

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
FAIRFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
MARCH 27, 2023**

Present: Shirley Greene, Dan Ruff, Clarence Gilbert, Tim Roseborough, Doug Pauley, Peggy Swearingen, Cornelius Robinson (Council Members); Laura Johnson (Interim County Administrator); Synithia Williams (Deputy County Administrator), Tommy Morgan (County Attorney); Dr. Kimberly Roberts (Clerk to Council)

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 Pauley called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:00pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Pauley called for the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion made by Mr. Gilbert, seconded by Mr. Ruff. ***The motion carried 6-0.***

4. INVOCATION

Pastor Marcello Wheeler, Sr. (Mt. Olive Baptist Church) led the invocation.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Mr. Ruff, seconded by Mrs. Greene to approve the minutes from Regular Meeting March 13, 2023. ***The motion carried 6-0.***

6. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

A. Proclamation Honoring the 106th Birthday of Mrs. Geneva Bell.

Dr. Roberts read the proclamation and Mr. Ruff presented it to Mrs. Bell.

Mrs. Greene presented her with flowers – pictures were taken.

Mr. Robinson entered the meeting at 6:09pm.

7. 1st PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION: 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
- Jeff Schaffer

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

9. ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND ORDERS

None.

10. BOARD AND COMMISSION MINUTES (For information only)

None.

11. BOARD AND COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

- A.** Council of Governments – Councilman Clarence Gilbert & Todd Warren
Motion made by Mr. Ruff, seconded by Mrs. Swearingen. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

12. OLD BUSINESS

None.

13. NEW BUSINESS

None.

14. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

- A. WIOA Job Fair** – Mrs. Williams said the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act was a federal grant received annually to help citizens find employment. She introduced Director Latasha Wadlington to talk about the upcoming job fair. Ms. Wadlington announced the job fair April 13, 2023 at the Boykin Fairfield County Parks & Recreation Center from 10a-3p. She said they had about 30 employers registered to include the Fairfield County Detention Center, Royalty Academy, Mekra Lang, BOMAG, Ridgeway Manor, Kraft Heinz, and Fairfield County School District. They would also have a boiled p-nut truck, Tuff Riders Fish & Fries and Wild Childz food truck. She encouraged all to attend.
- B. Risk Management Award** – Mrs. Williams introduced Van Hinson (Director of Risk Management with the SC Association of Counties - SCAC) and she said accepting the award was Jennifer Leaphart (Fairfield County Human

Resources Coordinator) who was responsible for the County's Workman Compensation Program. Mr. Hinson said the purpose of the Association was to provide training, education and representation of all of the counties at a State House level as well as ancillary services. One of their services was to provide the opportunity to join their insurance trust pool. Fairfield County was a member of the property and liability and Workman's Compensation trust with the SCAC therefore, they insured the elements and assets throughout the County. They had an annual membership meeting in January and they recognized members for outstanding achievements. That year, Fairfield County was recognized with the LAG Time Award for property and liability insurance claims reporting. The rate of return for Fairfield County was .08 days (not even a quarter of a day). Their minimum standard was at least within three days to receive claims information. It was significant because it enabled them to get the County's equipment back in operational service and it allowed their adjusters to handle outside claims at a faster rate- it saved time and money. It was an astronomical feat accomplished by Ms. Leaphart. He presented the award and pictures were taken.

- C. Litter Pickup Update** – Mrs. Johnson said SCDOT awarded a contract for litter pickup that would cover 40-50 miles each month. She provided a schedule for Council that showed the coverage areas from March – June. They would start with primary roads.
- D. Budget Work Session Update** – Mrs. Johnson requested to combine her Items D & E since the audit impacted the budget meeting dates. She requested the cancellation of the budget meeting for March 29th and to proceed with the April 3rd meeting with presentations from the agencies. Mr. Robinson asked for the date again and Mrs. Johnson said she was asking for the March 29th date to be cancelled and to proceed with the April 3rd meeting. Mr. Morgan said it would be appropriate to have a motion to remove the March 29th workshop and to resume the regularly scheduled meeting on April 3rd. Mr. Ruff asked if another meeting would be added in the place of the cancelled one and Mrs. Johnson said they would wait because the original calendar had an extra meeting included in the event one was needed. Mr. Robinson asked if the reason for the change was due to the audit. Mrs. Johnson said yes, they were still providing reports, documentation, invoices, etc. to the auditors. On the financial side, they were still making adjustments to the general ledger that were material and could not be ignored. They needed more time because they had not been able to really work on the budget. She would prefer to have the audit to look at the fund balances because they already found some issues with some of the fund balances and she relied on those balances when she started looking at the budget. She said the auditor stated they were looking at the end of April to complete the audit. Mr. Robinson asked if they found more money.

