

**LEE COUNTY COUNCIL
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
AUGUST 10, 2021, 9:30 A.M.
MAIN COURT ROOM – SECOND FLOOR OF THE COURTHOUSE**

Members present were Travis Windham, Chairman; Alexander Boyd, member; 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. Others present were Wayne Capell, Ruby Gibbs, Carrie Gass, Shirley Dixon, Pat Carter, Gee Whetsel, Kareem Wilson.

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

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDED AGENDA

Chairman Windham said that the agenda should be amended to include first reading of property up to 5 acres for Project Build. He said this item should be 7A in the agenda.

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the agenda with the revision. 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 JULY 13, 2021

Councilperson Josey made the motion to approve the minutes of July 13, 2021 as mailed. Councilman Beasley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE TO RETIRING EMPLOYEE

Chairman Windham recognized Wayne Capell and presented him with a plaque noting his 30 years of service as Treasurer of Lee County. Mr. Capell thanked the citizens and staff and County Council and former staff and Administrators of the County.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE INITIAL EXPENDITURES OF ARPA FUNDS

Mr. Watkins said this resolution was to authorize the initial expenditures of ARPA funds. He said the County has been appropriated \$3.2 million of funding through ARPA and had already received \$1.6 million and would receive the other half next July.

He said that he met with Planning, Taxes & Personnel Committee and they authorized premium pay for employees. They recommended that \$2,000 go to full time public safety employees, which would be EMS, Public Works, Fire, Sheriff, E911 and Coroner.

Mr. Watkins said there were 69 full time public safety and 50 part time. The dollar amount expended is going to be \$175,500 with the full time personnel receiving \$2000 and the part time personnel receiving \$750.

Mr. Watkins said the rotating staff in all other departments would include the full time personnel receiving \$1500 and part time personnel receiving \$750. He said there was an incentive in place for those employees who have taken the COVID vaccine in the amount of \$500. He said that employees who have not received the vaccine would have until October 15 to take the vaccine and still be able to receive the \$500 bonus.

Mr. Watkins said the more employees who are vaccinated, the better off the County would be in the sense of proving service to the citizens of the County.

He also said the committee added a contingency for extreme Covid cases. He said the County had one death and one person who has been out for six months, of which around 4 months of that were spent in the hospital. He said this benefit of \$10,000 would go to any employee who would fall into this category.

Mr. Watkins also said this authorization also has to do with lost revenue as a community. He said that the auditor who does our County audit came up with \$1.4 million as a result of COVID that was lost revenue. He said the balance of funds outside of premium pay can be used for lost revenue.

Mr. Watkins said that during the budget process, we had a number of 501c groups to request funds. He said that this Resolution will allow him to set up grant programs and have these groups that the County has dealt with in the past to submit applications for those funds. He said this was a one time grant.

Chairman Windham asked that outside agencies put in writing what is requested and also showing that you are a 501c certified group.

Mr. Watkins said this is restricted capital funding and could not be used for perishable items.

Chairman Windham said this is not seed money. He said that we need a time table that people respond to. Mr. Watkins said he would set that up and meet with committee.

Councilperson Caughman made the motion to approve the Resolution approving the initial expenditure of ARPA. Councilman Beasley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY TO APPLY FOR A GRANT TO EXTEND BROADBAND ON BEHALF OF FARMERS TELEPHONE

Mr. Watkins said the County received a request from FTC and he met with the Planning, Taxes & Personnel Committee on the importance of accessing internet in the remote areas of the county, especially with children and adults working from home.

Mr. Watkins said that FTC started this program a few years ago and said that 85% of homes in Lee County have internet, so progress is being made. He said that it would probably take around \$100 million to get to the last 15% of the homes without internet, mainly end of the line connection.

He said that the County was applying for approximately \$6 million in grant funds, which would cover approximately 100 miles of road in Lee County, mainly end of the line connections. This grant is a 90/10 match and FTC will provide the match and they will own the system.

Mr. Watkins thanked the COG in helping to prepare the grant and said the deadline was August 17.

Chairman Windham said this was a tremendous opportunity to help citizens help Lee County. He said the internet is so important and it's no cost to the taxpayers.

Councilman Beasley said as FTC puts lines down, the county would be made aware of where the grant funds were being impacted.

