

LEE COUNTY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 14, 2024, 9:30 A.M.
FAMILY COURT ROOM – SECOND FLOOR OF THE COURTHOUSE

Members present were Travis Windham, Chairman; Gordon Eckley, Vice-Chairman; Keel Addison, member; Charles Beasley, member; Jackie Josey, member; Johnette Caughman, member. Staff present were Alan Watkins, Administrator; Julie Stokes, Assistant Administrator/Clerk to Council; Paul Fata, Kayla Edwards, Lee Richardson, Teresa Brown, Michael Davis. Others present were Gee Whetsel, Nathaniel Brunson, LaToya Boyd, Shareka Anderson, Bernard McDaniel, Mattie Mack, Queenie Boyd, Andre Laws.

FOIA

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

OPEN MEETING, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Chairman Windham welcomed everyone to the meeting and Vice-Chairman Eckley gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDED AGENDA

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the agenda as mailed. Vice-Chairman Eckley 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 APRIL 9 2024

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Councilperson Josey 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 AGENDA

A. LEE COUNTY BUDGET FY 25

Mr. Watkins said this was a starting point for the FY 25 budget and said the Ways and Means Committee have met with outside agencies and no cuts have been made. He said that the current budget expenditures are \$15,613,875.62 and the current budget revenues are \$14,776,532.80, with a deficit of \$837,342.82.

Mr. Watkins said the goal is to give county employees a 3% cost of living raise and may look at other areas of public safety.

He said that the health insurance load factor is increasing where insurance has gone up primarily due to inflation.

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to approve first reading on the Lee County Budget FY 25 with a total of expenditures of \$15,613,875.62 and revenues of \$14,776,532.80 and a deficit of \$837,342.82. Councilperson Caughman seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

B. LEE COUNTY SCHOOL BUDGET FY 25

Mr. Bernard McDaniel said the School Board had its first reading on the budget and public hearing last week. Mr. Watkins said the Council would approve the same millage as last year of \$148.6 mills. He said the only portion of the school budget that Council has authority over is whether to increase ad valorem tax rates. The Council does not have any discretion of how funds are spent by the school district.

Councilperson Josey made the motion to approve the Lee County School Budget FY25. Councilperson McCutchen seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

KAYLA EDWARDS, WITH THE LEE COUNTY LIBRARY, WILL GIVE PRESENTATION ON THE SUMMER READING PROGRAM

Ms. Edwards gave a presentation on the summer program that the library will be offering this summer and also noted that the library had received a grant for \$2000 to go towards special summer programs.

UPDATE ON VARIOUS FACILITY CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONAL WORK TO BE PERFORMED

Mr. Watkins said that the Buildings, Land & Property Committee met and reviewed information on the recent upgrades EMS, which included new sleeping quarters, workout areas and laundry areas, etc. He said they received very positive feedback. He said that our ambulance service is critical since we do not have a hospital. He said these improvements were done with the use of funds of capital penny, ARPA and USDA funds. He thanked Tim DuBose and Matt Makela for securing these funds for the County.

He also gave an update on the Veterans Affairs Office and said that the State Office of Veterans Affairs secured funding for relocating to North Nettles Street.

Mr. Watkins said that it cost approximately \$200,000 to upfit the building. He said that it was getting a total makeover with paved parking lot, new roof, interior renovations. They will also install a security fence with a gate. Mr. Watkins said the project is expected to come in under budget because we are doing some of the work inhouse.

He said the Sheriff, Magistrate and Coroner's offices have had issues with their roofs. He said the building was renovated in 2000, and Mr. Watkins had a third party roofing consultant come in and do an assessment of the roof. He said some of the flashing needed to be replaced at a cost of \$74,440 and there were three areas of damage that needed to be repaired which will buy the county some time before the roof needs to be replaced. He said the roofing consultant is working with the bidders.

Mr. Watkins said the main work for these buildings are roof and fence at Veterans Affairs Office and roof at Sheriff/Magistrate/Coroner Offices.

