

LEE COUNTY COUNCIL  
PUBLIC HEARING  
JUNE 13, 2023, 5:30 P.M.  
MAIN COURT ROOM – SECOND FLOOR OF THE COURTHOUSE

Members present were Travis Windham, Chairman; Gordon Eckley, Vice-Chairman; Keel Addison, member; Charles A. Beasley, Chairman; Jackie Josey, member; Johnette Caughman, member; Ron Fountain, member. Staff present were Alan Watkins, Administrator; Julie Stokes, Assistant Administrator/Clerk to Council; Arlene Samuel, Sherry Kerr, Connie Brown, Brandon Holloman, Sheriff Daniel Simon. Others present were Paul Atkinson, Shareka Anderson, Bernard McDaniel, Mattie Mack, Jessica Dowling, Naomi Price, Luke Giddings, Wayne Hancock, Queenie Boyd, Carrie Gass, Damon Kirkland, Linda Stuckey, Rona Guzman, Damon Kirkland, Celestine Boone, Gee Whetsel, Regitt James, Nathaniel Brunson, Shirley Dixon, Pat Carter.

**FOIA**

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

PUBLIC HEARING

A. LEE COUNTY BUDGET FY 24

The public hearing was opened at 5:30 p.m. on a motion made by Councilman Beasley, seconded by Councilperson Caughman. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

Mr. Watkins said the Ways and Means Committee has met several times and is presenting a balanced budget of \$15,260,299, with expenditures of \$15,260,299 and revenue of \$15,260,299 and no tax increase on county operations.

Mr. Watkins said that the Rural Stabilization Fund, which is part of the Local Government Fund increased this year by over \$200,000, and there was also an increase in tipping fees from the Landfill.

Mr. Watkins said the County was able to focus on employees this year. He said that inflation continues to be a problem. Mr. Watkins said the Ways and Means Committee looked at COLAs and was able to give larger amount of COLAs on lower salaries, starting at 9% for salaries less

than \$28,000, and the County was able to take the lowest salaries up to a starting salary of \$30,000. He said there were not a lot of significant changes operationally.

Chairman Windham said the County has looked at this the last couple of years and said he was glad we were able to do this. He said the County has many valuable employees and thanked Alan and the Ways and Means Committee for their hard work in making this happen.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

The public hearing was closed at 5:41 p.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.

#### B. LEE COUNTY SCHOOL BUDGET FY 24

The public hearing was opened at 5:42 p.m. on a motion made by Councilperson Josey, seconded by Councilman Beasley. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

Mr. Watkins welcomed school board members present. He said that he received this request last week and said the current millage rate for the 22/23 school year is 146.6 mills. He said this is limited to local sources of revenue. He said the school board is requesting a 7 mil increase.

Mr. Bernard McDaniel said they have had two readings on their budget. He said they were requesting a \$2500 minimum teacher salary increase and also increases on non-teacher positions of 3%. He said that the current millage rate is 146.6. He said they were requesting 7 mil increase. He said that 8% of 146.6 is 11.72 mills. Their request of 7 mills is only 4.77% of the maximum of 8%. He said they could request 8% but they are not doing that because they understand the challenges the county is facing.

Shareka Anderson said that the 4.3 mills is received from local and rest of funds are received from the state. The millage increase would equate to \$64,000. She said that 80% went to employees and 20% went to the operations of the school district. She said their total revenue and expenditures were \$20,034,653.

Vice-Chairman Eckley asked if the 3% increase to the non-teacher positions was covered by the state. Ms. Anderson said that half of the teacher's salaries are covered from local funds, but teacher assistants, custodians, etc. are not covered.

Chairman Windham said that the school would be receiving a \$42 million investment consolidating three schools, and the taxpayers won't have to do it. He said that hopefully consolidating will lower your operations in the future.

Public Comment – None

The public hearing was closed at 5:54 p.m. on a motion made by Councilman Beasley, seconded by Councilperson Josey.

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REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
JUNE 13, 2023  
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 Vice-Chairman Eckley gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDED AGENDA

Mr. Watkins said that an Executive Session on an Economic Development matter needed to be added to the agenda.

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to approve the agenda with the revision. Councilperson Josey seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM COUNCIL MEETING OF MAY 9, 2023

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the minutes from May 9, 2023 as mailed. Councilperson Josey seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON FIRST READING APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE

A. APPROVAL OF CONTRACT FOR CLOSING ON SALE OF PROPERTY TO HOGSLAT THAT  
AUTHORIZES THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO SIGN ON BEHALF OF THE COUNTY

Mr. Watkins said that this matter had been discussed a while back and the project has taken time to get an encroachment permit for driveway. He said the property is adjacent to James Park and is not a part of the industrial park. He said they sell agricultural products for poultry farms and livestock farms. Mr. Watkins also pointed out the different points of closing documents which entailed driveway and various necessary easements.

Mr. Watkins added they will potentially employ five people and do approximately \$2.5 million business a year.

Vice-Chairman Eckley 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. PROPOSED ZONING MAP AMENDMENT TO REZONE TMP 030-11-00-103 OWNED BY COUSAR MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FROM LIGHT INDUSTRIAL (LI) TO GENERAL COMMERCIAL (GC)

Mr. Watkins said that Planning Commission recommended that this property be rezoned in order for the church to build a cemetery. He said the cemetery would be a permitted use.

