

**SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF GEORGETOWN, SC  
JANUARY 7, 2010**

**Notices of this meeting have been made in accordance with the 1976 Code of Laws of South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.**

A Special Meeting of City Council was held this date in the Council Chambers at City Hall with Mayor Pro Tem Brendon M. Barber, Sr. presiding.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Council Member Jeanette Ard  
Mayor Pro Tem Brendon M. Barber, Sr.  
Council Member Paige B. Sawyer, III  
Council Member Clarence C. Smalls  
Council Member Peggy P. Wayne

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Mayor Jack M. Scoville, Jr.  
Council Member Rudolph A. Bradley

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Mr. Chris Eldridge, City Administrator  
Mrs. Elise Crosby, City Attorney  
Ms. Ann Mercer, City Clerk  
Mr. Paul Gardner, Chief of Police

**NEWS MEDIA**

Mr. Scott Harper, *Georgetown Times*

Mayor Pro Tem Barber opened the Special Meeting of City Council at 5:30 PM. Council Member Sawyer rendered the invocation and Council Member Wayne led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Pro Tem Barber announced that all electronic devices and cell phones should be turned off or placed on silent or vibrate, with the exception of first responders.

**Call to Order,  
Invocation and  
Pledge**

Mayor Pro Tem Barber welcomed Council Member Sawyer back on City Council and new Council Member Ms. Jeanette Ard and said he looks forward to working with them in the future.

Mayor Pro Tem Barber explained the reason for the Special Meeting is to discuss and receive comments from citizens concerning a four-way stop at the intersection of St. James and Highmarket Streets and the Willowbank Community 90-day trial closure of two access points. He asked that comments be limited and suggested each group may want to appoint a spokesperson.

Mayor Pro Tem Barber recognized Little Miss Ella Smith who lives at 218 Cannon Street. Miss Smith told Council the roads and sidewalks near her house are bumpy and they need to be fixed. She and her brother are not able to ride their bikes because of the uneven pavement. Miss Smith also asked City Council for sidewalks from Cannon Street to East Bay Park.

Mayor Pro Tem Barber recognized Mrs. Sarah Smith, mother of Ella Smith. Mrs. Smith spoke on behalf of the residents of Cannon Street and stated they all have a concern about the four-way stop and the flow of traffic on St. James Street. They support City Council working with the DOT to implement some type of traffic control at that intersection...whatever DOT deems appropriate.

Ms. Verne Ray of Front Street spoke on behalf of a little three year old little girl who lives on Howard Street. Two or three weeks ago she got away from her mother and ran across Front Street. Ms. Ray stated cars and trucks drive down Front Street at 40 and 50 MPH on their way to the park, many coming from St. James Street, and she is in favor of a stop sign at the intersection.

Mr. Ernie Merchant, owner of Trendy on the corner of St. James and Highmarket Streets said he is astounded this has been such a long running issue. He stated it is treacherous for his clients to back in and out of his business into oncoming traffic. He appreciates this meeting and City Council's consideration.

Mr. David Bertrand of 310 St. James Street stated last week two people were drag racing down St. James Street to Church Street. He has trouble getting out of his driveway and said the 25 MPH speed limit is not obeyed in this area, police coverage is very sparse and tractor trailer trucks are traveling down the street about 40 MPH

**Citizen Comments  
Four-Way Stop at  
Intersection of St.  
James and  
Highmarket  
Streets-**

**Miss Ella Smith**

**Mrs. Sarah Smith**

**Ms. Verne Ray**

**Mr. Ernie  
Merchant**

**Mr. David  
Bertrand**

every morning. He feels it is imperative a stop sign is installed before someone gets killed.

Mrs. Dorothy Long said she does not live near St. James Street but has observed this intersection along with the four-way stop intersections in town and does not recommend a four-way stop. She suggested a regular stop light. The four-way stops are dangerous; people drive up, stop, look at each other and wait for somebody to give you a signal to come across.

**Mrs. Dorothy Long**

Mayor Pro Tem Barber opened discussion among Council Members.

