

**LEE COUNTY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 13, 2022
FAMILY COURT ROOM – SECOND FLOOR OF THE COURTHOUSE**

Members present were Travis Windham, Chairman; Gordon Eckley, Vice-Chairman; Alexander Boyd, member; 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; Michael Davis, Paul Fata, Arlene Samuel, Lee Richardson. Others present were Gee Whetsel, Naomi Price, Carrie Gass, Roy Dixon, Shirley Dixon, Mattie Mack, Nathaniel Best, Andre Laws.

FOIA

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

OPEN MEETING, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Windham opened the meeting 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 REGULAR MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 10, 2022

Councilperson Caughman made the motion to approve the minutes from regular meeting of November 10, 2022. Councilman Beasley 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. AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 44 OF TITLE 12, SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS, 1976, AS AMENDED, THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A FEE AGREEMENT BETWEEN LEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA AND PROJECT SWAN – LEE AND CERTAIN AFFILIATES, THE INCLUSION OF SPECIAL SOURCE REVENUE CREDITS AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Mr. Watkins said this is a solar development that will be located in the Ashland Stokes Bridge area that will be partially located in Lee and Darlington Counties. The property located on the Lee County side will be a \$53 million solar investment. It will be 46 mega watts and will generate approximately \$165,000 a year in taxes in Lee County. He said the land is zoned for agricultural use.

Mr. Watkins said that solar farms do not generate jobs but do contribute to tax base and said that the agreements for the solar farms are pretty standard at this point.

He said the second reading will be at next council meeting and there will be a public hearing in which the exact area and the parcels will be named.

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

B. AN ORDINANCE TRANSFERRING AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT THE CITY OF BISHOPVILLE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS TO THE LEE COUNTY REGISTRATION ELECTION COMMISSION

Chairman Windham said that the County had received a request from the City of Bishopville regarding this matter.

Mr. Watkins said that this agreement will authorize the Election Commission to take on responsibility of the city elections. He said this commission is picked by the legislative delegation.

He said that even though the City of Bishopville is requesting that the County be responsible for City Elections, the City will be responsible for any costs associated, such as poll workers and poll locations, etc.

Mr. Watkins said the City of Bishopville currently does not have an Election Commission.

Councilperson Josey 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.

RESOLUTION IDENTIFYING “PROJECT SWAN”, A PROPOSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT TO BE LOCATED IN THE COUNTY

Mr. Watkins said this is a one-time document outlining the project. He said it lets the company know we are moving forward, or an intent to go forward.

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve Resolution identifying Project Swan. 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 THIRD READING APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE

A. ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO ZONING ORDINANCE, ARTICLE VI, SECTION 6-16 TABLE OF PERMITTED USES, SECTION 2-21-3, “PRIVATE GOLF COURSE SERVICES” AS A NEW USE TO BE PERMITTED OUTRIGHT IN A RURAL DISTRICT AND AMENDMENT TO INCLUDE SECTION 2-21-3 “GOLF COURSE” IN THE “AMUSEMENT AND RECREATION SERVICES” SECTION.

Mr. Watkins said this zoning text amendment makes a golf course a permitted use but will require certain buffering from surrounding properties. He said that there should be a few jobs created and it would raise the values of surrounding properties around the community.

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 said that the land had been purchased and was being cleared now. He said that the tax value of the property will increase as it will no longer be under ag use.

RESOLUTION APPROVING THE AGREEMENT TO ALLOW ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION AT DESIGNATED LOCATION

Mr. Watkins said that Duke Progress had reached out to him to find a location to install a couple of charging stations to charge vehicles. He said that he had recently seen an announcement in Florence about an economic development project for electric cars.

He said that an app is used on your cell phone to locate charging stations. He said that there will be two charging stations located in the Sheriff’s parking lot. Mr. Watkins said this area is well lit and will be convenient for people to use. He said this will be a \$350,000 investment with a five-year agreement and during the five-year agreement, Duke Progress will be responsible for operation of the charging stations.

