

**LEE COUNTY COUNCIL  
PUBLIC HEARING  
DECEMBER 14, 2021, 9:30 A.M.  
MAIN COURT ROOM – SECOND FLOOR OF THE COURTHOUSE**

Members present were Travis Windham, Chairman; Charles A. Beasley, member; Alexander Boyd, member; Jackie Josey, member; Johnette Caughman, member; Ron Fountain, member. Staff present were Alan Watkins, Administrator; Julie Stokes, Assistant Administrator/Clerk to Council; Paul Fata. Others present were Quinetta Buterbaugh, Gee Whetsel, Carrie Gass, Kareem Wilson, Shirley and Randy Dixon.

**FOIA**

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, all individuals requesting notifications were so notified.

**OPEN PUBLIC HEARING**

**A. AMEND SCHOOL DISTRICT FY22 BUDGET**

The public hearing was opened at 9:31 a.m. on a motion made by Councilperson Josey, seconded by Councilperson Caughman.

Mr. Watkins said that he has sent a letter out to the school district when we set the budget in June, which projected what we thought the tax notices would be. The exact value of a mill was determined at 145.3. He said that he referred to the 2020 number and did not take into account the reassessment. Mr. Watkins said the overall accumulation had increased and the value of a mill had increased and said the auditor rolled back the millage by two and the correct millage should have been 143.3.

Mr. Watkins said that he just received the school audit report, and the school actually had \$120,000 more than the millage was projected to produce and did not impact all dollars. He said the school district wanted the same mill value of 143.3 He reiterated that the county was not taking any money away from the school district.

Chairman Windham said the procedure to set this millage is controlled by statute.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no comments from the audience.

**CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING**

The public hearing was closed at 9:37 a.m. on a motion made by Councilman Fountain, seconded by Councilman Beasley.

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LEE COUNTY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
DECEMBER 14, 2021  
MAIN COURT ROOM – SECOND FLOOR OF THE COURTHOUSE

**OPEN MEETING, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**

Chairman Windham welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. Councilman Beasley gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

**REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDED AGENDA**

Chairman Windham said the agenda needed to be amended in which item 8A would be added to authorize Mr. Watkins to accept a railroad grant.

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the agenda with the revision. Councilman Boyd seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

**REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 9, 2021, AND CALLED MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 17, 2021**

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the minutes from regular meeting of November 9, 2021 and called meeting minutes of November 17, 2021 as mailed. Councilman Boyd seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

**QUINETTA BUTERBAUGH, OF DUKE ENERGY, PRESENTED A CHECK TO LEE COUNTY FOR A PROJECT AT CHAPPELL PARK**

Ms. Buterbaugh said that she appreciated the opportunity to work with Lee County on this project at Chappell Park. She said that she hopes to have many more opportunities to work with Lee County.

**RESOLUTION OUTLINING CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LEE COUNTY COUNCIL FOR THE ADOPTION OF A REDISTRICTING PLAN FOR LEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE 2020 UNITED STATES CENSUS**

Councilman Beasley said that his committee went over the issue with the prison population and by talking to council and the chairman of the Democratic Party, the committee was in favor of keeping the prison in two districts.

Mr. Watkins said this resolution confirms that our goal is to follow rules. He said that typically the Council does not include public comments in committee meetings, but the Council agreed that all committee meetings having to do with redistricting would have public comment.

Councilman Boyd made the motion to approve the resolution outlining the criteria to be used by the council for the adoption of a redistricting plan. Councilman Beasley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

**REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF FIRST READING APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE**

**A. MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN LEE COUNTY AND MARTECH FOR THE SALE OF BUILDING AND PROPERTY IN JAMES INDUSTRIAL PARK**

Mr. Watkins said that Martech Research, with facilities located on Tunnel Road and the Industrial Park, wants to purchase a building that the county owns inside the James Park. He said the building is 5,000 square feet, and the county has formerly used for storage. He said that Martech has increased their operational capabilities and is in need of the additional space. He said the agreed upon purchase price for the 5,000 square foot building and two acres of land is \$95,000, which will be payable to Lee County. Mr. Watkins said there will be two more readings and a public hearing on this matter.

