



Finance, Administration, and Economic Development Committee

Beaufort County, SC

This meeting was held both in person at the County Council Chambers, 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, and virtually through Zoom.

Monday, September 18, 2023

3:00 PM

MINUTES

Watch the video stream available on the County's website to hear the Council's discussion of a specific topic or the complete meeting. <https://beaufortcountysc.new.swagit.com/videos/272313>

1. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chairman Lawson called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Chairman Mark Lawson
Vice-Chairman Anna Maria Tabernik
Council Member David P. Bartholomew
Council Member Gerald Dawson
Ex-Officio Joseph F. Passiment
Council Member Paula Brown
Council Member Alice Howard
Council Member Lawrence McElynn

ABSENT

Council Member York Glover
Council Member Logan Cunningham
Council Member Thomas Reitz

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Committee Chairman Lawson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. FOIA

Committee Chairman Lawson noted that public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: It was moved by Council Member Passiment, seconded by Committee Vice-Chair Tabernik, to approve the agenda.

The Vote - The motion was approved without objection.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: It was moved by Council Member Passiment, seconded by Committee Vice-Chair Tabernik, to approve the minutes of July 26, 2023.

The Vote - The motion was approved without objection.

6. CITIZEN COMMENT PERIOD

Please watch the video stream available on the County's website to view the full comment.

<https://beaufortcountysc.new.swagit.com/videos/272313?ts=714>

1. Skip Hoagland (arrived late, so he spoke after agenda item 7)

7. DIVISION UPDATE FROM ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS DALE BUTTS & PATRICK HILL

Please watch the video stream available on the County's website to view the full update.

<https://beaufortcountysc.new.swagit.com/videos/272313?ts=144>

Assistant County Administrator Dale Butts briefed the Committee on the Assessor's Office's community engagement events to discuss the reassessment notices, which will take place in early October at Beaufort County libraries.

Committee Chairman Lawson and ACA Butts discussed the appeal process for the reassessments.

Council Member Passiment commented that Assessor Ebony Sanders' presentation on reassessment illustrated the process and procedure for anyone who has questions.

Assistance County Administrator Patrick Hill briefed the Committee on Beaufort County's results in the nationwide cybersecurity review, which measures the gaps and capabilities of local government cybersecurity programs, the implementation of data loss protection policies and the FOIA Exterro System, and the County's cybersecurity insurance through Tokyo Marine.

Council Member Passiment and ACA Hill discussed ADA compliance and the County's website capabilities.

Committee Vice-Chair Tabernik asked about the FOIA process for text messages on County-provided phones. ACA Hill replied that the individual would be contacted because the IT Department does not have the capability to access text messages.

Committee Chairman Lawson asked if ACA Hill and the IT Department have the resources they need to prevent cyberattacks. ACA Hill replied that the IT Department has the tools and support we need to protect County and citizen data.

Council Member Brown and Kyle Jackson (Risk Management) discussed the County's cybersecurity insurance through Tokyo Marine.

8. DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION OF YEAR TO DATE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR FY 2024

Please watch the video stream available on the County's website to view the full discussion.

<https://beaufortcountysc.new.swagit.com/videos/272313?ts=886>

Interim Deputy County Administrator Denise Christmas presented the expenditures and revenues for the General Fund and Capital Improvement Fund for July and August and the rollover of purchase orders in the Capital Improvement Fund.

Council Member Howard asked for examples of the rolled-over purchase orders. Interim Deputy County Administrator Christmas replied that the County's purchase order for ambulances was rolled over.

Interim Deputy County Administrator Christmas also provided an overview of Fiscal Year 2023's year-end, including the revenues, expenditures, and fund balance. Interim Deputy County Administrator Christmas also commented on the upcoming audit for Fiscal Year 2023, the account conversion in Munis to reduce the number of line items, and the implementation of project accounting.

Committee Vice-Chair Tabernik voiced her support for the reduction of line items and for the Finance Department's provision of project accounting training. Committee Vice-Chair Tabernik also asked if the presentation would be made available on the County's website. Interim Deputy County Administrator Christmas confirmed that it would be available and would contain links to the digital budget book and live data.

Council Member Passiment confirmed with Interim Deputy County Administrator Christmas that there are no concerns with the County collecting only 79.5% of the revenue in Fiscal Year 2023.

Council Member Howard asked if enterprise funds, including solid waste and stormwater, could be reported to the Committee. Interim Deputy County Administrator Christmas commented that she could present all the enterprise funds.

9. RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF PURCHASE AND PAYMENT OF HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT AT BEAUFORT COUNTY'S PORT ROYAL CENTER IN THE AMOUNT OF \$799,052. (FISCAL IMPACT: \$799,052 to be paid out of Capital Improvement Project Fund 10401600-54436; account balance is \$4,820,179)

Please watch the video stream available on the County's website to view the full discussion.

<https://beaufortcountysc.new.swagit.com/videos/272313?ts=1774>

Assistant County Administrator Chuck Atkinson commented on a handicap-accessible playground structure that was procured via a Sourcewell national cooperative contract and a procedural sequencing error that led the structure to be installed before the Council provided approval.

Council Member Brown confirmed that the County had not paid the invoice for the equipment and asked if it would be possible to have the structure removed. ACA Atkinson replied that there was money appropriated from the Capital Improvement Fund for a number of different playgrounds, including a handicap-accessible playground, and his hope that the sequencing error would not overshadow the need for inclusive facilities.

Committee Vice-Chair Tabernik noted that the County is under scrutiny because of issues with procurements, contracts, purchase orders, and bids and that the procurement process was not followed. Committee Vice-Chair Tabernik added the person responsible should be held accountable.

Committee Chairman Lawson asked what staff can do to ensure this type of error does not happen again. ACA Atkinson explained that there should be education to ensure everyone understands the process that must be followed. ACA Atkinson added that appropriate action is being taken in terms of disciplinary measures.

Committee Vice-Chair Tabernik and ACA Atkinson discussed Sourcewell and the playground equipment vendor.

Council Member Bartholomew asked about the shipping expenditure of \$21,000 for the playground equipment. ACA Atkinson commented that the large scale of the facility resulted in the high shipping cost.

Council Member Passiment commented on the potential benefit of a master purchase order.

Council Member McElynn asked if Council Members would be able to receive information in an executive session about the accountability actions that were taken. Interim County Administrator Robinson replied that there could be limited discussions about the personnel actions in an executive session.

The Committee discussed the possibility of entering into an executive session to discuss the personnel issues.

Motion: It was moved by Council Member Howard, seconded by Council Member Dawson, to recommend approval of purchase and payment of handicap accessible playground equipment at Beaufort County's Port Royal Center in the amount of \$799,052.

Discussion: Council Member Brown voiced her objection to the motion.

Council Member Howard noted that the Port Royal's Town Council members favor the handicap playground.

The Vote - Voting Yea: Chairman Lawson, Vice-Chairman Tabernik, Council Member Bartholomew, Council Member Dawson, Council Member Passiment, Council Member Howard, and Council Member McElynn. Voting Nay: Council Member Brown. The motion passed by 7:1.

10. RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT A GRANT FOR PROJECT COMIDA (*FISCAL IMPACT: No fiscal impact*)

Please watch the video stream available on the County's website to view the full discussion.

<https://beaufortcountysc.new.swagit.com/videos/272313?ts=3059>

Special Projects Director Hank Amundson discussed how the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation helped a business gain a \$50,000 grant and that Council County needs to vote to accept the grant funding. Director Amundson also explained that the Economic Development Cooperation will assist the business in providing proof of the funds to be reimbursed.

Council Member McElynn asked for an explanation of Project Comida.

John O'Toole, Executive Director of Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation, commented that the business is hoping to set up a food processing and meal preparation facility but is struggling to find a location suitable for the \$8.1 million project. Mr. O'Toole also commented that this item is to ensure that the County is comfortable being the fiduciary agent when the funds are distributed.

Motion: It was moved by Committee Vice-Chair Tabernik, seconded by Council Member Brown, to recommend approval of a resolution to accept a grant for Project Comida.

The Vote - The motion was approved without objection.

11. DISCUSSION OF DEVELOPING SITES FOR DIVERSE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BEAUFORT COUNTY

Please watch the video stream available on the County's website to view the full discussion.

<https://beaufortcountysc.new.swagit.com/videos/272313?ts=3409>

Executive Director O'Toole briefed the Committee on the investment into Beaufort County, including the \$341 million already invested and the \$100 million in the pipeline, which supports new jobs and job retention. Executive Director O'Toole also commented on the Economic Development Corporation's recommendations for 1,500 acres worth of real estate.

12. RECOMMEND APPROVAL TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP WITH THE SOUTHERN CAROLINA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE (*FISCAL IMPACT: funds for this come from the General Fund account #10001198-55240. \$495,000 is budgeted for the year in this account. \$120,000 is for the Southern Carolina. \$375,000 is for the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation*)

Please watch the video stream available on the County's website to view the full discussion.