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

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ADMINISTRATOR TO APPROVE THREE YEAR AGREEMENT WITH SHEHEEN, GODWIN & HANCOCK

Mr. Watkins said that the County has been doing three year agreements with outside auditors for several years.

He said that the County has a really good working relationship with them and based on the past three years performance, the Council is extending the three year agreement and will include the fiscal years of 2021, 2022, 2023.

Councilman Fountain made the motion to approve the Resolution. 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 FIRST READING APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE

A. SALE OF COUNTY PROPERTY, UP TO FIVE ACRES, FOR PROJECT BUILD

Mr. Watkins said that an existing industry is doing an expansion. He said there will be more information at next meeting along with a public hearing at the next meeting.

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.

Chairman Windham said that he talked to Jay Schwedler and this was recommended.

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF SECOND READING APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE

A. CONTRACT FOR DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTION SERVICES

Mr. Watkins said that he met with Planning, Taxes & Personnel and reviewed terms of the contract.

He said the County can allow the Treasurer to do it or have a third party contract. He said the County has previously kept the Delinquent Tax Collection under the Treasurer's office. He said there has always been two budgets in the past. He said that the Tax Collection season has already started.

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Mr. Watkins said that he consulted with Mr. Capell to see if he would be willing to do it this year and in the future years. Mr. Watkins said the County would take the salary of \$50,000 out of delinquent tax and pay him as a third party contractor.

Mr. Watkins said that he will draw six months salary of \$24,300 to conduct the tax collection services. He said the operational budget will remain the same and Mr. Capell will have no benefits. Mr. Watkins said this would save the County \$13,500 of what we paid last year.

Mr. Watkins said that Mr. Capell's salary will be \$48,700 for a full year, which is less than what he was making as an employee, which is net savings to the County.

The contract date will have effective dates of July 1 – December 31, 2021. He will report to Mr. Watkins and have the option to extend.

Chairman Windham said this is a very important position. He said that certain deadlines have to be met and if they are not, they would have to void a sale.

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the Contract for Delinquent Tax Collection Services for first reading. Vice-Chairman Eckley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

B. MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH DJJ FOR HOUSING LEE COUNTY YOUTH

Mr. Watkins said this is an annual contract we do update every year to house youthful offenders. Mr. Watkins said the County agrees to pay \$50 a day for housing.

Councilperson Caughman made the motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement with DJJ for Housing Lee County Youth. Councilman Beasley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON THIRD READING APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE

A. ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE LEE COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE, ARTICLE VI, SECTION 6-16 TABLE OF PERMITTED USES, SECTION 6-16.4 "AGRICULTURAL, FORESTRY AND FISHING" AS A NEW USE TO BE PERMITTED IN THE RURAL DISTRICT (RU) AS A SPECIAL EXCEPTION "E" AND AMEND ARTICLE 7 SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT REGULATION BY ADDING A NEW SECTION, SECTION 7-37 WILDLIFE REHABILITATION/EDUCATION CENTER" WITH ITS GUIDELINES

Mr. Watkins said that we are updating our zoning to allow for permitted use of rescue of injured wildlife on private property, provided that certain criteria are met and certain licenses and certifications are obtained. It has to be located on a minimum of ten acres. He said this was a recommendation from the Planning Commission. He said there were some additions to the list of criteria previously approved, as listed in the Ordinance.

Chairman Windham said the County had a public hearing in last month's meeting and they were only doing an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance and each application stands on its own.

Councilman Boyd made the motion to approve for third and final reading. Vice-Chairman Eckley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor. Chairman Windham thanked the Committee for its work on this matter.

B. ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING PURSUANT TO TITLE 12, CHAPTER 44 OF THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA 1976, AS AMENDED, THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF FEE-IN-LIEU OF AD VALOREM TAXES, AGREEMENTS BY AND BETWEEN THE COUNTY AND CERTAIN COMPANIES, COLLECTIVELY, AS SPONSOR, IDENTIFIED COLLECTIVELY FOR THE TIME BEING AS PROJECT LIME, TO PROVIDE FEE-IN-LIEU OF AD VALOREM TAXES INCENTIVES AND SPECIAL SOURCE REVENUE CREDITS; TO MODIFY A JOINT COUNTY INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS PARK OF LEE AND SUMTER COUNTIES AS TO ENLARGE THE PARK; AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Vice-Chairman Eckley said that he owned land in regards to this matter and recused himself from discussion and voting on this matter.

