

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
FAIRFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 8, 2021**

Present: Moses Bell, Shirley Greene, Cornelius Robinson, Mikel Trapp, Timothy Roseborough, Clarence Gilbert, Douglas Pauley (Council Members); Brad Caulder, Interim Director, Charles Boykin, County Attorney.

Absent: None

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 two other individuals.

Due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus), the meeting is being live-streamed through the County's YouTube page in order to keep citizens informed.

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made by Councilman Trapp, seconded by Councilman Roseborough, to approve the agenda. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

3. INVOCATION

Councilman Trapp led the invocation.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Councilman Trapp, seconded by Vice Chair Greene to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting of October 25, 2021, Special Meeting October 27, 2021, Special Meeting October 28, 2021, Special Meeting October 28, 2021, Special Meeting November 2, 2021, Special Meeting November 4, 2021. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

5. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

None.

6. 1ST PUBLIC COMMENT (3 MINUTES): INPUT MUST PERTAIN TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA, FOR WHICH NO PUBLIC HEARING IS REQUIRED OR HAS BEEN SCHEDULED. THE TOTAL TIME ALLOCATED TO THIS PUBLIC COMMENT SEGMENT IS 30 MINUTES.

- Brad Douglas – Ordinance 778
- Lee Haney – Ordinance 778
- Toyja Strickland – Ordinance 778
- Sheniqua Cook – Ordinance 778
- Sheriff Will Montgomery – Ordinance 778
- Tammy Ramsey – Ordinance 778
- Dillion Pullen – Ordinance 778
- Henry Lewis – Ordinance 778
- Mike Turner – Ordinance 778
- Dan Sloan – Ordinance 778

Mr. Bell thank all who came for bringing their concerns to Council.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

An Ordinance to Approve the Sale of Certain Parcels of Land Known as the Hospital Property and Other Related Matters. Coroner Chris Hill apologized for the interruption but stated he signed up to speak for the public comment section and was not acknowledged. Mr. Bell referred him to the agenda which stated it was for the first 10 people and he was number 11. Mr. Hill stated he was not informed of that. Mr. Bell stated it was on the agenda. Chairman Bell opened the public hearing at 6:28pm. The following persons signed up to speak:

- Randy Bright

Mr. Bell closed the public hearing at 6:31pm.

8. ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND ORDERS

- A.** Third and Final Reading Ordinance No. 775: An Ordinance to Approve the Sale of Certain Parcels of Land Known as the Hospital Property and Other Related Matters. Motion made by Councilman Trapp, seconded by Vice Chair Greene. ***The motion carried 7-0.***
- B.** Third and Final Reading Ordinance No. 778: An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds Received by Fairfield County from the American Rescue Plan. Mr. Trapp made a motion to amend Ordinance 778 to increase the funds appropriated by \$12,000.00 to add an appropriation for the Fairfield County Library and to exclude County Council members from the payments authorized in the ordinance, seconded by Vice Chair Greene. Mr. Pauley stated since the library was put on at the last minute and he wasn't notified, he wanted to put on the record that the \$12,000.00 is going towards 8 full time employees at \$1,200.00 and 4 part time employees at \$600.00. He also wanted

