**ACoN Minutes**
Oct. 11, 2016
6:30 p.m., Municipal Bldg., First floor conference room

Present:
Gary Yount, President James Matthews Betty Myers Paige Bayne
Ann Dicks, Vice President Mary Yarborough Sgt. Mary Frantz Michael Dennis Beth Copenhaver, Secretary Roger Brock Mike Jordan Brad Wiemer
Diane Saunders, Treasurer Michele O’Shaughnessy Teddy Umsted

President Gary Yount opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. and asked everyone to introduce himself/herself.

The minutes from the July 26, 2016, meeting were distributed, as well as the treasurer’s report.

First on the agenda was the landlord/property issues update. President Yount and Vice-President Ann Dicks gave details of their meeting in early September with Mayor Osbon, City Manager Klimm, and Assistant City Manager Bedenbaugh. President Yount said that this issue will be assigned to Lessie Price’s committee. President Yount asked our guests from the county and city to introduce themselves: Paige Bayne, Director of the Aiken County Code Enforcement and her two staff members, Michael Dennis and Brad Wiemer; Teddy Umsted, City Property Code Inspector, and Mike Jordan, City Zoning/Building Official.

Mr. Jordan said that, in 2010, there was discussion about strengthening the ordinances regarding property nuisances. He gave examples of what property issues he deals with within the city limits: houses being boarded up, tall weeds/grass, abandoned cars in the yards, etc.; he also talked about the pros and cons of the taxpayers footing the bill on abandoned properties, the length of time that a property owner has to fix the problems cited, etc.

Ms. Bayne said that she and her two staff must deal with many of the same issues but for the entire Aiken County. The property codes/ordinances for the county are less specific/stringent. Another issue is that the officers must have the exact name of the person who owns the property and must deliver that citation—which becomes extremely difficult if the owner resides out of state or if there are multiple heirs when the property is in probate. If probated, all heirs must be in court, not just a couple of them, in order to serve the notice. She said that some cases have been open for 8-10 years before resolution. She also said that liens placed on county properties fall off after 10 years. When asked about overgrown yards, she said that, if limbs of trees or overgrown bushes extend onto your property, you have the right to trim what extends into your yard.

President Yount asked about boarded up properties. Mr. Jordan said that, if the taxes are paid, there is very little that the city ordinances allow the officers to do. Mr. Jordan said that block grants can only be used in low-to-moderate income neighborhoods. Ms. Bayne said that, in her opinion, it would be helpful to have mandatory annual or bi-annual inspections for any landlord with more than 2-3 properties. ~~Mr.~~ Mr. Jordan said that he thinks that landlords must have business licenses if they own over 5 properties. He also said that inspections of apartment complexes can be difficult since tenants may feel that inspections are an invasion of their privacy; however, inspections are mandatory in Section 8 housing. He stated that, at one time, there was a “livability court” to handle such cases. He also said that, once the city starts to clean up a neglected property, the city takes on legal liabilities.

ACoN members made suggestions such as shortening the number of days given to landlords/property owners to fix problems listed in citations. Another member asked that the county look also at mobile homes that are unsafe/nuisances; Ms. Bayne said that she would be glad to do so. Ms. Bayne gave her county office number: 803-502-9000 Ext. 3704.

The second agenda item was a recommendation for wording changes to the ACoN bylaws in order to comply with 501(c)(3) application parameters. The changes to the bylaws were approved unanimously. Mrs. Saunders will now file the 501(c)(3) application.

President Yount talked about the ACoN election of new officers and the need for new blood. It was also agreed that officers must be able to attend the majority of bi-monthly meetings. After some discussion, Secretary Copenhaver was asked to send an email to ACoN members soliciting nominations for president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. The election will be at the November meeting.

In roundtable discussion, Mrs. Dicks reiterated that the City Council (Mrs. Price, in particular) is asking that ACoN bring issues directly to them; the City Council welcomes ACoN’s ideas/issues/participation.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. **The final 2016 meeting will be Tuesday, Nov. 29, 2016**.