

**LEE COUNTY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 12, 2022
MAIN COUNCIL CHAMBERS – FIRST FLOOR OF THE COURTHOUSE**

Members present were Travis Windham, Chairman; Gordon Eckley, Vice-Chairman; Charles A. Beasley, member; Jackie Josey, member; Johnette Caughman, member; Ron Fountain, member. Staff present were Alan Watkins, Administrator; Julie Stokes, Assistant Administrator/Clerk to Council, Lee Richardson, Tim DuBose. Others present were Quinetta Buterbaugh, Shirley and Roy Dixon, Carrie Gass, Jenna McGuirt, Gee Whetsel.

FOIA

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

OPEN MEETING AND INVOCATION

Chairman Windham opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Vice-Chairman Eckley gave the invocation.

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDED AGENDA

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the agenda as mailed. 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 REGULAR MEETING OF JUNE 14, 2022 AND CALLED MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 28, 2022

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Councilperson Caughman seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

QUINETTA BUTERBAUGH, OF DUKE ENERGY, WILL DO A CHECK PRESENTATION

Ms. Buterbaugh said that she has been working with Recreation Department on some different things and said they were so good to work with and said they did a great job.

Ms. Buterbaugh said that EMS had applied for a \$20,000 grant and she was presenting this check today to EMS from Duke Energy and this would be used for communications equipment. Chairman Windham thanked her for coming and said that the County appreciates working with Duke Energy.

RONNIE RHODES, WITH SC STATE 1890 RESEARCH AND EXTENSION, WILL GIVE A PRESENTATION ABOUT THEIR PROGRAM

Mr. Rhodes said that he had been working with Recreation Department and the school district already on the 1890 Extension Program. He said this program offers outreach programs and services to the citizens of South Carolina on behalf of SC State University. He said these programs are designed to provide learning opportunities that help rural and urban limited resource clients improve their quality of living.

Chairman Windham thanked Mr. Rhodes for coming and sharing with the Council.

TRACEY POWELL WILL MAKE A PRESENTATION ABOUT BACK TO SCHOOL BASH FOR LEE COUNTY

Ms. Powell said this will be a countywide back to school bash with all schools, and Duke Energy and Clemson Extension will be also be involved. She said that children will be able to receive school supplies at this event. She thanked Recreation Department and the Council for their support. She invited Council to the Back to School Bash and to participate in hosting a booth to introduce themselves to the children and the parents attending.

Chairman Windham thanked her for coming and sharing with the Council.

Chairman Windham introduced Lee Richardson as the new librarian. She encouraged everyone to visit and see everything they have going on and said the hours are Monday through Friday 9-5. Chairman Windham said Lee County was very fortunate to have such a great library.

Chairman Windham recognized Jenna McGuirt and also recognized Shirley and Roy Dixon.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tracy Powell asked about the plans to expand the broadband coverage in the Cypress area. Mr. Watkins said that FTC is working on expanding broadband in the county and said that 85% of customers will have broadband coverage Mr. Watkins said that it is \$50,000 per mile to put broadband in the ground. He said there are programs available to low-income citizens who could possibly qualify for access to broadband coverage. Mr. Watkins said that he may be able to find out which areas are being worked on. He said that another issue FTC is facing is the supply chain, i.e. Having problems getting supplies.

Carrie Gass thanked Council for their support in the Salkahatchie project. She said they were only able to do three houses because of lack of volunteers and the main reason is that volunteers had to be vaccinated.

Carrie Gass also asked about the progress being made in bringing dentist to Lee County.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE

Councilperson Josey had no reports but asked about COVID reports. Mr. Watkins said that he is receiving intermittent reports from DHEC and the last one he got was June 29. He said there has been an increase in cases. He said there was another variant which entailed less serious hospitalization. He said not as much testing was being done. He said this virus will continue to mutate and will hopefully become weaker. He said that vaccinations are still available at CareSouth, DHEC, and Bishopville Drug.

B. PLANNING, TAXES & PERSONNEL

Councilman Beasley said that he had no meetings but that the new budget had been finalized with no tax increase.