Councilperson Josey made the motion to approve for first reading. Councilperson Caughman seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

**B. REDISTRICTING OF THE COUNCIL DISTRICT LINES**

Mr. Watkins said that Council had just passed the resolution outlining the criteria that would be met in the drawing of the lines.

Councilman Fountain made the motion to approve for first reading. Councilman Beasley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

**REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF SECOND READING APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE**

**A. AMEND SCHOOL DISTRICT FY 22 BUDGET**

Chairman Windham said that the Council had just had the public hearing on this matter and asked if there were any questions from any of the Council. There were no questions.

Councilperson Josey made the motion to approve for second reading. Councilman Beasley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

**B. APPROVAL OF AUTOMATIC AID AGREEMENT FOR STRUCTURE FIRE PROTECTION**

Mr. Watkins said this issue came up when the county started making plans to construct some rural fire stations. He said there will still be some houses on the edge of the county which will be outside the five mile radius. Mr. Watkins said that Lee County reached out to Kershaw County and they indicated they too have homes on the county line that are outside the five mile radius. He said this agreement will enable both counties to offer assistance in the event of a structure fire and the homes that are outside the five mile radius will receive the same insurance rate as those homes located within five miles of a fire station.

Chairman Windham said this will save people a lot of money. He said that he wanted to commend the fire department for their time in coordinating with Kershaw County to initiate this agreement.

Councilperson Caughman made the motion to approve for second reading approval of ordinance. Councilman Fountain seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

**AUTHORIZATION TO PROCEED WITH FINAL DESIGN AND BIDDING FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS UTILIZING ARPA AND CPST FUNDING**

Mr. Watkins said that he met with Buildings, Land & Property and reviewed a number of projects and the funding has become available from a couple of sources, including ARPA and CPST.

Mr. Watkins said that Lee County will have received \$3.2 million over a three year period and have already received \$1.6 million of the \$3.2 million in July. The only ARPA funds previously

expended were the \$325,000 that went to County employees and the \$145,000 that went to 501c organizations as grants. The additional projects presented to Council today will utilize the balance of the first allotment of ARPA, which includes work in Coroner's office, manned sites, library upgrades, EMS quarter upgrades, and various recreation projects. He said that Council is authorizing these remaining projects for final design and bidding today.

Councilman Beasley made the motion for the authorization to proceed with final design and bidding for capital projects utilizing APRA and CPST funding. Councilman Boyd seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

#### **AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT RAILROAD GRANT**

Mr. Watkins said that this was a joint project with the City of Bishopville for the old railroad depot that runs from Nettles Street to the Cotton Museum. He said the City has secured a long-term 30 year lease. Mr. Watkins said the County is to be the applicant for this grant from the Department of Commerce and will pass through to the City. They plan to rehab the property and the brick depot will be saved and will be turned into some type of venue. Mr. Watkins said there will be parking with sidewalks and lighting.

Mr. Watkins said that Will Wheeler and other legislative members secured \$450,000 through Archives and History and the total cost for this project is \$900,000.

Councilman Fountain made the motion to approve the authorization to accept a railroad grant. Councilperson Caughman seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

Chairman Windham said this was great news.

#### **COUNCIL WILL APPROVE WARREN JOYE TO SERVE ON THE LEE COUNTY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS**

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve Warren Joye to serve on the Lee County Board of Zoning Appeals. Councilperson Caughman seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

##### **A. HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE**

Councilperson Josey had no report. She did encourage everyone to get vaccinated, continue wearing masks and social distancing.

##### **B. PLANNING, TAXES & PERSONNEL**

Councilman Beasley said that his committee met on redistricting and this matter had already been discussed.

### C. BUILDINGS, LAND & PROPERTY

Vice-Chairman not here.

### D. PUBLIC SAFETY

Councilperson Caughman had no meetings.

### E. RECREATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Councilman Boyd thanked Council for the work in the areas of recreation and said that Mr. Watkins had already discussed.

### F. WAYS AND MEANS

Councilman Fountain had no meetings.

### G. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Watkins said the County had 56 Covid cases as of 12/13/21, which had increased 14 from last month. He encouraged everyone to practice safety measures. He said that CVS is offering vaccines as well as CareSouth.

He also said that he had a conference call with the City and the COG regarding the dilapidated housing grant and said this is behind because of Covid. He said the contract for asbestos abatement has been secured.