<https://beaufortcountysc.new.swagit.com/videos/272313?ts=3891>

Special Projects Director Amundson commented on the renewal of the contract with the Southern Carolina Development Alliance for a five-year term with no fee increases.

President and CEO of the Southern Carolina Development Alliance, Danny Black, briefed the Committee on the changes made to the contract in other counties and the planned updates to the contract with Beaufort County to keep the language consistent. Mr. Black also discussed how the contract will provide the same amount of money but will be for a five-year instead of a three-year term.

Motion: It was moved by Council Member Passiment, seconded by Council Member Brown, to recommend approval to renew membership with the Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance.

The Vote - The motion was approved without objection.

13. DISCUSSION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS' COMPENSATION

Please watch the video stream available on the County's website to view the full discussion.

<https://beaufortcountysc.new.swagit.com/videos/272313?ts=4167>

County Attorney Brittany Ward commented that the Finance Committee meeting on August 12, 2019, referenced the need to amend the base salary for elected officials. County Attorney Ward noted that two elected officials (the Auditor and the Coroner) are not receiving the same salary as other elected officials.

Council Member McElynn noted that if someone leaves an elected position, the COLA increases and other salary adjustments remain tied to the position, but the 5% bonus for re-election would be deducted.

County Attorney Ward commented that the ordinance establishing base salaries was not amended, so the salaries of officials elected since 2019 are based on the 2015 salaries with the added COLAs.

Council Member Passiment confirmed that the Council did not adopt an ordinance to adjust the base salary in 2019, so the base salary from 2015 still must be used.

Council Member McElynn asked, and County Attorney Ward confirmed that the presentation reflects the 2019 base salary recommendation and the COLAs and other salary adjustments. Council Member McElynn and County Attorney Ward also discussed the re-calculation of base salary for the probate judge.

Council Member Passiment suggested moving this item forward to the Council and asked staff to provide information by Monday, September 25th's Council meeting.

Motion: It was moved by Council Member Passiment, seconded by Council Member Brown, to send this to Council for approval at Monday's meeting with the caveat that the salaries of the auditor and the coroner be corrected to the desired salaries.

County Attorney Ward commented that the salary changes are to be implemented at the time the Auditor and Coroner were elected so that they will be paid retroactively.

Interim County Administrator Robinson noted that the base salary for elected officials would become part of the annual budget discussions moving forward.

Council Member Tabernik asked whether the payment of the filing fee was based on salary and whether the payment provided was correct. Interim Deputy County Administrator Christmas replied that the filing fee was based on salaries but that staff reached out to the State Election to determine the base salary amount used.

Committee Chairman Lawson noted that this change would not affect the salaries of Council Members.

The Vote - The motion was approved without objection.

14. DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF COUNTY COUNCIL'S RULES AND PROCEDURES DRAFT DOCUMENT (FISCAL IMPACT: *No Fiscal Impact*)

Please watch the video stream available on the County's website to view the full discussion.

<https://beaufortcountysc.new.swagit.com/videos/272313?ts=5341>

Council Member Passiment briefed the Committee on the planned update for the Rules and Procedures Manual since it was adopted in 1985 and last updated in 2015. Council Member Passiment commented that a draft iteration of the manual has been shared with Council Members and that they will take comments into consideration for future drafts.

15. EXECUTIVE SESSION

PURSUANT TO S. C. CODE SECTION 30-4-70(A)(2) TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS INCIDENT TO PROPOSED CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS AND PROPOSED PURCHASE OF REAL PROPERTY (PROJECT TEAMWORK)

PURSUANT TO S. C. CODE SECTION 30-4-70(A)(2) TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS INCIDENT TO PROPOSED CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS (BURR FORMAN ANNUAL LOBBYING CONTRACT)

PURSUANT TO S. C. CODE SECTION 30-4-70(A)(2) TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS INCIDENT TO PROPOSED CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS (LOWCOUNTRY INSIDE TRACK, LTD.)

PURSUANT TO S. C. CODE SECTION 30-4-70(A)(2) TO RECEIVE LEGAL ADVICE WHERE THE ADVICE RELATES TO THREATENED OR POTENTIAL LITIGATION (FORMER EMPLOYEES AND FORMER INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR)

Motion: It was moved by Council Member Passiment, seconded by Committee Vice-Chair Tabernik, to enter into an executive session.

The Vote - The motion was approved without objection.

16. MATTERS ARISING OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

No matters arising out of executive session.

17. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at or around 5:30 p.m.

Ratified: November 20, 2023