



**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
FAIRFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
MARCH 12, 2018**

Present: Billy Smith, Doug Pauley, Neil Robinson, Jimmy Ray Douglas, Dan W. Ruff, Mikel Trapp, Bertha Goins, Council Members; Jason Taylor, County Administrator; Davis Anderson, Deputy County Administrator; Tommy Morgan, County Attorney; Patti L. Davis, Clerk to Council.

In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80 (e), as amended, the following persons and/or organizations have been notified of the time, date and location of this meeting: The Independent Voice of Blythewood and Fairfield, The Country Chronicle, and one hundred thirty four other individuals.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Smith called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Council Member Trapp and seconded by Council Member Pauley to approve the Agenda. ***The motion carried unanimously 7-0.***

3. INVOCATION

Council Member Douglas led the invocation. A moment of silence was held for Mr. Willie Charles who recently passed away. Mr. Charles had been an employee for the Public Works Department for eight years.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Council Member Trapp and seconded by Council Member Ruff to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 26, 2018. ***The motion carried unanimously 7-0.***

5. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

None.

6. 1ST PUBLIC COMMENT (3 MINUTES): All public comments made during this session must pertain to items on the agenda for which no Public Hearing is scheduled. Each speaker is allocated three (3) minutes for comment. The total time allocated for the public comment portion of the meeting is thirty (30) minutes. Those wishing to make public comment must sign to do so prior to the Council Chair calling the meeting to order. The Clerk to Council will make a public comment sign-up sheet available at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to the scheduled start time of the meeting.

- Randy Bright - Ordinance 691
- Jeff Schaffer - EMS/Fire Events

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

8. ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND ORDERS

A. Second Reading: Ordinance No. 691 – An Ordinance by Fairfield County Establishing Procedures to Expend Funds Appropriated by Fairfield County in its Annual Fiscal Budget for Collaborative Capital Public Works Projects. It was moved by Council Member Douglas and seconded by Council Member Robinson to approve the Second Reading of Ordinance No. 691. Vice Chair Goins requested that Mr. Taylor explain the ordinance. Per Mr. Taylor, the County included \$300,000.00 in last year's budget to assist the municipalities with projects to encourage collaboration between the County and the towns for projects that would benefit the citizens. This will also encourage application for grants. In the ordinance, the process is defined by which the money would be given to the municipalities. With this being public money, it must be accounted for with proper procurement procedures. The ordinance outlines how the money would be spent, accounted for and how the projects will be selected. Chairman Smith reminded everyone that this was included in the current fiscal year budget because as requests come in from the municipalities, if the money is not budgeted, the funding cannot always be approved in the middle of the budget year. As Mr. Taylor said, this describes the criteria of how the money will be funded and also expresses to the municipalities the type of projects that would interest the County. Vice Chair Goins appreciates the explanation and the manner in which this is set up going forward which will manifest transparency and accountability. ***The motion carried 6-1 with Council Member Trapp voting nay.***

B. Third and Final Reading: Ordinance No. 694 - An Ordinance Authorizing Fairfield County to Convey All or a Portion of County Owned Real Property Located at 355 Commerce Boulevard, Ridgeway, South Carolina, 29130, with TMS #184-00-00-071-000 to CS Industrial, LLC. At the request of administration, Chairman Smith announced that this item will be held over to a future date.

9. BOARD AND COMMISSION MINUTES

Disabilities and Special Needs, Hospital Board and Chamber of Commerce. It was moved by Council Member Trapp and seconded by Vice Chair Goins to approve the minutes as presented. ***The motion carried unanimously 7-0.***

10. BOARD AND COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

None.

11. OLD BUSINESS

None.

12. NEW BUSINESS

None.

13. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

A. Miriam Woodard, Tax Collector - Department Overview. Mr. Taylor introduced Mrs. Woodard, who began her report by giving the location of the Tax Collector's office at the Courthouse, telephone number 803-815-4021 or 4022. This office is a separate office under the supervision of the County Administrator. The duties are governed by state law and procedures. Some duties of the department include: Collection of delinquent taxes, delinquent notices, mailing for all delinquent taxes once received from the Treasurer's office, submission of information to the S.C. Debt Set-Off office for collection of mobile home taxes, accounting of all monies collected being turned over to the County Treasurer and preparation of delinquent tax sales. When someone does not pay their taxes by a certain date, which by State law is August 31, preparation is made for the delinquent tax sale. Once this commences, certified notices are sent out for all delinquent taxes and posting of the property occurs. Anytime during this period, the individual still has the opportunity to pay the property taxes. Once posted, the property must be advertised for three consecutive weeks before the sale can occur. The tax sale normally occurs the first Monday in December. Individuals are required to offer to be a bidder at the tax sale and then attend the tax sale. The property is sold unless there is a problem with the property or the taxes. Once sold to the highest bidder (purchased by cash, cashier's check or money order), the delinquent taxpayer still has one year to redeem the property from the tax sale. The majority of the advertised sold property is redeemed by the original owner. Usually less than 3% of the property sold at a delinquent tax sale in Fairfield County is actually deeded to the new buyer. In some instances, the land goes to the Forfeited Land Commission. For the current fiscal year, the Tax Collector's office has collected over \$933,000.00 through the end of February. There is approximately \$1.6m including bankruptcies and defunct businesses that the County Treasurer is assisting in attempting to remove from the tax roll. The office should receive the 2017 taxes by March 19 of approximately \$2.3m. Chairman Smith asked if anyone had questions for Mrs. Woodard. Council Member Douglas inquired if someone buys 23 acres at a tax sale and the property is not redeemed in the allowed time period of one year, how many acres the purchaser actually receives. Per Mrs. Woodard, they will be given this information ahead of time at the tax sale. The Forfeited Land Commission has the right to divide off a certain portion, and the Commission consists of the Treasurer, the Auditor and the Clerk of Court. The Assessor then assists the Commission to divide off the portion to be covered by the taxes. Further, Council Member Douglas inquired if the land is subdivided, would a survey be done in order to properly record a deed. Per Mrs. Woodard, the Assessor will divide the portion of property and the buyer would then need to get a survey. Council Member Pauley thanked Mrs. Woodard for her presentation and for her service to the County. Vice Chair Goins feels the

information shared tonight was very helpful, and she wishes more people had attended the meeting to be able to receive this information.

- B.** Jason Pope, Fire Services Director and Phyllis Watkins, Emergency Management Director - Fire Update. Mr. Taylor stated Mr. Pope and Mrs. Watkins are reporting on the recent fires in the Jenkinsville area. He also thanked the Forestry Service for their assistance along with Newberry County. Mr. Pope reported at approximately 2:15 p.m., Saturday, March 3, the County fire units were dispatched to reports of multiple brush fires on 215-S and 213 in the Jenkinsville area. Upon arrival, it was determined that this was a quickly expanding incident; therefore, support was immediately requested from the Forestry Commission. The duration of this incident was about 4 hours. In this time period, 30 personnel were on scene including support from the Sheriff's Department, EMS, Rescue Squad and also Newberry Fire. County equipment used during this time included 6 brush trucks, 4 tankers, 2 engines, 3 forestry dozers and 1 Forestry airplane in the sky. The County rehab unit and 1 EMS unit were also present. Station 7 (Ridgeway) came into town and provided standby coverage for station 20 and actually responded to a call during this time period. Great Falls was on standby for the Mitford area. An all-call was placed, and Sammie Castles was one of the first chief officers on the scene. He knew very quickly the County would need help. In total, 20 different fires were reported consuming approximately 100 acres. The Forestry Commission plowed 11 of the fires totaling 85 acres. Thankfully, no one was injured, and no structures or homes were damaged. This is directly related to the quick action of the volunteer firefighters who did amazing work. The Forestry Commission was on scene on Sunday to completely contain the fires. We were also thankful for the media coverage from WIS and WLTX. Initially the fires were thought to be intentional. However, a joint investigation was conducted by the Sheriff's Department as well as the Forestry Commission, and the incident was determined to be accidental. Mr. Pope stated he cannot say enough about how well the County public safety agencies work together. Everyone was on scene from the Sheriff's office, EMS and many others, and the cooperation and support were amazing. Mr. Pope also thanked the 9-1-1 dispatchers. Two people were on shift with tremendous radio traffic because the incident was expanding so rapidly. They handled the radio traffic, the needed resources were delivered and they did an amazing job. Mr. Pope also appreciated the support from administration, including Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Goins, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Anderson, who were all on the scene. If the incident had happened during the week, half of the volunteer firefighters would not have been available, and it is very possible there would have been a different outcome. Currently, there are 120 volunteer firefighters; however, twice this number is needed. Mr. Pope asked everyone, as you are out in the community and you see a volunteer firefighter, please remember to say thank you. Mrs. Watkins agreed there were only 2 dispatchers on duty at the time of this incident. She pulled reports for an hour and 20 minutes into the incident with the most crucial time being the first hour. In the midst of this time, the 2 dispatchers fielded over 100 calls with the department normally averaging around 100 calls in a typical day. On top of this, during these 100 calls, they monitored 592 radio transmissions within an hour. It was chaotic on the radio, and Mr. Anderson played an excerpt from the radio

transmissions. Council Member Ruff and Chairman Smith thanked Mr. Pope and Mrs. Watkins along with the volunteers and staff. Chairman Smith was glad to be able to witness every component of the team working together and appreciates everyone.