Mr. Watkins reviewed the various grants and other revenue sources that the County has received in 2021, which equaled \$6.1 million, which does not include ARPA or capital penny.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Randy Dixon was present and commended Council for showing up and doing their jobs. He presented a number of questions to Council and Mr. Watkins was instructed to answer them within 30 days. See the attached questions and answers to Mr. Dixon.

He said that Council should be proud of the information they are putting out.

He also asked if a house catches on fire that is on the Kershaw and Lee County lines, does the homeowner call Kershaw or Lee County.

Mr. Watkins said that they would call 911 and our 911 would dispatch Kershaw County if needed. He said this only affects homes located outside 5 miles of fire station right along the county line.

Jana Robinson, CEO of New Revelations Outreach, was present and made everyone aware of a new housing project grand opening on December 19 at 3:00 at Old Gilbert Road.

Carrie Gass said she was very pleased that the City had secured a lease on the old railroad property. She asked the Council to please consider paving the street behind her house.

Ms. Gass also wanted to know who the members are on the redistricting committee. Mr. Watkins said that it's the Planning, Taxes & Personnel Committee, which are Councilman Beasley, and Councilpersons Caughman and Josey, but Council as a group are working together.

Chairman Windham responded to Ms. Gass and said that the lease with the railroad is between the city and the railroad and does not involve the road behind your house. He said that she would need to talk to Gregg McCutchen.

Pamela Frasier asked if a park could be done in the Browntown area with some of this extra money the county has.

Paul Fata introduced Creighton Segars as the new law assistant at Stuckey, Fata & Segars.

Chairman Windham said that he welcomed comments from the audience and appreciated them.

**ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:32 a.m. on a motion made by Councilman Beasley, seconded by Councilman Boyd.

_____	_____
CHAIRMAN	VICE-CHAIRMAN
_____	_____
CLERK TO COUNCIL	MINUTES APPROVED

12/14/21  
Roy Dixon  
Questions:

1. Can the public get a copy of the audio video tape of the council meetings?

The meetings are recorded via an audio recorder and minutes are transcribed and approved at the next council meeting; there is not a visual recording of the meetings unless the meeting is streamed via social media. Upon approval, the transcribed minutes are posted on the count's website; LeeCountySC.org. Hard copies of the minutes can be made available for a minimal fee.

2. Have you considered having a joint meeting with city council and the school board?

The County Council has had joint meetings with City Council on several occasions and are currently partnering with the city on several projects; to include, a downtown redevelopment project of the old RR Depot and major upgrade to the wastewater lines leading from the interstate to the treatment facility in town. The County is also in discussions with the School Board to update the playground equipment at Dennis Elementary through a joint project. Announcements on these various projects will hopefully be made after the first of the year.

3. Referenced the money coming in and inquired about compensating employees in the county or upgrading employee salary in the county.

With regards to the APRA funds, these funds were not used to actually upgrade salaries but to provide a one-time bonus for current employees who worked during the emergency period of the pandemic (March of 2020- May of 2021) and to provide a vaccine incentive for current employees. Because these funds are a one-time allotment, and any salary adjustments would have to be included permanently in the budget, the county is not using these funds for recurring costs such as salary increases.



4. Council needs to have more meetings and have them later in the day or night.

Our regular monthly meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month, we do meet on the majority of those days at 9:30 in the morning, but we also have several night meetings each year as well. We always conduct our budget public hearing at night and we had our recent public hearing regarding census data used for redistricting of Council lines in the evening as well, November 17th. We have scheduled our upcoming public hearing for the new map for Council District Lines for January 25<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm. We have compared the number of attendees at our evening verses our morning meetings and have not seen a significant difference in the number of attendees or the actual individuals who attend.

5. When jobs become available in the courthouse, are they posted and where? Or are they given to someone inhouse?

When jobs are available in County Government, they are typically advertised in the Lee County Observer and on the county's Facebook page; Lee County Government. Consideration may be given to inhouse employees if they are qualified, but it depends on the requirements of the specific job being filled. Elected and Appointed Officials' hiring practices may vary from those of the County Administration, as Elected/Appointed Officials have the authority to hire as they see fit within their respective offices.