Mr. Watkins said this was FILO agreement for a solar project for the county. He said that we had a public hearing and second reading already and the project was with Southern Current. He said that it was \$38.8 million in solar investment, with 32 mega watts on 359 acres. He said the county would receive \$110,000 per year over the life of the 40 year agreement. Mr. Watkins also said that the County would collect \$4.4 million of taxes over the life of the 40 year agreement. He said that the County was requiring some additional requests in regards to the maintenance, which had to do the grass cutting of the site. He said the fee agreement was the same, but the vegetation clause was added.

Chairman Windham thanked Alan and the committee for their work on this matter.

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

C. ORDINANCE TO MAKE PERMANENT THE PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED EMERGENCY ORDINANCE ALLOWING FOR ELECTRONIC OR HYBRID MEETINGS, AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED HERETO

Mr. Watkins said that during the pandemic, Council was allowed to use their phones to call into meetings and participate in Council meetings and vote on matters. He said this provided a convenience that allowed Council to participate in a meeting if they are out of town and still would be able to vote.

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

Chairman Windham said that the City of Bishopville was hosting a retirement drop in celebration for Chief Calvin Collins today from 5-7.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE

Councilperson Josey said that with the virus cases rising, she encouraged everyone to continue wearing masks and be tested and vaccinated.

B. PLANNING, TAXES & PERSONNEL

Councilman Beasley thanked Councilpersons Josey and Caughman for meeting on the topics covered in today's meeting. He said that it would be savings to the County to allow Mr. Capell to continue to act as Tax Collector.

C. BUILDINGS, LAND & PROPERTY

Vice-Chairman Eckley said that the County was working with the City in getting ditches cleaned out and was currently working on the ditch beside the cotton gin.

D. PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Watkins said there has been an uptick in COVID numbers. He said the number of cases had dropped to single digits in May and June, but as of August 9, 2021, Lee County had 33 active cases.

E. RECREATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Councilman Boyd said that he will continue to work with Alan in this area and plans to visit with Recreation Department soon.

He thanked Vice-Chairman Eckley for this report in reference to water projects.

F. WAYS AND MEANS

Councilman Fountain said that he had no meetings. He said that the County was in a new budget year and would continue to monitor expenditures.

G. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Watkins said that Parks and Rec was currently registering for youth football. They were continuing to monitor COVID activity and was hopeful to have fall sports.

Mr. Watkins said that Dawn Ellen had retired from Lee County Library and the Library Board had hired Bruce Heimberger as Interim Director until that position is filled. Mr. Watkins said that he worked in Richland County before retiring and is working 20-25 hours a week at the library. Mr. Watkins said that the Library Director position is hired by the Library Board.

Mr. Watkins said that redistricting is coming up shortly and said that the County has not received any census information as of yet but should receive in September. The redistricting process should begin and go through September, October and November.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Winifred Reese, with SC Youth Challenge Academy, was present to brief Council on their agency and how it could impact our community. He said this is a federal program and is for youth ages 16-18, currently located in Richland County schools. He said the program is 17 ½ months long and they provide housing, uniforms and meals to the students. He said they work through Midlands Tec and the students get job experience while getting an education.

Chairman Windham thanked him for coming to address Council and said this is a great opportunity for youth in our community.

Carrie Gass referenced Item 5 regarding 501c and ARPA funding. She said that Salkahatchie has not been in Bishopville for the past two years. She asked the Council to consider funding this program due to the substandard housing in Lee County.

Pat Carter said that she knows the county partners with DJJ and said that it had been brought to her attention of how the children are treated there. She asked if the County knew how the children are being treated at this facility. Mr. Watkins responded that it is a state agency and we have no control of how the facility is operated.

Vice-Chairman Eckley referenced this Delta Variant and said that a lot of people think it affects just old people but he has seen that it is affecting young people ages 24-35 and young people do not want to be vaccinated.

ADJOURN

The Council meeting was adjourned at 10:38 a.m. on a motion made by Vice-Chairman Eckley, seconded by Councilman Fountain.

CHAIRMAN

VICE-CHAIRMAN

CLERK TO COUNCIL

MINUTES APPROVED

