

Council Announces Pay Raise Rejection

Tactics Overshadow Coalition News Conference

Hits: 4179

The tactics of Greenville County Council Chairman "Butch" Kirven to outflank an announced Conservative Coalition news conference scheduled 30 minutes before the regularly scheduled December 7 meeting of council was effective in keeping the Coalition criticism of Council actions from daily newspaper and television headlines.

The news conference was originally set for 5:30 p.m. and the regular council meetings begin at 6:00p.m. Citizens are allowed to speak during the meetings according to council policy.

The only council meeting scheduled for December was cancelled and a special called meeting was scheduled for 5:30, the same time as the news conference. It was announced that no public input would be allowed at the special called meeting.

A larger than expected crowd showed up for the news conference on a very cold night. Both the news conference and the council meeting ended before 6 p.m.

Sometime after the council meeting adjourned and reconvened for a Judy Gilstrap farewell party in the secure conference room, a reporter for the daily paper was provided with a paper signed by 10 council members. The paper stated that the undersigned, all but Lottie Gibson, had agreed not to accept the pay raise for 2011. Council members Willis Meadows and Joe Dill had pledged not to accept the raise when it was approved by a majority of their colleagues earlier this year.

It was reported that the 10 council members decided to sign the pledge after and in response to the Coalition news conference.

An unofficial statement by council contradicted the statement and said the decision was made during a finance committee meeting prior to the Coalition meeting.

That statement was challenged because Councilman Fred Payne did not arrive at County Square until after the news conference ended and the council meeting was about to adjourn.

Butch Taylor, Harry Kibler and Roan Garcia-Quintana spoke for the Coalition.

Speakers were furious about being prevented from speaking at a council meeting until next January. They received loud applause when one of the speakers said that if the chairman continues to obstruct their freedom of speech that they may hold the next news conference near the chairman's home so his neighbors will be informed. They discussed the illegal transfer of county taxpayer money to the NAACP and other special-interest non-profit organizations.

They also briefly discussed the council pay raise.