**Council Discussion**

Council Member Sawyer asked Police Chief Gardner if he does or does not see a need for more traffic control at the intersection of St. James and Highmarket Streets. Chief Gardner stated there is a need for some kind of traffic control at this intersection. St. James has become the street of choice for vehicles to cut through and avoid five points as well as people traveling to the park. He said the Police Department does provide traffic enforcement in the area, obviously not as regular as the citizens would like, and added a device at the intersection would slow people down. Council Member Ard asked the Chief if there is a record of the number of tickets issued and/or accidents near the intersection. The Chief said this issue came up about 18 months ago and a study was performed for DOT. During that year or 18 month period there had been two accidents at the intersection and DOT reported there was no need for a device. The Chief argued there is a need. Council Member Wayne sited visibility issues and difference in the road width at the intersection and said if anything is installed there it should be a red light. Council Member Smalls said four-way stops are confusing for a lot of people and he would not be in favor of one at this intersection. He asked about a stop light. The Chief indicated it may be a cost issue with DOT. Mayor Pro Tem Barber reminded all in attendance this is a workshop and no action will be taken tonight. He asked the Chief for his recommendation on the safest form of traffic control for the intersection. The Chief said with the amount of traffic there, the safest form would be a light. Council Member Sawyer stated the purpose of the meeting tonight is to formulate a Resolution to DOT for some type of traffic control, whether it's a four-way stop or a stop light. Mayor Pro Tem Barber said '*the safest form of traffic control*' should be included in the wording.

Discussion on a four-way stop at the intersection of St. James and Highmarket Streets concluded at 5:55 PM.

Mayor Pro Tem Barber opened the floor for comments on the Willowbank Community 90-day trial closure of two access points and asked that only one or two people from the community address City Council.

Mr. Fred Hoelscher of 609 Cypress Street in Willowbank thanked Chief Gardner for spearheading this project which is the result of two community meetings beginning in late summer/early fall held at the Presbyterian Church. He said it is an ongoing problem with people cutting through at the two intersections and running down Palmetto or going all the way around Willowbank. This was discussed at both community meetings. There are no sidewalks, the streets are narrow, a number of houses have multiple cars that are either parked on both sides of the road, pulled up in their driveways or in their front yard which makes it very difficult to see traveling up and down the road. There are a number of families moving to Willowbank with young children and there is no place for them to play except on the street or walking to and from the parks in Willowbank. He said Chief Gardner presented the concerns to the DOT and they agreed to a trial closure of two access points.

Mr. Marty Tennant said he supports the Willowbank closure and added the reason for this meeting is because people are trying to avoid five-points and the intersection of Willowbank and Black River Road. He stated he has come before Council on many occasions about a serious problem on Black River Road and has requested to be placed on the agenda for the February Council meeting to discuss the matter. He asked Council to take a more comprehensive view of traffic issues in the City. He wants Council to request DOT do something about Black River Road as well as Willowbank and five-points. The road is in terrible shape, manholes are in the wrong locations, which when hit by big trucks traveling to the dump on a regular basis, cause miniature earthquakes in the houses (including his own) and at the hospital. Whenever a cut is made in the road, dirt and asphalt are packed in by the workers, then when the truck tires hit this it forms a depression. When this is filled in, it forms a dome and every time the heavily laden trucks hit the dome or depression it creates miniature earthquakes causing damage to the homes. He has cracking and windows coming loose from the brick. Mr. Tennant said after he spoke with the County Administrator, Sel Hemingway, about the problem, Mr. Hemingway voluntarily agreed to restrict county trucks from going on Black River Road traveling from Highway 17 south to Highway 701 north going to the dump. Mr. Tennant also spoke with Chief Gardner about the

**Citizen Comments  
Willowbank  
Community 90-  
day Trial Closure  
of Two Access  
Points**

**Mr. Fred  
Hoelscher**

**Mr. Marty Tennant**

truck routes in the City. He concluded by asking City Council to approach DOT with a unified voice.