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

C. ORDINANCE TO ADOPT VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL AND STANDARD CODES RELATING TO INSPECTION ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNTY OF LEE, SOUTH CAROLINA AND ENFORCEMENT OF BUILDING PROVISION AS PROVIDED IN SAID CODES

Mr. Watkins said according to state law, counties must adopt the most recent version of these codes because the houses and commercial buildings that are being built must adhere to certain standards. He said the Council would be approving an updated version of the International and standard codes.

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the adoption of various international and standard codes relating to inspection activities for Lee County. Councilperson Caughman 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. LEE COUNTY BUDGET FY 24

Chairman Windham said that the Council had just had the public hearing for the budget. Mr. Watkins said the total budget FY 24 was \$15,260,299 as a balanced budget with no tax increase.

Councilperson Josey made the motion to approve the Lee County Budget FY 24 for second reading. Councilman Fountain seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

B. LEE COUNTY SCHOOL BYDGET FY 24

Chairman Windham said that the Council had just had the public hearing for the school budget. Vice-Chairman Eckley said that just hearing presentation and the school's request of seven mills, he felt that it was the Council's obligation to look over this information and review before making a final decision. He said the budget is a carry over of 146.6 mills and said that the Council could have a decision by third reading in two weeks.

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Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to continue millage at the current millage of 146.6 and make a final decision regarding an increase at third 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 THIRD READING APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE

- A. AN ORDINANCE (1) AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE FEE AGREEMENT, DATED AS OF FEBRUARY 28, 2017, BY AND BETWEEN LEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC CANNERS, INC TO PROVIDE FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE INVESTMENT PERIOD AND A MODIFICATION OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE CREDIT (2) PROVIDING FOR OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Mr. Watkins said the County had a FILO Agreement with SAC in 2017 for \$14 million and nine jobs, and they came to us with an additional investment with more jobs and wanted to extend the inducement for fees. The new agreement would add \$28.75 million and create 15 additional jobs for a total fee of \$42.75 million and 24 jobs. He said the fees are split between the county and the school.

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to approve the Ordinance for third and final reading. Councilman Beasley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

#### APPOINTMENT OF CHRIS PARNELL TO THE LEE COUNTY DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS BOARD FOR A FOUR-YEAR TERM

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to appoint Chris Parnell to the Lee County Disabilities Board. Councilperson Caughman 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 she was glad to see the school board members with the Superintendent in the meeting. She said she attended the groundbreaking of the new school on May 24 and recognized Bernard McDaniel to speak. He said this would be a new consolidated elementary school located next to the campus on the High School and Middle School. He said he was excited about this new construction and said that young students are the future of county government.

- B. PLANNING, TAXES & PERSONNEL

Councilman Beasley said that he worked with budget information and said he was glad that the county was helping everyone with salaries, especially lower salaries. He thanked Mr. Watkins for his hard work on the budget.

C. BUILDINGS, LAND & PROPERTY

Vice-Chairman Eckley said that work is continuing on the EMS building and should be complete in about 45 days.

He said that the LINK is working with two prospects that look very promising.

D. PUBLIC SAFETY

Councilperson Caughman had no meetings. Brandon Holloman was present and said that 200 road signs had been put up and was working on more.

Sheriff Simon said that he is still actively recruiting people to work with the Sheriff's Office. He said they were installing cameras within the county.

E. RECREATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Councilman Addison said that work was continuing on upgrades for the parks.

Mr. Watkins said the tennis courts are paved and they are putting up posts and said they should be complete in about 45-60 days.

F. WAYS AND MEANS

Councilman Fountain thanked the committee for their time and hard work on the budget. He also thanked Alan Watkins and Connie Brown for their help in the budget.

G. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Watkins said that everyone should remember the Davis family in the passing of James Davis, 96, who served as the Clerk of Court for Lee County for over 30 years.

He also commented that he attended the dedication of the City/County Complex. He said this was a good joint project and would be a meeting place for government or civic groups. He said that Jenna McGuirt would be the contact person if someone wanted to use the building.

Mr. Watkins said the final inspection on the meters for the lighting has been scheduled. He said the lighting for the sidewalks has been installed and will hopefully be done by next month. He said the County is working with Duke on lighting on the ramp itself and it will be seamless on and off the ramp on Highway 15, similar to Exit 98 in Camden.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Linda Stuckey – she said that prior to April meeting, the employees that were employed at the Animal Shelter are no longer employed. She had a few questions: (1) how did the funds become available for the new building for cats (2) how many full time and part-time employees

are at the Shelter (3) wants a copy of the current budget (4) wants a copy of the written policies and procedures policy (5) concerned about how the employees and volunteers were treated and expected full transparency.

Rona Guzman – lives on 4886 Springvale Road. She wanted to know what’s being done with the volunteers gone and the vet has quit doing business with the shelter. She said the dogs are just dying and the shelter needs a director that properly trained.

Pat Carter – she said she mentioned in the April meeting about the meeting time of the council meeting and if it could be changed and wanted to know if any decision had been made.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

Council entered Executive Session at 6:26 p.m. on an Economic Development matter on a motion made by Vice-Chairman Eckley, seconded by Councilman Fountain.

Council came out of Executive Session at 6:40 p.m. on a motion made by Vice-Chairman, seconded by Councilman Beasley. No votes were taken and only discussion on an economic development matter.

ADJOURN

Council adjourned the meeting at 6:41 p.m. on a motion made by Vice-Chairman Eckley, seconded by Councilman Beasley.

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CHAIRMAN

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VICE-CHAIRMAN

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CLERK TO COUNCIL

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MINUTES APPROVED