

**LEE COUNTY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 14, 2023
FAMILY COURT ROOM - SECOND FLOOR OF THE COURTHOUSE**

Members present were Travis Windham, Chairman; Gordon Eckley, Vice-Chairman; Keel Addison, member; Charles A. Beasley, member; Jackie Josey, member. Councilman Ron Fountain and Councilperson Caughman were absent. Staff present were Alan Watkins, Administrator; Julie Stokes, Assistant Administrator/Clerk to Council, Paul Fata, Arlene Samuel, Michael Davis. Others present were Eddie and Mary Durant, Ruby Gibbs, Carrie Gass, Mattie Mack, Josh Rhodes, Robert Benfield, Tim Winslow, Gee Whetsel.

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

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 MEETING OF OCTOBER 10, 2023

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to approve the minutes from meeting of October 10, 2023 as written. Councilman Beasley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

DORLISA ADAMS, OUTREACH LIASON, AT CENTER FOR HEIRS' PROPERTY PRESERVATION, WILL BRIEF COUNCIL ON SERVICES OFFERED

Ms. Adams briefed Council on the services that are offered through their program, including free wills clinics and free forestry technical assistance. She said they have offices in Florence, Darlington and Charleson counties.

Chairman Windham thanked Ms. Adams for coming and sharing with the Council.

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF THIRD READING APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE

A. LEASE AGREEMENT WITH DUKE ENERGY FOR INSTALLATION OF LIGHTING FOR THE ON AND OFF RAMPS AT EXIT 116

Mr. Watkins said that he was still waiting on final numbers for this project and was requesting to table this matter.

The matter was tabled.

RESOLUTION DECLARING THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER AS FAMILY COURT AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Watkins said this was a resolution that counties in the state was adopting to show the awareness of the importance of the family court system and how it impacts the lives of the children in South Carolina.

Councilperson Josey made the motion to approve the Resolution declaring the month of November as Family Court Awareness Month. Vice-Chairman Eckley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ADMINISTRATOR TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT WITH EVOLVE, AN ONLINE PERMITTING COMPANY, FOR THE PURCHASE OF SOFTWARE THAT WILL ALLOW THE PUBLIC TO REQUEST FOR AND PAY FOR ONLINE PERMITTING, INSPECTION AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

Mr. Watkins said that he met with Planning, Taxes & Personnel Committee and reviewed with Arlene and RCI, the county's third party building official. He said that Brian Blackwell recommended this software package and said this will allow citizens to go to website and go online through software program and send plans for review, schedule inspections and pay building permits. He said there will be a 4% convenience fee to pay online. Mr. Watkins said the committee was looking at all permitting fees right now and possibly looking at a cost adjustment increase over the next 2-3 years. He said that the additional revenue of fees should offset the cost of the software.

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to approve the Resolution authorizing the Administrator to sign an agreement with Evolve, an online permitting company, for the purchase of software that will allow the public to request and pay for online permitting, inspection and code enforcement. Councilperson Josey seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

RESOLUTION OF INTENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SOUTH CAROLINA COUNTIES' PROPERTY AND LIABILITY TRUST FOR COUNTY PROPERTY INSURANCE NEEDS

Mr. Watkins thanked Tim Winslow, Robert Benfield and Josh Rhodes for coming to the meeting today and working with the County in this transition of insurance coverage. He said that the County has had workers comp with SCAC and had property and liability insurance with the State. He said they did a comparison and met with Planning Committee and found that the cost

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is comparable and will save the county money for the first five years. Mr. Watkins said that the maximum benefit coverages are a lot higher and the county will receive cyber security coverage.

Tim Winslow said that the SCAC appreciates the County doing service with them and looks forward to working with them in the future.

Robert Benfield talked about exposures and county reinsurance and said that the coverage was \$2,000,000 per occurrence and \$4,000,000 per year. He said that all coverages were matched or higher than what the county originally had with State Insurance Reserve Fund.