to say thank you to all of the County employees and first responders that were here tonight. He appreciated the job they were doing and it did not go unnoticed. It amazed him that some of us can sit up here and say that coming to a Council meeting was putting their life on the line. He never once thought coming to a Council meeting that he was in danger. If you did think you were in danger, you could have stayed at home for months at a time like other Council members have done in the past. These first responders can't stay home. They have a job to do. He knew what putting your life on the line meant but he wanted to make sure he looked up the definition of that so other Council members could understand. It stated to put oneself in harm's way to achieve something, especially at the risk of losing someone's life. These first responders do this on a daily basis. They are risking their lives, willing to die to protect us from any harm. While we are sleeping, while we are enjoying our weekends with our families, while we are enjoying holidays with our families, they are working around the clock. It doesn't stop at 5pm and they go home. They are always open and willing to put their life on the line. In closing, we are receiving approximately four million three hundred thousand dollars total in rescue money. The first allotment is two million one hundred and fifty thousand and one million five hundred and eighty five thousand is being spent. That leaves five hundred and sixty five thousand dollars in this allotment. We will get another allotment of two million one hundred fifty thousand dollars. At the last Council meeting, nothing was said where that remaining money was going. Now after being called out about it, your Chairman and your Vice Chair have sent emails responding to citizens saying it is going towards the Courthouse. Do you see it in the ordinance tonight marked for the Courthouse? No, you sure don't because they are going to find somewhere else to waste it on. He made an amended motion to give first responders and safety sensitive workers \$4,000.00 out of the \$565,000.00 that is left in this allotment. Motion seconded by Councilman Gilbert. Mr. Gilbert stated after listening to the speakers tonight, it's a no brainer. He would not want to have to deny these responders the reward that's due to them. If he was to vote against them, which he would not, he would not want to have to require their services and for them to know that he voted against them. Let's do the right thing. Let's give them what's due to them. Vice Chair Greene stated she had heard from citizens in her district and she had listened to all of the things that they had said tonight. She could understand how difficult it is to do the job that they do. She had one wife to state very eloquently to her – unless your loved one puts on a bullet proof

vest every day to go to work, runs into a burning building to save someone or sits in the back of an ambulance going down the highway while trying to start an IV, while still worrying about a pandemic. Mrs. Greene said she knew that there have been so many things to happen to each and every one of you here in this audience, people who are here as Council members and others. There is nothing that is more important than the service that you provide. She thought it was very important, Mr. Chair and others to take a look at the offers that we might make to you, whether we make them tonight or whether we give you a promise to do that in taking a look at some other funds or funds that are left over. She just wanted them to know that they are important and the work that they do is important and from what she heard tonight, she was certainly pleased with the efforts that they have given and thankful for all of the work that they've done. Mr. Bell called for those in favor of the amended amendment. Mrs. Green asked for the amendment to be restated. Mr. Bell stated to give the first responders an additional \$4,000.00. Mr. Pauley stated not an additional \$4,000.00 but to make it \$4,000.00 – from \$1,200.00 to \$4,000.00. Mr. Bell asked Mr. Pauley to restate the motion. Mr. Pauley stated, "I make an amended motion that we give first responders and safety sensitive workers and extra \$2,800.00 for a total of \$4,000.00." Mr. Gilbert seconded the motion. Mr. Robinson requested a hand count (raised hands were Greene, Pauley, Robinson, and Gilbert). Opposed raised hands were Trapp, Bell and Roseborough. Mr. Bell asked for a motion to approve the amended motion. Mr. Robinson made the motion to approve the amended motion, seconded by Mr. Gilbert. Mr. Bell stated some of the guidelines concerning the ARP rescue plan funds as it relates to premium pay/bonus pay – since there was a lot of misconceptions about it. Premium pay, physical recovery fund payments may be used by recipients, including counties to provide premium pay, bonus pay to eligible county workers performing essential work during the COVID 19 public health emergency or to provide grants to third party employers within the county to compensate eligible workers who performed essential work. The interim final rule defines essential work as work involving regular and personal interaction, or regular physical handling of items that were also handled by others. Essential employees are defined as any work performed by an employee of the State, local or tribal government. It also states that any individual that teleworks 100% from a residence may not receive premium pay/bonus pay. The U.S. treasury urges counties to prioritize premium pay/bonus pay to low and moderate income persons. Counties should prioritize moderate and low income