- C.** Acceptance of 2.72 acres from Lake Wateree Presbyterian Church, Old Windmill Road, Ridgeway, SC to be used for the Purpose of a Fire Station. Mr. Taylor explained the request to accept 2.72 acres being given by the church to the County for the use of a fire station, which is budgeted item. The geotechnical work has been done, the property does perc and it has a clean title. A vote is now needed from Council to allow the County to accept the property. It was moved by Council Member Douglas and seconded by Vice Chair Goins to accept the property as described for the use of a fire station. Council Member Pauley inquired if this new station will affect the ISO rating in the area. Mr. Taylor asked Mr. Pope to address this matter. Per Mr. Pope, he met with the County GIS personnel, and this location was discussed. Currently, coverage of the southeastern station is up to a certain point, but there are several densely populated areas that the new fire station will cover within the 5 mile radius. Council Member Douglas stated that Mr. Tony Hill prepared a study on this matter, and the new station will cover 258 homes down to Rolling Hills. Chairman Smith clarified that tonight the vote is specifically on the acceptance of the property, and the building of the fire station will be a separate issue. That being said, one concern is that while this may be a good thing for the community in the 5 mile radius, will that dilute the volunteers from the Dutchman Creek station and negatively affect that area. Mr. Pope has heard this concern. Since he is new to his position, he is still gathering the background information for this project. However, this is being looked at right now as a substation of southeastern, which means the same volunteers could be utilized. This area is only 3-4 miles from the southeastern station. Chairman Smith feels this could be a creative way to handle this so as to not run into this issue. He requested Mr. Pope to continue to present information to Council concerning this matter as it moves forward in the process. ***The motion carried unanimously 7-0.***
- D.** Intergovernmental Meeting Hosted by Town of Ridgeway, Thursday, March 15 at 6 p.m. at Ridgeway Town Hall. Mr. Taylor reminded the Council of the Intergovernmental Meeting this Thursday.

14. CLERK TO COUNCIL'S REPORT

None.

- 15. 2ND PUBLIC COMMENT (3 MINUTES):** All public comments made during this session must pertain to items not on the agenda or under Council's consideration. Each speaker is allocated three (3) minutes for comment. The total time allocated for the public comment portion of the meeting is thirty (30) minutes. Those wishing to make public comment must sign to do so prior to the Council Chair calling the meeting to order. The Clerk to Council will make a public comment sign-up sheet available at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to the scheduled start time of the meeting.

- Randy Bright - Request
- Peggy Swearingen - Fire Department
- Jeff Schaffer - SCE&G and Taxes

16. COUNTY COUNCIL TIME

Ruff: In the future, Council Member Ruff requested that Mr. Taylor briefly explain the Resolutions and Ordinances on each meeting agenda for the benefit of the citizens. He appreciates the County fire and EMS personnel and agrees perhaps we need to look into incentives to attract more firemen along with looking into what other counties are doing. He also questioned if fire stations are being placed too close to one another. Perhaps we can look at the whole County to see where stations are needed.

Robinson: Publicly thanked the emergency services, especially the volunteers. Council Member Robinson fully understood the 9-1-1 call with all the radio traffic, which included 4-5 agencies at once. In reference to the volunteer firemen, he does think we need to look into possibly some sort of compensation. He also feels it would be good to look into full-time fire coverage for the west side.

Goins: Thanked the Fire Department, Sheriff's Department, Forestry and everyone who assisted on that Saturday. Vice Chair Goins experienced a house fire when she lived in Columbia and understands the damage that can be done in a short period of time. She feels the County has a team that is truly amazing. Vice Chair Goins also called into 9-1-1 on that day, and the operator displayed such authority and professionalism, as if she was the only person the operator was speaking to at the time. One must be in the situation to appreciate what could have happened. The volunteers risk their lives for the lives of others, and she agrees we need to step it up where these services are concerned. Also, with the Chairman and administration staff coming to the scene, this says to her that we are no longer separated by district boundaries, instead we are becoming a unit with compassion one for another. She believes Fairfield County has taken a turn and moved to another level that was not believed possible, and we will continue to go higher.

Douglas: In answer to Council Member Ruff's question concerning the fire station, this station will be serving the only area in Lake Wateree that does not have service. The citizens in this area are paying ISO ratings to insurance companies of 10. This will assist with insurance rates and completely cover Lake Wateree where it was not covered before.

17. EXECUTIVE SESSION (The following statement is provided in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act: Subsequent to Executive Session, Council may take action on matters discussed in Executive Session.)

At 6:53 p.m., it was moved by Vice Chair Goins and seconded by Council Member Ruff to go into executive session for (a) Legal Matter - Update on Litigation Against SCANA/SCE&G in Reference to the Abandoned V.C. Summer New Nuclear

Project and (b) Proposed Contractual Matter - Discussion Regarding the Potential Purchase of Real Property Identified as Fairfield County TMS #126-03-01-001-000.
The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

At 7:50 p.m., it was moved by Council Member Ruff and seconded by Vice Chair Goins to come out of executive session and return to open session.

No action was taken in Executive Session.

18. ADJOURN

At 7:51 p.m., it was moved by Council Member Ruff, properly seconded by Council Member Douglas to adjourn. ***The motion carried unanimously 7-0.***

PATTI L. DAVIS
CLERK TO COUNCIL

WILLIAM B. SMITH, JR.
CHAIRMAN