MINUTES
BUDGET WORK SESSION III
FAIRFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
MAY 28, 2025

Present: Don Goldbach, Clarence Gilbert, Peggy Swearingen, Doug Pauley, Oren Gadson, Carl E. Bell, Dan Ruff (Council Members); Vic Carpenter, County Administrator; Dr. Kimberly Roberts, Clerk to Council.

Absent: None.

Others Present: Beverly Mozie

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 forty one other individuals.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Gilbert called the Work Session to order at 2:31 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made by Mr. Pauley, seconded by Mr. Goldbach, to approve the agenda. ***The motion carried unanimously 7-0.***

III. INVOCATION

Mr. Ruff led the invocation.

IV. OUTSIDE AGENCIES REQUESTS

Mr. Carpenter said they ran out of time at the last meeting and he was glad that some of the agencies were able to come to that work session.

RAILROAD MUSEUM

Treasurer, Henry Nechemias, said their requested funding would be used for maintenance ($30,000). He also gave some data regarding the increase in visitors and said they did not charge admission to the museum. Mr. Gilbert asked if they ever considered a small charge for admission and Mr. Nechemias said no but they had donation boxes. Mr. Goldbach asked if it was appropriate for the request to come from Accommodations/Hospitality (A&H) taxes and Mr. Carpenter said yes. Mrs. Swearingen asked if the Greenbriar Connector could receive funding from A&H tax and he said yes. Mr. Nechemias said that would be very helpful. Mr. Pauley agreed that the railroad would be

best funded via A-Tax and asked if three readings were required to do so. Mr. Carpenter said yes. Mr. Nechemias said they would be able to accommodate more train riders with the connector. Mr. Pauley asked Mr. Carpenter if he would consider the recommendation and see if it could be done and he agreed.

OLDE ENGLISH DISTRICT
No representative.

AMERICAN RED CROSS
Interim Executive Director, Jerome Nesbit, gave information about the agency and requested $10,000 (the same as last year). He said within the last year, they installed over 100 smoke detectors and provided education on how to respond when they alarmed. He said $0.90 cents of every dollar donated went directly to their mission. Mr. Pauley asked how long had they received $10,000 from the County and he said they had not receive it. They requested $10,000 but received $4,000. Mr. Goldbach said he appreciated how much of their donations went towards their mission and it was a question he had for all of the agencies. He thought it was something that Administration should ask during the requesting process.

CHAMELEON INSPIRATIONAL LEARNING CENTER
Board Member, Rudolph Walker, gave some information about the program and its mission. They requested $4,000. Mr. Goldbach asked if he knew how much went towards their mission and he said he did not know.

PALMETTO CITIZENS AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT
No representative.

Mr. Carpenter said he was presenting a draft – a working document – of his budget recommendations. He felt the County was adequately staffed so there were no requests for new positions. He reminded them that it was a reassessment year and by State law, the millage had to be rolled back. He recommended to keep the millage at the current rate which would generate approximately $1 million for operations to the County. His recommendations for the use of those funds were as follows:

- A 3% cost of living increase for all employees across the board (about $650,000)
- Enter into vehicle lease agreements for the Sheriff's Office (6), the Fire Department (3), Animal Control (1), administrative vehicle and an ambulance for EMS (total about $300,000)
- Create a capital replacement fund separate from the general fund (could not be used for the day-to-day operations of the County) funded by an

8 millage increase – it was his first time recommended a tax increase because it was not possible to provide proper, needed equipment any other way. It would allow the recurring ability to annually replace vehicles, equipment and apparatus with a secure and defined source of revenue. It would be a line item on tax notices. It would generate about $1.3 million. His recommendations for those funds were tasers, EMS equipment, EMD equipment, fire radios, repaving the judicial center parking lot, and two fire trucks. Mr. Pauley asked if it was possible to include the needs given by the directors for Parks & Recreation and Public Works and he said he would take a look at it and would also give them his 5-year plan.

- Move current leases from the general fund to the debt side, which would allow funding for an animal shelter or renovations, a firing range for the Sheriff's Office and the completion of the fire station
- Turn two part time positions in Community Development into full time (permit tech & residential building inspector)

Mr. Goldbach said as much as he disliked tax increases, he understood the rationale. He said it was only $32 per $100,000 property assessed value and about $5/month for a $200,000 property assessment. He also mentioned the capital project sales tax. It had no flexibility, lots of limitations and it would take at least 18 months before those dollars would be available. Mr. Ruff agreed with him.

Mr. Carpenter said the capital project sales tax program would address long term capital (mostly brick and mortar). It would have to be voted on by the public. He also recapped the recommendation of a capital improvement plan and its benefits.

Mrs. Swearingen asked about the pickle ball/tennis courts being paved via A-Tax. Mr. Carpenter recommended resurfacing the courts @$85,000 and $5,000 for the Lake Wateree algae issue. She also asked about the funding for the Greenbriar Connector. PIO Director, Gene Stephens, said the A/H Tax Committee (who were new to the process) tried to stay under $285,000 to avoid a budget amendment and in doing so, they addressed two of the three requests from the Railroad Museum that were considered immediate needs. They would consider the third request during the 2025 funds to be awarded. Per a question from Mr. Goldbach, he said he believed funding for the Lake Wateree algae could come from the local Hospitality tax funds as well as the resurfacing of the pickle ball/tennis courts. Mr. Goldbach said the LWA would be requesting $30,000 annually for the algae treatment. He needed information on the application process. Mr. Carpenter suggested the committee meet before the budget to get their recommendations and include it in the budge process for Council's approval.

Mr. Carpenter said he would take from the meeting what he heard from Council and incorporate them into his budget proposal at second reading.

V. ADJOURN

At 3:35 p.m., motion made by Mr. Pauley, seconded by Mr. Gadson, to adjourn. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

KIM W. ROBERTS, Ed. D.
CLERK TO COUNCIL

CLARENCE GILBERT
CHAIRMAN