persons with additional justifications needed for workers above 150% of the residing state's annual wage for all occupations of their residing counties – average annual wage, whichever is higher. It has been suggested that we are disrespecting some County employees by providing full time employees with a \$1,200.00 bonus. It was referenced that Richland County provided their first responders with a \$5,000.00 bonus. While that is accurate, our research confirms that other neighboring counties such as Chester, since it was mentioned tonight, received \$6.4 million and Newberry, which received \$7 million, as of today's date have not given any bonuses. Kershaw County received \$13 million and gave their full time employees \$2,500.00 and \$1,250.00 for part time. Fairfield County, of the current allotment of ARP funds, is giving approximately 22.4% to employees - that was the original. It has also been suggested, although false, that because we supported an equal amount of \$1,200.00 for all full time employees, we are disrespecting first responders. I have great respect for first responders, which I am included since 1978 as a volunteer fire fighter. I also have great respect for all County employees who worked during the pandemic – the County dispatchers, the Detention workers, public works, finance department, building maintenance, animal control and so on. All full time employees receiving the \$1,200.00 bonus ultimately reported to work during the pandemic. We believe all work is significant. During the last meeting, I referenced the missed opportunity to provide bonus hazard pay to County first responders with CARES Act funding in 2020. My position was clear that I wanted first responders to receive funding as noted in my email to Council. I would like to have those emails recorded into the minutes without objection. As you know, I was not the Chair at the time and was frequently losing sight of the 5-2 vote. The item never made the agenda. While Fairfield County Council could receive these funds as a bonus, we have made a provision in the ordinance to state so as to exclude members of the Fairfield County Council as County employees for the purpose of this ordinance. In other words, Fairfield County Council will not receive any ARP Rescue Plan funds. But let me be clear. I respect the commitment and sacrifice of all employees who reported and continue to report to work during this pandemic. I think we should acknowledge and recognize all County employees. I think the current bonus proposal does exactly that. Counties across the State have handled it differently. Some counties did exactly as we did. Some did nothing and others gave more to first responders and less to other full time county employees. Council received an email to that effect. The very thing we are facing, such as

our current financial obligations, we see this as an opportunity to help the totality of the County employees. We recognize that there are probably as many valid thoughts as there are citizens in the community but we believe that given the current needs of the County, this plan, original plan, best fits and serves the complete County workforce. With that, we must look at our other financial obligations as it relates to the opportunity that has been given to us in trying to make sure we purchase air packs, sheriff cars, ambulances, fire trucks. All of these things have been discussed with our Interim County Administrator and our County Controller. All of these items have been discussed and not only has that been discussed, it has been discussed how we pay for the additional \$1.1 million for the Courthouse. Again, this decision was not made in a vacuum. It was made looking at all the finances that we are encountering based on where (yes to the audience) we had been left. Those are my comments. Mr. Robinson asked if before the vote they could get a more clear understanding (he knew Mr. Pauley made the recommended amendment) but does this stipulate still for County employees for the \$1,200.00. After a pause, he asked if he stated that correctly. He said the questions are still coming regarding if the workers of the County will still get \$1,200.00. Mr. Bell stated that was in the amended motion. Mr. Robinson said ok. Mr. Gilbert asked if what was being said was that the first responders would get \$4,000.00 and the other employees would get \$1,200.00. Mr. Bell responded that is what you voted for – yes. Mr. Gilbert said he was just getting clarity. He did not have a problem with it. Mr. Robinson stated just before a vote was taken he wanted to let all the first responders know (he probably knew 90-95% of everybody out there) and they might have answered a call or what not. When COVID first hit, that was a real scary time for a lot of people. He had the luxury of sitting at home, not wanting to go out but you guys had to go out. My hat's off to you. If you came by my house and I didn't let you in, I apologize but we go for another day. But my hat's off to you and I really appreciate you. Mr. Bell asked if we had a financial person present to talk about what the \$2,800.00 means. He asked how many employees we had. Mr. Caulder stated we had a little less than 290 right now. Mr. Bell stated we were talking about the Detention workers too. Mr. Caulder said the motion made and voted on was regarding safety sensitive (it's what Mr. Pauley said). He was taking safety sensitive as the Sheriff's Office, EMS, Detention Center, Fire, Solid Waste, Animal Control and Building Maintenance. Those are classified as our safety sensitive employees. Mr. Robinson said we had other employees also that needed to be added to the list. Mr. Caulder stated