He heard rumors and he wanted clarification. Mrs. Johnson said they did not find money – it was already there in an escrow (bank) account but were not recorded in the general ledger. The amounts were material. Since the last Council meeting, she found an additional \$8.5 million in bond monies that were in an account but had not been recorded in the general ledger and that bond was issued December 2021. Finance had to go back to December 2021 to record those bond monies and examine all statements up to that point and record any transactions, interest, disbursements, etc. in the general ledger. They currently, as they found transactions, were trying to catch them up to June 30, 2022 so they could turn them in to the auditor. Every transaction that they did had to be reviewed by the auditor. She wanted to make sure all understood that the situation did not occur overnight and would not be fixed overnight. They were still working on 2022 transactions for audit purposes as well as trying to prepare a budget and looking at 2023 transactions. There would be findings in the 2022 audit and those findings might run over into the 2023 audit. Normally when an audit was done and there were findings, there was a time period allotted to correct the errors. If they received the audit at the end of April or the first May, it would give them only two months to make corrections and some findings could take longer than two months. If those findings could not be corrected within the two month period, they would rollover into 2023. They were finding the material things as much as they could but every time they did a transaction or updated material amounts, they had to re-audit and that was what she was trying to avoid. She said they should not expect things to be nice, shiny and good for fiscal year 2023. There was a lot to examine in that area. If they found something in 2023 that should have been in 2022, that would be a prior period adjustment that would have to be made by the auditors and in some cases it would lead to a finding. Mrs. Swearingen asked why they were finding so many things – were they going back to 2021. Mrs. Johnson said the fiscal year 2022 went from July 2021 to June 2022 so when she said December 2021 it fell into fiscal year 2022. Mrs. Swearingen asked why those things were not posted and Mrs. Johnson said she could not answer that question. She went through the records and found these discrepancies. The finance department was currently going through the bank statements month by month through June to post those transactions. She said she did not know why the transactions were not reported – they were very material. Mrs. Swearingen asked whose job it was to post the transactions and Mrs. Johnson said the finance department. Mrs. Swearingen asked who was over the finance department and Mrs. Johnson said Anne Bass. Mrs. Swearingen said thank you.

Mr. Gilbert made a motion to cancel the budget work session scheduled for March 29th and resume the budget work session on April 3rd, seconded by Mr. Ruff. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

E. Audit Update – This information was given in Item 14 D.

15. CLERK TO COUNCIL'S REPORT

None.

16. 2nd PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION: 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.

- John Jones
- Jeff Schaffer
- Randy Bright

17. COUNTY COUNCIL TIME

Mr. Gilbert said with the big announcement coming from Blythewood regarding the Scout plant, Fairfield County had the opportunity of a lifetime to reap some of the benefits of that announcement. They had a small timeline to get themselves in place to receive those benefits. First, they must get their wastewater treatment plant up and running and without delay. Despite the assumptions of some that they had been sitting on their thumbs, it was quite the opposite. The County and the Towns of Ridgeway and Winnsboro agreed to put aside their strife that may have existed to work together to make that opportunity a reality. They realized that there would be some pushback on some of the decisions they would make but it would be for the betterment of Fairfield County as a whole. They must not tarry. They had a timeline of two to three years to get it done. They must seek help from the State and other entities in order to speed up the process. They could not and should not lose out on that second chance. Their wastewater treatment plant should have been up and running by then but they could not cry over spilt milk. All though some of the decisions in the past may have hurt them, they were behind them. Let them get to work and not make the same mistake again. They could not lose out on that opportunity. Let's get it done for the people of Fairfield County – their future depended on it. Ridgeway would host their first intergovernmental meeting since the pandemic in April. God bless Fairfield County and its citizens.

Mr. Ruff agreed with Mr. Gilbert regarding infrastructure so the County could grow and attract industry. He thanked the Chair for adding the Pledge of Allegiance to the agenda. He knew she had left the meeting but he congratulated Ms. Bell on her 106th birthday. He said he saw on the news the night before a Council meeting in Kershaw County where a citizen came to the podium to speak and a Councilperson put earphones in his ears and he disrupted the meeting. The Chair had to call him down. He thought that was absurd. He said they were not going to conduct themselves in that way – they listened, cared and appreciated everyone's comments. He thanked Mrs. Greene for scheduling the Fort Mill Wastewater Treatment Plant tour. The membrane was unbelievable. The water that came out was almost as clear as the bottle of water in front of him. He asked Mrs. Williams for an update on the planning grant that included/involved Ridgeway. Mrs. Williams said the recipients of the SKIP grant application for the Ridgeway/Winnsboro connector had not been announced by the State. Mr. Ruff asked if she knew when the announcement would be made and she said they originally said the end of March but they had not heard anything yet. She agreed to let them know as soon as they received the information.

Mrs. Greene agreed with Mr. Gilbert regarding the importance of moving forward with the wastewater treatment plant. She also thought it was important to move forward with the strategic plan. They had to ensure that they were prepared to take advantage of their opportunities and to do that they should have a road map.

Mrs. Swearingen agreed with all and said they had to learn from their mistakes. They made some bad ones but they had to move forward. They learned from history, just do not repeat it. A simple monthly finance report would be good. It was a mess – they did not even know what the fund balance was, no fault of Mrs. Johnson. She thought it was atrocious that they did not know where they stood. It was a sad day. She thanked the Chair for the Pledge of Allegiance. She said when they completed the audit report and got the finance department back on track, she thought a simple monthly report would be great and would keep them from getting in that situation again.

Mr. Robinson said in past years Council would get updates on road closures or roads being paved. He received about 20-30 calls on 269. He asked for an update.

Mrs. Greene added that there would be trash collected on Highway 21 from 200 to Camp Welfare Road by the Masons in the Pea Road area of Mitford that upcoming Saturday from 9a until.

18. 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.)

- A.** Receipt of Legal Advice and Discussion: Negotiations Incident to Proposed Contractual Arrangements and Relating to the Proposed Location or Expansion of Industries in Fairfield County pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 30-4-70(a)(2) and a(5).

At 6:53pm, motion made by Mr. Ruff, seconded by Mr. Gilbert go into executive session. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

At 7:47pm, motion made by Mr. Gilbert, seconded by Mrs. Greene to come out of executive session. ***The motion carried 7-0.*** Chairman Pauley stated there was no action taken in executive session.

19. ADJOURN

At 7:47pm, motion made by Councilman Robinson, seconded by Councilman Roseborough to adjourn. ***The motion carried 7-0.***

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

DOUGLAS PAULEY
CHAIRMAN