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion to approve the resolution approving the agreement to allow electric vehicle charging station. Councilperson Josey seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE TO ALEXANDER BOYD FOR HIS SERVICE ON COUNTY COUNCIL

Chairman Windham presented a plaque to Councilman Boyd and said that this would be his last meeting as Councilman. Chairman Windham commented that Councilman Boyd had served as a former City Councilman, Mayor and now as former County Councilman. He said that it had been a pleasure having him on Council and wished him well in his future endeavors.

Councilman Boyd said that he encouraged the Council to continue leadership with Mr. Watkins and continue to provide leadership in the County. He said that he has enjoyed being on Council.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE

Councilperson Josey recognized Andre Laws, Mayor of Lynchburg, and said they hosted a community meeting in Lynchburg concerning the water situation.

Andre Laws said that it was a meeting with representatives from state and federal agencies on hand to discuss the needs of current water system and possible grant opportunities. He said that the community of Lynchburg was invited and said that hopefully Lynchburg would get the grant.

Nathaniel Best said that he attended the meeting and said the water and sewer situation needed to be updated. He said he was writing legislators on behalf of Lynchburg to ask for assistance in this endeavor.

B. PLANNING, TAXES & PERSONNEL

No meetings.

C. BUILDINGS, LAND & PROPERTY

Vice-Chairman Eckley said that EMS building is coming along and progress is being made. He said The Link is continuing to recruit.

D. PUBLIC SAFETY

No meetings. Councilperson Caughman talked to Tim DuBose and he could not be here today but had lots of information to share and said he will update everyone in January meeting.

E. RECREATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Councilman Boyd said that a lot of park equipment had arrived and has started being installed.

F. WAYS AND MEANS

No meetings.

G. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Watkins said that he attended a luncheon at Lee County Transit on November 10. He said that Congressman Jim Clyburn was guest speaker and the luncheon was to honor former Councilman David Addison. He said that it was well attended and said he wanted to thank Bettye Scott for coordinating the luncheon.

Mr. Watkins said that he participated in the December 10 Christmas parade. He said there is a Christmas tree on the front lawn of the Courthouse, donated by Dr. Tracey Powell.

Mr. Watkins reported that the County did receive two new fire trucks and said we have two more coming. He said they are fully equipped.

He said that paperwork on USDA grant has been finalized and the County received \$1.6 million in federal grants towards public safety equipment.

Chairman Windham asked what the cost of a fully equipped fire truck is, and Mr. Watkins said the cost is approximately \$500,000.

Chairman Windham said the County has to be very careful of how those USDA grant monies are spent because they are audited.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Roy Dixon – said he attended a meeting at Chappell Park and noticed a lot of construction and wanted to know what is going on. He said that he thought it would be a good idea for the company doing construction to put an advertising sign to let people know what is going on at Chappell Park.

He said he attended the Duke Energy meeting talking about their rates going up. He said that with the solar panels he hoped the County doesn't sit back and put stuff in here and put burden on citizens. He asked if the solar panel are going to be incentive?

Carrie Gass – Duke Energy – she said you used to be able to pay your electric bill downtown but now they do not accept anything but cash and we need a place to pay bills.

Nathaniel Best – how will the residents of Ashland Stokes Bridge benefit or county at large from the solar?

Mattie Mack – asked about building more fire stations and where they would be located. Mr. Watkins said that the Fire Department identifies parcels outside of five-mile radius. He said that insurance is based on value of home and where a fire station is located. He said that it costs around \$125,000 to build a fire station and then you have the expense of the trucks, etc. , so to do a fire station, would be around \$500,000 - \$1,000,000.

Nathaniel Best – said he concurs with Mr. Watkins and referenced location of fire hydrants.

Lee Richardson – said the Library opened the night of Christmas parade and said they had people drop in to visit and said they had a very nice open house last week. She also said they had a nice back drop for photos at the library if anyone was interested in having a photo made.

Mattie Mack – she said this was the last week of rental assistance.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. COUNCIL WILL ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION ON A PROPERTY MATTER

Council entered Executive Session at 10:15 on a motion made by Vice-Chairman Eckley, seconded by Councilman Boyd. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

Council came out of Executive Session at 10:28 a.m. on a motion made by Councilman Beasley, seconded by Councilperson Josey. No votes were taken and a property matter was discussed.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned 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.

CHAIRMAN

VICE-CHAIRMAN

CLERK TO COUNCIL

MINUTES APPROVED