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the Resolution of intent to participate in the South Carolina Counties' Property and Liability Trust for County property insurance needs. Vice-Chairman Eckley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO SIGN TECHNICAL AGREEMENT WITH SANTEE LYNCHES COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT TO UPDATE THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE FOR LEE COUNTY

Mr. Watkins said that the Planning, Taxes & Personnel Committee had reviewed the agreement and said that all counties are required to keep Comprehensive Plan updated. He said that the Comprehensive Plan has to do with demographics, prospective new growth, etc. He said that because of the pandemic, the county was a little behind schedule in updating. He said that the update will involve public meetings and will require 3 readings and a public hearing.

Mr. Watkins also said that this will be zoning review that entails development regulations. He said the cost to update the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning revisions will be approximately \$34,000 and will include technical services through the COG, who will conduct public hearings and meetings and will provide council with information and attend the council meetings. He said that Dr. Jeff Parkey will be the main point of contact.

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the Resolution authorizing the County Administrator to sign technical agreement with Santee Lynches Council of Government to update the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance for Lee County. Councilperson Josey seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

APPROVAL OF APPOINTMENT OF ALYSSA LAVERGNE TO THE LEE COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD FOR DISTRICT 2

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to approve Alyssa Lavergne to the Lee County Library Board for District 2. Councilman Addison 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 on October 13, she attended the Council on Aging groundbreaking. She also commented that Lee County lost one of its retirees, Jo McGuirt, who retired from Lee County Magistrate's Court.

B. PLANNING, TAXES & PERSONNEL

Councilman Beasley said that his committee did have some meetings and voted on those items in today's meeting. He also said that he attended an event at the Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Park and said it was well attended and recognized Mrs. Gass and Mrs. Gibbs in the meeting.

Mr. Ruby Gibbs thanked the County for keeping up the property of the birth site of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune. She said it was founded in 1935 and is now a venue that is used for many events. She said they wanted to recognize all of the people who have helped to make it happen.

C. BUILDINGS, LAND & PROPERTY

Vice-Chairman Eckley said the fence at the airport is complete and will keep animals off the runway. He also said that parking lot at the tennis court should be complete between now and Christmas. He said the County was working with three prospects.

D. PUBLIC SAFETY

Councilperson Caughman not here. Mr. Watkins said the EMS headquarters passed the final inspection and the roof should be done in a week. He said they were also going to do a remodel of the kitchen area. He also said that the tennis court unveiling would be soon.

E. RECREATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Councilman Addison said that he had no meetings. He said that the tennis courts and pickle ball courts are open and he has received a lot of positive comments on the courts.

Mr. Watkins said they have started painting at the old Bishopville High School and the floors will also be refinished.

F. WAYS AND MEANS

Councilman Fountain not here. Mr. Watkins said that we are in a new budget year and everything is going well.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Eddie Durant, who lives at 90 Price Lane, was present to discuss the road going to his house and inquired about his road being rocked or paved.

Mr. Watkins said that rocking has been approved by the C Fund Committee and said the only road that has been paved in the last ten years is Docs Drive, and that is because a school is located on that road. Mr. Watkins said that he would have public works look at the road.

Mr. Durant also said that he was having problems with stray cats and was told by animal control to handle the problem himself. Mr. Watkins said that Animal Control falls under the Sheriff's Department.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Watkins said the County did close on the property transfer on Hogslat and said they will begin construction after the first of the year.

Mr. Watkins said that there have been multiple visitors at past council meetings with complaints about the Animal Shelter. He said that the State Director of State Humane Society did a pop in visit at the shelter and sent him an email after her visit stating what great condition the shelter was in and how impressed she was with the shelter and the staff. Mr. Watkins reminded everyone that the shelter is open Monday through Friday from 10-2 and encouraged everyone to visit.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m. on a motion made by Vice-Chairman Eckley, seconded by Councilperson Josey.

CHAIRMAN

VICE-CHAIRMAN

CLERK TO COUNCIL

MINUTES APPROVED