



(Post-Courier File Photo)

S.C. Railway Warehouse at 32 Ann St.

# Chamber Given Green Light To Buy Railway Warehouse

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The Charleston Trident Chamber of Commerce will be able to purchase the S.C. Railway Warehouse at 32 Ann St. from the city of Charleston, City Council decided Tuesday.

The council voted in favor of a recommendation by its Ways and Means Committee to sell the warehouse for \$450,000.

The chamber will use the building as its headquarters and executive briefing center.

The building, once known as the Gas Engine Building, is among five 19th-century railroad buildings on a two-block site that the city plans to develop as its Visitor Reception and Transportation Center. The site is across Meeting Street from the Charleston Museum.

After Tuesday's meeting, Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. said the purchase "is nothing short of phenomenal. It's something we've been working on for four years. It makes a statement about the importance of this part of our city."

The appraised value of the building was higher than the purchase price, Riley said. The city sold it at the lower price because it had purchased the buildings and adjacent railroad structures at a \$1 million savings from Norfolk Southern Corp. The city passed that savings on to the chamber to encourage the chamber's purchase of the warehouse, he said.

In other business, Riley announced the hiring of a new executive director for the Gaillard Auditorium. Derrick C. Williams of Savannah, Ga., will assume the position.

Williams was assistant director and program director of the Savannah Civic Center, a post he held for almost four

years. Prior to that, he was general manager of a sports complex in Seattle, Wash. He has been sales director of the D.L. Henderson Co. of Savannah since 1986.

Williams said he feels "great, excited" about the appointment. He said that "there are not enough superlatives" to describe his enthusiasm.

His experience and excellent references made him the obvious choice from among many applicants for the job, Riley said.

City officials said they haven't pinned down yet when Williams will begin work.

The position has been open since July 3. Former director Herbert Cunningham was placed on administrative leave after the city investigated claims of improprieties in his use of public funds.

Cunningham, who was appointed executive director in 1979, pleaded guilty Friday to embezzling public funds between January 1986 and May 1987. The plea came under a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that allows a person to plead guilty while maintaining innocence because the person believes he would be convicted by overwhelming evidence.

Also Tuesday, the council gave approval to a first reading of the rezoning of 16.2 acres on Stefan Drive on James Island from a diverse residential classification, allowing multifamily housing, to a single-family residential classification. During a public hearing before the vote, several residents said they favor the rezoning.

A representative of property owner P. John DeStephano said he opposed it. The city had earlier approved the diverse residential zoning, he said, and "now it's being altered and changed and taken away from us."