Safety Committee meeting was made by David Ames and seconded by Marc Grant. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

4. Unfinished Business

5. New Business

- a. A motion to approve the Proposed 2020 Intergovernmental Committee Meeting dates was made by David Ames and seconded by Marc Grant. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.
- b. Discussion of Legislative Update Report from MASC – Senator Tom Davis

The Senator began by speaking about a number of parochial items that he is currently working on with the Legislature. Senator Davis explained about the tax revenue that the Lowcountry and Hilton Head Island sends to Columbia. More of that money is being repatriated back to our local area in a more equitable way. For example, in terms of funding for University of South Carolina Beaufort per pupil average, historic Mitchelville and the Penn Center.

Senator Davis went on to compliment the Town on engaging the public in discussions concerning the US 278 Gateway Corridor Improvement project. There have been

multiple opportunities to engage public opinion on the bridge aesthetics, functionality and location of the bridge looking to minimize impact on the Gullah community. With this project, the job of the Delegation and Senator is to make sure there is adequate funding. An application for a portion of the total cost has been made by Beaufort County to the State Infrastructure Bank (SIB), the state agency that awards money for large scale projects. Our delegation is working hard to ensure that the application is fairly considered by the SIV. The Senator went on to explain details about the SIV's deliberation process, board members and the relationship between them and our delegation. It was also noted that Josh Gruber, Assistant Town Manager, along with the county and the consultant, have been shepherding the application through the process, monitoring and coordinating future strategies.

David Ames changed topics by asking if there is a movement to reform K-12 education. The Senator explained that although Beaufort County is at the national average in funding, the results are below the national average. The funding flows to the administration, but not into the classroom, teacher salaries, curriculum, or instructional material. The goal is to find the best and brightest who want to be teachers and develop a reputation to be a state that rewards its teachers. Our Delegation is working sync up the tax reimbursement stream so that it is truly reimbursing.

Mr. Ames then spoke of the Town's inability to coordinate with condominium regimes with the ability to either upgrade, renovate, or completely tear down the facility. There is legislation in other states that allows this to happen. Senator Davis indicated that this item came up a year ago with the initial homeowners' reform bill. It would give the Department of Consumer Affairs jurisdiction over all these homeowner's associations. However, Senator Davis indicated he took the position that Property Owners Association and restrictive covenants in particular are contractual rights and homeowners have contracted with each other to use their property a certain way. Any attempt to have a law address derelict/ or dilapidated properties will be against the Constitution saying there cannot be any legislation passed that impairs the ability of a private party to contract. David Ames also noted the dramatic increase in Air B&B's and VRBO's within the Plantations impacting the quality of life in residential areas. The Senator expressed that any land-use regulations considered would be dictated by each constituent's best interest. As a matter of philosophy, the Senator feels it is better for local people to decide what the land-use regulations should be rather than official in Columbia dictating policy.

Senator Davis noted that he was recently appointed to a committee in the Senate to look at the interstate systems and how to put them in better condition. He went on to say that there is going to be a strong push to put a toll on Rt. 95 at the North Carolina / South Carolina border to the north and the South Carolina / Georgia border to the south. The Senator suggested a note of caution. He will be looking for clarity to know where the current tax dollars are going before agreeing to impose a toll.

Marc Grant asked the Senator about additional security in schools. Senator Davis said that it is important for additional funding in this year's budget for School Resource Officer (SRO.) Mr. Grant followed up, asking if the SRO money would be used for rules, regulations, and/or training. Senator Davis noted that he did not know if the government would tell the school how to spend it any additional funds.

Mr. Grant spoke about the Gullah Geechee task force and Heirs property issues that need to be addressed with the state. The Senator said that three years ago there was an Heirs Property Reform Act. Historically, there have been issues with the tax payments made by primarily one family member with no one other members contributing. Three years ago, the legislature passed a law making it easier for Heirs to subdivide their property and have the pieces conveyed to other family members. It created an exemption under land use ordinance.

Mr. Lennox questioned the Senator about the impact with our budget and the state employees' pension reform. When it is fully indexed, it will cost us an additional \$300,000/ year with another estimated \$40 billion unfunded. Senator Davis said that the true impact on what was passed a couple years ago had been masked because there has been a line in the general fund to hold localities harmless. The State Retirement committee is responsible for managing that plan.

Chairman Lennox asked for public comments. One individual questioned what oversight does the Legislature in Columbia have over the misappropriate application of local rule to disadvantaged local citizens. The Senator indicated that there are state ethics rules against using the public office for political gain. Local municipalizes would have jurisdiction over action of the members because this is not within the state oversight.

With no further public comments, the Chairman moved for adjournment.

6. Adjournment

A motion for adjournment was made by David Ames. It was seconded by Marc Grant. The meeting adjourned at 10:47 AM.

Submitted

by: _____

Approved: 3/2/2020
