

Public Comment For City Meetings

Name

Mrs. Sandy D Ferencz

Address

4 Seahorse Ct, Isle of Palms, South Carolina 29451

Comments for Council Meeting

I have two items on the agenda on which I would like to submit a formal citizen comment.

REGARDING:

Based on current information and estimates of revenue and expense accruals still to come, the General Fund could end FY20 with revenues in excess of expenditures by approximately \$600,000.

In my wildest dreams I can not fathom how, during this pandemic and lost revenues, the City still reports excess income.

Every year there is between \$600,000 and \$1 million dollars in excess which brings the budgeting process into question.

Project budgeting every year places the entire cost into one year, assuring excess because there is no way the project will be completed in one fiscal year. In my opinion the general fund budget process is flawed if every year there is excess.

REGARDING:

a. Consideration of request from the IOP Water and Sewer Commission for approval of \$16M bond issue for the decommissioning and relocation of the Wild Dunes wastewater treatment plant.

I have the following comments/questions:

1. I cannot decipher from the budget page of the W&S presentation what funds are actually needed for the Wild Dunes plant demolition and incorporation into the Forest Trail Plant, vs. construction for future improvements. That detail is important to me as a customer who will pay for this endeavor. There is no doubt that the WD plant needs to be incorporated into the Forest Trail Plant, but other projects need to be considered at a later date if they are part of the requested \$16 million.
2. I see no quality control assurances, i.e. cost for a third party engineer to monitor the construction process
3. No mention of the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) which was to preclude any monetary requests to assure communication between the W&S Board and the City which has been sorely lacking in the past.

I urgently request NO APPROVAL of funds until all these details are readily available and understood.

Meeting This Comment is Intended For:

Ways and Means Committee

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Public Comment For City Meetings

Name

James W Smiley

Address

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Comments for Council Meeting

Dear Council,

In this time of restricted and limited public interaction with their local government, it would seem important to take every opportunity to enable Citizen participation in virtual meetings. Whereas prior to virtual meetings, Citizens were able to participate in their government's meetings by their very presence and most importantly by being able to comment orally during a Citizen's comments period near the beginning of the meeting. This form of participatory government has unnecessarily gone by the wayside and our government has become much less open as a consequence. Let me explain. On July 13 I watched the virtual Recreation Committee meeting. Prior to the meeting, I and possibly other citizens submitted comments on a form destined to become part of the meeting record. But really, what does becoming part of the record mean? In Recreation Committee instance it means that rather than being heard now and in the present when it is important to be heard, Citizens will not be heard for at least a month after the meeting concludes. How can this be so? Because all comments submitted on the filled out form are simply appended to the meeting minutes which are not published in even draft form until twenty four hours before the next meeting, usually a month later. Those who submitted comments in writing are simply shut out of the process at hand in the present and in so doing are effectively excluded from participatory government. Just as justice delayed is justice denied, participation delayed is participation denied.

There is a simple and straightforward solution. The solution is for the Clerk to read the written Citizen's comments into the meeting record at the beginning of each meeting at the point where citizen's comments would be heard were the meeting not virtual. This was actually done last week in the Public Safety Committee meeting and it did not slow down or interfere substantially with the Committee's business. On July 13 as I Zoomed in on the Recreation Committee meeting, citizen's comments were not read into the record, but rather the City Administrator seemed to give the Committee the choice of having the Citizen's Comments read into the record or not read and the Committee chair elected not to have the citizen's comments read. In the former instance citizens would have been able to participate to the maximum extent possible in a virtual meeting, in the latter (and actual) instance, the meeting was completely closed to citizen participation. I have heard the complaint that to read aloud Citizen's comments might unduly prolong meetings. A simple remedy to guard against overly lengthy meetings would be for the comments to be read in the order received with a maximum read time per comment of 3 minutes and a maximum total reading time for all comments of 30 minutes. This procedure would mimic in a virtual meeting the process already adopted for real meetings.

Please adopt the practice of having citizen's comments heard at the beginning of all meetings.

Meeting This Comment is Intended For:

Ways and Means Committee

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Public Comment For City Meetings

Name

Mr William J. Mills

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Comments for Council Meeting

I realize you have many pressing issues to deal with but since renewal of the STR/Host Compliance contract is on the agenda, I would like to provide my perception. The last report I saw indicated we have over 1,500 short-term rentals on the island generating significant rental income and potentially considerable tax revenues. It is also my impression that the city has never made much of an effort at enforcing licensing and tax compliance. So, it is likely that we have a fair number of rentals that are not paying the annual license fees and/or correct amount of taxes, which in addition to real & personal property tax include:

City/ County/ State Accommodations Taxes, Sales Tax, Transportation Tax, County School Tax and IOP Beach Preservation Fee – which total 14%.

It is quite likely that illegitimate rental properties + those that under report occupancy are resulting in tens of thousands in lost revenues to the Isle of Palms.

I advocate that Council provide the resources (software and staffing) to properly administer the short-term rental regulations. And enforce penalties on those property owners that willfully fail to comply.

Thanks for giving this your consideration. -Bill-

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Ways and Means Committee

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