Chairman Windham said that the Copeland Family owned the Veterans Affairs Office building and it was once a gift shop. She gave it to the Friends of the Library and they donated it to the County. He thanked Representative Will Wheeler, Senator Thomas McElveen, and Senator Gerald Malloy for securing these funds.

Mr. Watkins also commented that Tia Baldwin has been involved with the renovations.

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to approve the updates on various facility construction projects and approval of additional work to be performed. Councilman Beasley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE

Councilperson Josey said that April was Autism Awareness Month in Lynchburg involving the Lisbon family. The Lisbon family enlightened everyone on autism. She attended Caresouth community health fair with great participation and door prizes were given. Mary McLeod Bethune organization was recognized.

She also attended the Relay for Life and said it was well attended.

B. PLANNING, TAXES & PERSONNEL

Councilman Beasley said that he had no meetings but a lot of information was given at the Ways and Means Committee meeting.

C. BUILDINGS, LAND & PROPERTY

He said that this committee had some meetings and there had been a lot of activity. He said that EMS facility was very impressive and our employees should be proud to work there. He said that the courthouse and sidewalks, along with Voter Registration, were pressure washed and the flag pole had been repaired.

Vice-Chairman Eckley said that the County is currently working with a local company for a major expansion. He also noted there were two prospects looking at spec building.

D. PUBLIC SAFETY

Councilperson Caughman said that her committee did not have any meetings. She attended the EMS drop in and said it's amazing how far it has come in the past ten years. She said they are top notch and said the County needs to have the best emergency care since we don't have a hospital. She said that Lee County EMS is able to offer services that other counties are not able to offer.

E. RECREATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Councilman Addison said that his committee did not have any meetings. He said that they are wrapping up baseball this week. Mr. Watkins added that they had a good season with a great number of kids.

Mr. Watkins said there had been a lot of activity on tennis courts and pickleball courts. He said that Parks and Rec even has equipment to borrow if you do not have equipment to play pickle ball.

Chairman Windham also added that the Parks and Rec are now able to electronically lock and unlock doors. He said that Angie Simon can unlock and lock bathrooms and doors from her phone.

F. WAYS AND MEANS

Councilman Fountain not here.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lee Richardson said for everyone to come by and get handout on their summer reading program. She said that it on their website and on Facebook. She said that we are fortunate to have the library that we have and encouraged everyone to sign up for the summer reading program.

She said that Creighton Segars will be at the library tonight at 6:00 to do a talk on wills. She also said that Sandra Gamble will be doing a talk on “grief” on May 21.

Chairman Windham thanked Ms. Richardson for the great job she is doing.

Eddie Durant, of Price Lane, was present and said he is still waiting for his road to be fixed. He said that he does appreciate what has been done so far.

Mr. Watkins said that he has a list of aprons that need to be repaired and may be requesting funds from the CTC committee.

Shirley Dixon made everyone aware of housing repair opportunity through the SC Association of Community Action Partnership.

ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Mr. Watkins said that he did a presentation on Local Government to the Emerging Leaders on April 23. He also attended the Magnolia Festival and the Relay for Life. He reminded everyone that the Spring Hill May Fest and parade is Saturday, May 18 at 11:00. Mr. Watkins also reminded everyone of the Mary McLeod Bethune Park walk Saturday morning at 8:00.a.m.

Vice-Chairman Eckley said the Emerging Leaders program is put on by TheLink and thanked the schools for participating.

Councilperson Josey reminded everyone of the Rental Assistance Program meeting on May 30 at 6:00 in which individuals may be eligible for up to \$500 in assistance.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. COUNCIL WILL ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION ON AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
MATTER

Council entered Executive Session at 10:29 a.m. on a motion made by Vice-Chairman Eckley, seconded by Councilman Beasley. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

Council came out of Executive Session at 10:53 a.m. on a motion made by Councilman Beasley, seconded by Vice-Chairman Eckley. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 10:54 on a motion made by Councilman Beasley, seconded by Vice-Chairman Eckley.

CHAIRMAN

VICE-CHAIRMAN

CLERK TO COUNCIL

MINUTES APPROVED