the Coroner and apologized. He did not intentionally leave anyone out and would have to get all of them together. He asked if he missed anyone. Mr. Robinson asked if workers had to turn in time sheets. If he was not mistaken, when we first went into COVID that was the requirement. He was curious as to if we went away from that. Mr. Caulder said last year with the CARES Act every hour worked was recorded under the CARES Act. Actual time, time off from COVID or scheduled time that they didn't work – all of it is broken down to the hours worked. He wanted to be clear, this applied to a bonus pay. Mr. Caulder stated this is not a premium pay. Mr. Caulder agreed that this was not a premium pay. This is due to lost revenue because we could not give a cost of living during budget time. Mr. Pauley asked if it was premium pay it would have been for everyone who worked during COVID. Mr. Caulder said it would have been however Council decided. Mr. Bell called for the vote on the amended motion – to give safety sensitive employees \$4,000.00 and everyone else \$1,200.00. He asked where the volunteer firemen come in. He said if they were going to do this, volunteer fire fighters needed to be included as he said previously. Mr. Pauley stated he had no problem with that (with the volunteer fire fighters). We can make a motion to give them \$600.00. They were getting \$200.00 to start off with. Mr. Bell suggested to allow the motion to fail and pull together a committee that can really look at giving everyone \$1,200.00 but look at the EMS, Detention Center workers and a lot of other people talked about here tonight, as how to say we appreciate them in a way that we can give them some money. He believed they did that by doing the \$1,200.00 but if we believe we want to do more, we can do more. We can do the \$2,800.00 and start from there but he thought they should appoint a committee because right now we do not know what it does to the money. We don't know. We've got about 165 volunteers. Mr. Caulder said he just spoke to Ms. Bass and if Council would like to get the numbers, she could run the numbers and have them for you before the meeting adjourns. Mr. Bell asked if it could be tabled until they knew what the finances looked like. Mrs. Greene said so moved. A question was asked (off mic) by Mr. Robinson and Mr. Bell replied no, let's do it tonight because the volunteers have come, the EMS have come and we want to tell them that we appreciate the work they have done so we can handle this tonight. He asked for a motion to table the subject until they got the financials. Mrs. Greene stated she would like to make a motion to table the amended motion until they got numbers to decide exactly what the finances look like, seconded by Councilman Trapp. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

9. BOARD AND COMMISSION MINUTES

Fairfield County Chamber of Commerce
October 18, 2021

10. BOARD AND COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

11. OLD BUSINESS

None.

12. NEW BUSINESS

None.

13. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

A. Earthquake Report – Mr. Caulder introduced Brad Douglas (Emergency Management Director) to give an update on recent earthquakes in western Fairfield County. Mr. Douglas prefaced the update by saying he was not a geologist and he would be giving information received from State EMD. The recent earthquakes we've had in Fairfield County have gotten a lot of attention and rightfully so. We experienced about 7 within about a week of time at the end of October, early November. The U.S. Geological Survey terms as a swarm of earthquakes, which is a bunch that happens in a short range of time. These ranged from a magnitude of 1.7 up to 2.2 on the Richter scale. According to the USGS, their seismologists believe that while these are unusual, it is still normal background activity and are not indicators of earthquakes to come. The USGS have stated that these earthquake swarms are not uncommon to the vicinity of Lake Monticello in sight of several instances in the past of similar activity. Most notably, in 1977 when the lake was being filled, we had some swarms then and since then thousands of earthquakes have occurred in the general area – none being larger than 2.9. That was thru 77 until probably the early 80's. From the early 80's to the 90's, it was quiet and in late 1996-99, we had several more earthquake swarms, totaling nearly 1,000 earthquakes during that time period and that's all centered around that same year in Jenkinsville. It is likely that we have more earthquakes similar in size as with this recent swarm we had. He didn't feel like there should be a surprise if more were seen. South Carolina averages approximately 10-20 earthquakes per year. We are a little higher than that since January 2021, where 20 earthquakes have been recorded throughout South Carolina and 7 of those just happened within the last couple of weeks in the Jenkinsville area. On September 27, 2021, three earthquakes occurred in Charleston, Berkeley, and Dorchester in the same range – between 2-2.9 on the Richter scale.