Ms. Deborah Thomas of 807 Palmetto Street, said as she was taking her husband to the doctor this morning when a truck coming off of Church Street on to Orange Street did not stop at the stop sign at the corner of Palmetto and Orange. She was already in the intersection and the driver did see her but added it was a very close call. Another reason for wanting the streets closed is that people do not obey the stop signs or the speed limit. Because there are no sidewalks, elderly people and children are walking in the streets or in people's yards.

**Mrs. Deborah Thomas**

Mrs. Dorothy Long said she has driven through Willowbank several times and observed the traffic. She expressed her opposition to closing the two access points into Willowbank off of Church Street and further stated she does not believe in closing any streets where ambulances or fire trucks may enter.

**Mrs. Dot Long**

Mayor Pro Tem Barber called on Chief Paul Gardner to explain the process and how he approached DOT. Chief Gardner said Willowbank was the first Town Hall meeting and he thanked the Minister from the Presbyterian Church for the use of their facility. He went door to door in Willowbank, gave out business cards and invited the residents to the meeting. One of their primary issues at the meeting was the cut throughs and speeding through the neighborhood. Chief Gardner said they are in regular conversations with DOT. The Police Department does targeted enforcement and tries to slow people down. To determine what the problem is, the idea for a temporary closure of two access roads to stop the cut throughs was discussed. The light at Wood Street would have to be examined to see if the timing could be more conducive because there will be more people using this intersection. A follow up Town Hall meeting was scheduled to talk about the idea. Of the 30 residents who attended all were in favor of the trial closures. Chief Gardner said as a Department Head he could not go to Council requesting them to approve a request without being able to tell them what all the citizens wanted. Cards were sent to 125 homes with 68 responding back; 53 for and 15 against. The proposed Resolution would request DOT to approve a 90-day trial closure of two access points; at which time a follow up Town Hall meeting could be held to hear from the citizens as to how they feel it is working.

**Chief Paul Gardner**

**Council  
Discussion**

Council Member Sawyer said as long as he has been on Council residents in Willowbank have complained to him about these same issues. He thanked Chief Gardner for all he has done with the Willowbank community leading up to the meeting. He reiterated this is just a trial period. The residents don't mind being inconvenienced because they want to be able to safely walk and ride on the streets without the fear of being hit by a vehicle and they want their children safe.

Council Member Wayne said she was in the Willowbank community today between 1-3 PM. She asked the Chief if *No Through Traffic* signs would help. Chief Gardner said DOT will not put signs up because these are state roads. Council Member Wayne pointed out there are two exits and entrances on to Black River Road from Willowbank and said all the traffic will be in that part of the neighborhood. The Chief did state time is a determining factor, in the morning with work and school and in the evening with people coming home from work. Council Member Wayne said if this is what the community wants she does not have a problem blocking the two roadways but she would like to hear their opinion on how it's working for them after the 90 days.

Mayor Pro Tem Barber asked the Chief if he has consulted with EMS and Fire. Chief Gardner said Fire Chief Tanner is not opposed to the trial closure as long as they have access. Mayor Pro Tem Barber expressed his concerns about first responders having access if the two access roads are closed and there is a situation at the intersection of Wood and Church Streets and Black River Road is blocked.

Chief Gardner answered Council Member Wayne's question by stating this will require a Resolution from City Council. DOT said if it could be shown that the community and City Council support this, they would entertain a trial period.

Mayor Pro Tem Barber thanked the Chief for his work and thanked the citizens for attending the meeting, along with their input. He said Council listened to their concerns, will take it under advice and officially address it at the next City Council meeting.

Council Member Smalls requested a Special Meeting to go into Executive Session in reference to a personnel matter next Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>. Council Member Sawyer asked if this could be held at the Regular Meeting. Council Member Smalls said he wanted to

meet before the Regular Meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Barber asked Council to check their calendars and let the City Clerk know when they are available to meet.

**COUNCIL MEMBER WAYNE MOVED TO ADJOURN SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER SAWYER. Mayor Pro Tem Barber called for the question. THE MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED 5-0.**

**Adjourn Special Meeting**

The Special Meeting was adjourned at 6:27 PM.

Ann U. Mercer  
City Clerk

**DATE APPROVED: 02/18/10**  
**VERIFYING INITIALS: \_\_\_\_\_**