

LEE COUNTY COUNCIL  
PUBLIC HEARING  
FEBRUARY 14, 2023  
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; Tim DuBose, Brandon Holloman, Michael Davis. Others present were Brad Bochette, David Rankin, Lee Gainey, Dwayne and Kathy Huggins, Nathaniel Best, Roy and Shirley Dixon, Carrie Gass, Justin Montgomery, Gee Whetsel

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

The public hearing was opened at 9:30 a.m. on a motion made by Councilman Beasley, seconded by Vice-Chairman Eckley.

PUBLIC HEARING

- 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 that the Council had had two readings already. He said that the County has 5 solar farms to date and one under construction. He said the Fee Agreement provides tax incentives and lower the taxes they would have paid on property. He said the tax credit will apply to the investment of \$53 million. He said that approximately 2/3 of the solar farm will be located in Lee County and the other 1/3 will be located in Darlington County.

Jesse Montgomery, President of National Renewable Energy Corporation was present and briefed Council on the project. He said it would be located between Ashland and Hartsville.

Public Comments:

Roy Dixon asked what benefit will county or citizens be able to purchase panels for their home.

Jesse Montgomery said there is an agreement with this company to pay property taxes \$163,000 annually. He said this is a 60 megawatt solar farm. He said this is ag use land, which is the lowest tax base. He said that county would receive \$163,000 for 40 years.

Councilperson Caughman asked how they were going to keep it clean. Mr. Montgomery said they work with SC certified engineer to do a design with ground cover. He said they will do six

grass cuttings per year. Mr. Watkins said that if it's not done, they will notify company and if they don't cut grass, fines will occur.

Carrie Gass – as a taxpayer, how will this benefit taxpayers ? Alan Watkins said this will generate additional tax revenue for county and school district.

The public hearing was closed at 9:53 a.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.

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LEE COUNTY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
FEBRUARY 14, 2023

**FOIA**

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

**OPEN MEETING, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEIGANCE TO THE FLAG**

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**

Councilperson Josey made the motion to approve the agenda as mailed. Councilperson Caughman 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 JANUARY 10, 2023**

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

**PROCLAMATION OF CONGRATULATIONS TO LEE ACADEMY VARSITY FOOTBALL TEAM**

Chairman Windham recognized Coach David Rankin, Lee Gainey, Athletic Director, and Headmaster Brad Bochette and presented them a Proclamation to Lee Academy Varsity Football team for winning the SCISA 1A State Championship.

PRESENTATION OF RETIREMENT PLAQUE TO DWAYNE HUGGINS

Chairman Windham, along with Alan Watkins, presented Dwayne Huggins with a retirement plaque recognizing his 38 years of service. Mr. Huggins thanked the Council and said that he enjoyed his years with the County and was looking forward to retirement.

REQUEST FOR MOTION OF ADOPTION OF FIRST READING APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE

A. PURCHASE OF PROPERTY FOR CONSTRUCTION OF VOLUNTEER FIRE STATION IN DISTRICT 6

Mr. Watkins said that was included in the capital penny sales tax that renewed in 2018. He said that the County wanted to place volunteer stations in areas with the most parcels that are outside of five miles that will be an insurance savings to residents' home insurance as well as provide fire protection.

He said that the County was purchasing one acre of land for \$5000 from Unionville AMEC Church, located on Swimming Pen Road and Raccoon Road, and this was a recommendation from the Fire Department.

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

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON THIRD 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 COURSE REVENUE CREDITS, AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Chairman Windham said that the public hearing was just held on this matter.

Councilperson Caughman made the motion to approve for third and final reading.

Councilperson Josey 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 REGISTRATON ELECTION COMMISSION

Mr. Watkins said that City of Bishopville has municipal elections coming up this summer and City Council's preference is to contract with the County and allow the County Election Commission to conduct elections for the City.

Councilman Beasley 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 all elections are run by the Election Commission.

#### APPROVAL TO REAPPOINT DAVID BRANHAM AND FRITZ SMITH TO LEE COUNTY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS FOR ANOTHER TERM

Councilman Fountain made the motion to reappoint David Branham and Fritz Smith to the Lee County Board of Zoning Appeals for another term. Councilman Beasley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

Chairman Windham said this is a five-member board, all serve at large.