We encourage all of our residents to stay informed about emergence activity and have a family plan in the event of a major earthquake. This swarm that just happened was about a week after the State's earthquake readiness drills. We encourage our residents to stay informed and they can keep track via South Carolina's Emergency Management Division's app that will notify you when earthquakes occur in South Carolina. We have some information with Fairfield County Emergency Management as far as earthquakes and earthquake preparedness. He offered those interested in more information to contact his office to receive any information needed to be prepared for earthquakes and sites with the State to keep up with up-to-date information.

14. CLERK TO COUNCIL'S REPORT

None.

15. COUNTY COUNCIL TIME

Mr. Pauley stated he would like to see sometime in the near future the second public comment section put back on the agenda. We are no longer under an emergency order and we're letting citizens talk during the first section and he thought they should be able to talk in the second public comment section.

Mr. Bell stated he respected the commitment and sacrifice of all the employees, especially our public safety folks. We spent a lot of time – Mr. Caulder, Ms. Bass and I, talking about how and what to do to make sure we meet the needs of this County going forward. We have done this. This decision that we made was not made in a vacuum. It was made looking down the road and seeing how we can best meet the obligations that we have going forward. Again, he thanked all for their time and for revealing their requests to the Council in a way that he felt was very professional and very meaningful. Again, he thanked them for doing so and at the same time, there was no decision made that was based on politics but was based on what we thought was the best thing for this County going forward. We realize that we have many valid thoughts, as I said earlier, as we have citizens in this community. We care about our first responders and have done things to make sure we retain them, keep them and we appreciate the work they all do day in and day out. We appreciate the work of all of our County employees.

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 7:03 p.m., motion made by Council Member Trapp, seconded by Councilwoman Greene, to go into executive session concerning the below listed items. There was an interruption from the audience (Jeff Schaffer) asking to speak and was denied by Chairman Bell. As Mr. Schaffer continued to talk, Mr. Trapp asked for a point of order. Mr. Bell proceeded with the motion. ***The motion carried unanimously 7-0.***

A. Personnel Matter – Regarding County Administrator Search Update Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §30-4-70(1).

At 7:27 p.m., motion made by Council Member Pauley, seconded by Councilwoman Greene, to come out of executive session and return to regular session. Mr. Bell stated no action was taken in Executive Session. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

Mr. Bell stated prior to going into executive session we tabled a motion in order to get some financial numbers on a proposal to the amendment to Ordinance 778. Mr. Caulder stated we had those and asked Ms. Bass to speak to that subject. Ms. Bass stated she added for all of the emergency response personnel from \$1,200.00 to \$4,000.00 and the volunteer fire and EMS staff from \$200.00 to \$600.00. It brings the grand total to one million forty-five dollars, which an increase of \$595,000.00 and that includes the wages and all associated benefits. Mr. Bell asked if it was \$595,000.00 total or \$595,000.00 plus the \$460,000.00. Ms. Bass stated it was \$595,000.00 additional. The grand total would be one million forty-five dollars. Mr. Trapp asked for all the departments included in that total. Ms. Bell responded the Sheriff, EMS, Detention, Coroner, 911, building maintenance, public works, solid waste, and animal control. They are usually included with our safety sensitive department. She believed she got everybody. Mr. Bell asked how much was left out of the \$2.137 million. Ms. Bass stated she did not know – she did not take the total and subtract out all of the other parts of the ordinance. She only got the difference on this. Mr. Bell stated we needed that number. Ms. Bass asked if she could have a minute and Mr. Bell agreed. Mr. Robinson asked if we had staff to work during COVID that were regular staff members. Mr. Bell asked for the question to be repeated and Mr. Robinson did so. Mr. Bell responded the staff is already getting \$1,200.00. Mr. Gilbert stated we could get most of that money if we eliminated the mini parks. Mr. Trapp said he didn't think that would be a good idea. He restated he didn't think that would be a good idea, Gilbert. You don't want the people to have a mini park, do you? Mr. Gilbert said he wanted these people to have raises, money, bonuses. Mr. Trapp stated that's a good way to be. We can have both. Mr. Gilbert stated as we wait, we should recognize Thursday as being Veteran's Day. We need to put some emphasis on it because he was sure a lot of the people present were veterans