He said that he had received some phone calls regarding road signs that are down. He did mention a Community Violence Intervention Church Safety Works event that took place on July 9 at Unionville AME Church.

He said that he had received a complaint about limbs hanging down where there are parking spaces across from Voter Registration.

Chairman Windham said that the road signs are a big problem. He said that he talked to Mike Bedenbaugh and, as of two weeks ago, there were approximately 300 signs down.

Mr. Watkins said that county personnel had ridden around the county and tried to note where the signs were down. He said they plan to start working on putting signs back up in a timely manner. He said they were planning to pull people from Recreation, Fire, and Public Works to do them over a couple of days.

Chairman Windham suggested to Gee Whetsel that she do a story in the Observer and get Sheriff Simon involved.

C. BUILDINGS, LAND & PROPERTY

Vice-Chairman Eckley reported a lot of activity in Economic Development. He said that Lee County was the number one site in South Carolina for a prospect on the spec building. He said that the county would hopefully be announcing an industry within one or two months.

D. PUBLIC SAFETY

Councilperson Caughman said that she had no meetings but asked Tim DuBose to give a report.

Mr. DuBose said Medicare B provides eight covid tests through the plan including covid transports. He said that Lee County was part of a pilot program for FAST-ED Prehospital Stroke Evaluation and they were doing telehealth for stroke assessment. He explained that it's when you assess patient and talk to the hospital they are being transported to, which includes MUSC in Charleston.

Mr. DuBose also mentioned that he has several employees in the paramedic program.

Councilperson Caughman thanked him for his report.

Mr. Watkins said that Mike Bedenbaugh retired as Fire Chief as of June 30, 2022. He said that he served as Fire Chief for over 20 years and will continue to work part time as Emergency Management. He said that Brandon Holloman became Fire Chief effective July 1, 2022. Mr. Watkins said that currently there are eight full time firemen and volunteer staff and there are 2-3 people on duty 24/7 all the time.

Chairman Windham asked about the status on the Lucknow Fire Department. Mr. Watkins said there are fire trucks already there. Chairman Windham said he wants to have a ceremony like the one they had for Springhill Fire Station.

Councilman Beasley said that he wants Brandon Holloman at the next meeting to recognize him as the new Fire Chief and present Mike Bedenbaugh with a retirement plaque at next meeting.

E. RECREATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Councilman Boyd was not present. Mr. Watkins said that he has had a lot of positive comments on the sports camp for the youth at the Recreation Department. He said that Parks and Rec was working with Council on Aging on bingo for seniors and exercise for seniors.

He said that Angela Simon takes care of office and scheduling and Shannon Reddick maintains and coordinates youth programs.

Mr. Watkins said the County just ordered playground equipment for the parks.

F. WAYS AND MEANS

Councilman Fountain thanked the Committee for their hard work on the budget and said that he was proud to be able to approve a budget with no tax increase.

G. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Watkins said that the County has started bidding EMS Facility improvements, which will enhance the sleeping quarters. He said that building permit has to be obtained before work can be started.

He said that plans have been finalized on the tennis courts, which will be funded through ARPA and PRT funds. He said bids have been received and work will begin in 45 days.

He said that playground equipment should be in about 10-12 weeks.

Mr. Watkins said that the County and City are working on two grants, one of which is the Railroad Depot and the other is the wastewater upgrade. He said that Railroad Depot is in the engineering phase and the Wastewater project is almost ready to go out for bid.

Chairman Windham asked about the Animal Shelter. Mr. Watkins said that the animal shelter is considered a low kill shelter because they euthanized only six animals last year. He said that Bridget Kirkland works with a lot of rescues to get animals to homes and all of the animals are spayed and neutered. Mr. Watkins said that Bridget does a great job.

Mr. Watkins also said that construction on St. Charles Road and Highway 341 and Main Street will begin soon with resurfacing by DOT, with a cost of approximately \$2 million.

Councilperson Josey asked when the bridge on Highway 76 would be opened? She said she understands that it will be 12-18 months. Mr. Watkins said he would check on it.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 10:24 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.

CHAIRMAN

VICE-CHAIRMAN

CLERK TO COUNCIL

MINUTES APPROVED