#### APPROVAL TO REAPPOINT MATT HICKS TO LEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION FOR ANOTHER TERM

Councilperson Josey made the motion to reappoint Matt Hicks to the Lee County Planning Commission for another term. Councilperson Caughman seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

##### A. HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE

Councilperson Josey said that she attended the MLK Breakfast on January 19 and said there was very good participation.

##### B. PLANNING, TAXES & PERSONNEL

Councilman Beasley said that he had no meetings but said he would have some meetings coming up in the next two weeks.

##### C. BUILDINGS, LAND & PROPERTY

Vice-Chairman Eckley said that he had no meetings but said the County had an active prospect looking at the spec building that looked promising at this time.

##### D. PUBLIC SAFETY

Councilperson Caughman said that she had no meetings. Brandon Holloman gave an update for the Fire Department. He said that the Fire Department had responded to 125 calls since first of the year, mainly home fires. He also reported that four new trucks are in service that were purchased with the capital penny sales tax. He said they were now receiving equipment that was funded with the USDA grant. Mr. Holloman also reported that the Fire Department

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received a \$13,000 BE SAFE grant and they were able to install 450 smoke alarms in homes. He commented they were also working on putting up road signs that have been removed.

Tim DuBose said they are working on Relay for Life now and encouraging participation.

He said that most of the equipment that was purchased with the USDA grant has come in. He said that progress was being made on the EMS headquarters.

Mr. DuBose said that Lee County was awarded EMS Peds Ready ALS Service. He said that only eight counties in the state have been awarded this service. That allows EMS the capability to handle pretty much pediatric emergency.

He also said that E911 is going to be receiving system upgrades and will go online on May 15.

Chairman Windham asked Mr. DuBose how many full-time employees he had. Mr. DuBose said that he 21 full time EMS and 6 part time and 8 full time E911 Dispatch. Chairman Windham asked Brandon Holloman about full time positions with Fire, and he responded that he had 7 full time and 45-50 volunteer firemen.

#### E. RECREATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Councilman Addison said that he was the newest member here, and a lot of things had been planned before he got here. He said that six parks had been upgraded and that was an attraction for families.

Mr. Watkins said that Levy Park had new playground equipment had been installed, which will cut down on maintenance.

He said that Parks and Rec are now doing baseball registration.

#### F. WAYS AND MEANS

Councilman Fountain had no meetings but said that work on the budget will begin soon.

#### G. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Watkins said that the County applied for and was awarded 14 USDA Grants.

He said that Public Works has started receiving new compactors and open top roll off containers.

He said that he attended an Insurance Reserve Worker's Comp meeting and Managers Administrators conference.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Roy Dixon asked if the County was going to purchase fire truck to go in new fire station. Brandon Holloman said that the Fire Department just received four fire trucks and had used equipment on hand, so that already have it taken care of.

Mr. Dixon had a question about the county elections.

Mr. Watkins said that County never did election. The County Election Commission runs the election. County Council does not appoint anyone, they only pay them. Mr. Watkins said the County provides funding for them to operate.

Shirley Dixon asked if the Fire Department goes out and installs carbon monoxide detectors. Brandon Holloman said they do install them upon request when they have them.

Carrie Gass said she has received a lot of calls about home repair. She said that Salkahatchie program is coming the last week of June.

Roy Dixon asked what happened a couple of months ago when HUD came for a meeting here. He said that none of the officials in Lee County came to the meeting or anyone from the City was there.

Mr. Watkins said the public hearing was held by COG. He said that they are an advocate for Lee County and there was no need for anyone from the County to attend because we deal with Santee Lynches on a regular basis. Mr. Watkins said this was a needs assessment meeting which would allow the public to speak directly to them.

Mr. Watkins said that there was some information on FaceBook that was misrepresented and people thought they were getting their homes repaired. That was not the purpose of the meeting.

Nathaniel Best applauded Council for the job they are doing. He said that he wanted to share an idea about Fleming Middle School. He said that he had reached out to the school board and churches about possibly making it a One Stop Shop for Lynchburg that citizens can come to for assistance if they are not able to go to Bishopville, Sumter, or Florence.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 10:44 a.m. on a motion made by Vice-Chairman Eckley, seconded by Councilman Addison.

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CHAIRMAN

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VICE-CHAIRMAN

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CLERK TO COUNCIL

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MINUTES APPROVED