and he wanted to thank them for their previous service to the country. We thank you guys so much. Veteran's Day is one we should really put some emphasis on. Thank you. Mr. Bell stated while we were waiting he wanted to thank everyone for being present. One of the things we were thinking about (Mr. Caulder and Ms. Bass) and I have been spending time on how we will be able to afford going forward, ambulances, fire trucks, police cars and all of this. That's one of the reasons we were thinking about that and we have to buy air packs and all of these other things. So we will just have to see how it turns out. Mr. Trapp asked Mr. Caulder if Planning and Zoning were considered essential workers. He responded they are not safety sensitive. Mr. Bell asked for the groups included in the proposal. Mr. Caulder stated the Sheriff's Office, EMS, Fire, Detention Center, Solid Waste, Public Works, Animal Control, Building Maintenance, Coroner and 911. Mr. Bell asked for verification of Building Maintenance and Mr. Caulder verified that they were included. Ms. Bass came back to the podium and stated the first initial allotment we received was \$2,170,321. If she changed the \$460,000 to one million forty-five, that brings the subtotal of Ordinance 778 to \$2,158,800.00, leaving a balance of \$11,521.50. The second allotment to be received \$2,173,321.00 leaving total remaining funds of \$2,181,843.00. Mr. Bell asked if that would almost deplete the current allotment except for \$11,000.00. Ms. Bass responded for the first half, yes sir. Mr. Bell asked if anyone else had questions. There were none. Mr. Bell asked for a motion to bring the item off of the table. Motion made by Mr. Gilbert, seconded by Mr. Robinson. **The motion carried 7-0.** Mr. Bell stated the amended motion was to change Ordinance 778. He read what it captured – to exclude County Council members, to increase the funds for the library by \$12,000.00, to give all full time employees, except for safety sensitive staff, \$1,200.00 and all safety sensitive employees (he then asked Mr. Caulder to rename those groups) - Mr. Caulder stated the Sheriff's Office, EMS, Detention Center, Fire Department, Solid Waste, Public Works, Animal Control, Building Maintenance, Coroner's Office and Emergency Management. Mr. Bell stated they get \$4,000.00 and all volunteer fire fighters and volunteer EMT's get \$600.00, and the recycle workers get \$200.00 (Mr. Caulder agreed) and part time staff stay the same (verified by Mr. Caulder). That spends all of the ARP funds except \$11,000.00. Mr. Pauley asked if that was for the first allotment. Mr. Bell responded that was for the first allotment. Some of that allotment, and Ms. Bass will tell you, will come from lost revenue and the total lost revenue has not been calculated for the second allotment. Ms. Bass, off mic, confirmed. Mr. Bell asked for the amount of the lost revenue. Ms. Bass responded off mic and could not be heard. Mr. Bell stated alright, so that's the motion (just wanted to reiterate). **The motion carried 7-0.**

Mr. Bell asked for a motion to accept the amended motion. Motion made by Councilman Trapp to adopt Ordinance 778 on third reading as amended, seconded by Councilman Roseborough. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

16. ADJOURN

At 7:41 p.m., it was moved by Councilman Trapp, seconded by Councilwoman Greene, to adjourn. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

KIM W. ROBERTS
CLERK TO COUNCIL

MOSES BELL
CHAIRMAN