

Council Advances Water Quality Planning, Addresses Community Concerns

Camden City Council approved a grant-funded water quality study and considered neighborhood, traffic and utility concerns during its Sept. 1 meeting.

A \$750,000 grant will help the City of Camden plan for future water treatment needs without placing the cost of the study on City customers.

Council approved funding from the South Carolina Water Quality Revolving Fund Authority for a study examining potential treatment improvements related to PFAS. Often referred to as “forever chemicals,” PFAS have been widely used in manufacturing and consumer products and have been detected in water systems across the country. City Manager Matt DeWitt said the study will be fully reimbursed and will provide recommendations for addressing PFAS in Camden’s water system.

Mayor Vincent Sheheen emphasized that Camden’s water remains within safe levels and applauded City staff for pursuing the grant. DeWitt added that funds received through a broader legal settlement are being held separately to help offset future treatment costs.

Neighborhood preservation was also part of the evening’s discussion as Council considered a request to change the zoning of several properties along Lyttleton Street and Railroad Avenue near the entrance to Kirkwood from residential to Limited Business District.

Shelia Farrar and Phyllis Dye spoke in opposition to the change in zoning, describing Kirkwood as a historic, family-centered neighborhood and expressing concern about how commercial development could affect traffic and its residential character. The prior recommendation of the Planning Commission to Council was a unanimous vote to deny the rezoning request. After hearing all considerations, Council voted 3-1 not to change the zoning.

Richard Lowery asked the City to review charges for a security light that was never installed. He also requested reimbursement for the disputed charges.

In other business, Council gave final approval to updated regulations for billboards and digital signs. As amended, the regulations allow one digital sign per City, county or state government facility and establish standards for signs at school district facilities.

Council also reappointed five members to the Board of Construction Appeals. Kevin Flowers and Travis Kelly were reappointed to terms expiring May 31, 2028. Paul Solan and Raymond “Eddie” Stevens were reappointed to terms expiring May 31, 2029, and James P. Witkowski was reappointed to a term expiring May 31, 2030.

A request to make Johnson Street between Lyttleton Street and Kirkwood Lane a one-way street prompted discussion but there was no action taken. City staff noted that the roadway is approximately 10 feet wide, while Council members considered feedback from residents both supporting and opposing the change.

DeWitt also said some customers have experienced utility bills covering longer-than-normal periods during the City's meter upgrades. Residents experiencing financial hardship may contact the City's Finance Department to have their bills averaged. He apologized for the inconvenience and said the issue is temporary.

Councilman Elliott discussed the importance of keeping residents informed about utility billing and other issues that may affect them directly and suggested exploring additional ways to share that information.

DeWitt also encouraged residents to attend the upcoming Fire Fest celebration and thanked Councilman William Wilkes for his contribution toward Camden's new pet microchip scanning station.

Mayor Sheheen asked that the meeting be adjourned in honor of Columbia Police Officer Christopher DeLong, Jr., an Elgin, South Carolina native, who was killed in the line of duty.

Agendas and approved minutes are available at www.experiencecamdensc.com.