



**REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, April 15, 2025; 6:30 P.M.
Bennettsville Public Safety Complex**

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER Mayor Abraham
2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Zion Mack & Sarah Hall
3. ROLL CALL
District 1-Wanada Weaver
District 2-Tyrone R. Davis
District 3-Allen Taylor
Mayor Tyron Abraham
District 4-William Jennings, Jr.
District 5-Cy'Heim McRae
District 6-Gregory Scott, Sr.
Pictures were taken with the High School volunteers. Mayor Abraham welcomed Ms. Weaver back.
4. APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES
 - A. **Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, March 18, 2025-** Mr. Davis made a motion to approve the Regular City Council Meeting minutes of Tuesday, March 18, 2025. Mr. Scott seconded the motion.
Correction: Mr. McRae voted no because he wasn't a part of council at that time to approve the Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, March 18, 2025. The motion passed.

Mr. Simon amended the Agenda to remove the Passage of Resolutions (Ground Lease for Affordable Housing) will be looked at on a later date.
Mayor Abraham asked that we move the Executive Session to the end. Also, move Mr. Milhous up after Item 6 to discuss the audit. Motion made by Mayor Abraham. Move by Mr. Davis. Mr. Scott seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
5. PUBLIC REQUESTS/ PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
 - A. **Employee Anniversaries-** Mrs. Angela Ward, Asst. City Administrator expressed appreciation for all April employees' Anniversaries. She thanked all employees for their dedication and hard work for the City of Bennettsville. Elaine German

(Police Department) 15 years; Michael Coit (Public Works) 3 years; Walter Baker (Police Department) 2 years; Jeremy Jones (Public Works) 2 years; Denise Miller (Planning & Zoning) 3 years; Rickie Huckabee (Wastewater) 1 year after Retirement.

An award was presented to Lt. Elaine German by Councilman Allen Taylor for her 15 years of service.

B. New Hires & Promotions (March)

New Hires

Trey Cox (Detective Division/ Police); Roger Hale (Sanitation Operator/Public Works)

Promotions

Jerusha McArthur (Facilities and Maintenance Manager)

Sammy Crosland (Interim/Acting Police Chief)

Scott Bowen (Sergeant First Class, Training Officer)

C. Special Recognition

Mayor Abraham presented an award to Ms. Pearlie Lawson (County Councilwoman and Community Leader) for her dedicated hard work in the community and for always trying to make a difference. She represents District 4 for Marlboro County.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items Only)

No one signed up.

7. REPORTS AND INFORMATION PRESENTATIONS

- A. **2024 Annual Audit-** Mr. Bob Millhouse, the city auditor, presented the audit report for the year ended April 30, 2024. The financial statements were presented fairly, with a fund balance of just under \$3.3 million, an increase from the previous year. The general fund balance sheet shows assets of over \$4.8 million and liabilities of \$1.571 million. The combined utility fund's assets and liabilities were also discussed, with a net position of \$12.7 million. Some changes that took place last year regarding earn capital grant contributions from your ARPA monies from your rural infrastructure authority, some CDBG monies totaling 1.8 to \$2 million compared to about 717,000 a year ago and we had this transfer out from the utility fund at 1.9 million, which is the budget that was approved, and that covers the overhead to the general fund. Change in net position for the year ended April 30, 2024, was just a slight deficit of \$4,761.

8. SECOND READING AND PASSAGE IN FULL OF ORDINANCES

No Business

9. FIRST READING AND ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCES

A. **FY 2025-2026 Budget-**

The budget for the fiscal years 2025 and 2026 is before the council for consideration. Council has received a revised copy that includes some minor changes; however, most of it remains the same. A committee meeting was held recently, and Chairman Jennings provided details on that.

Mr. Simon stated, "As the administrator, it is my responsibility to present a balanced budget based on our operational needs and projected revenue. To ensure complete transparency, I want to quickly go over some key points from the memo I emailed to the Council and the public." The process is as follows: I will present a balanced budget, and the Council can

recommend changes. He will then incorporate those changes. If everything goes smoothly, we will have a second reading on either the 22nd or the 29th, depending on approval from the first reading. An approval is not needed tonight. Regarding the proposed budget, it includes a 6.2% increase from last year. Importantly, there will be no increases to the millage rate. However, there will be some increases in certain fees and permits.

Approving Action: Council members expressed their concerns. They discussed what they agreed on and disagreed on. Mayor Abraham made a motion to approve the First Reading for the FY 2025-2026 budget. Mr. Scott motioned to approve the FY 2025-2026 Annual Budget. Seconded by Mr. Davis. Three opposed: Ms. Weaver, Mr. Taylor, and Mr. Jennings. Motion carried.

10. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS

- A. **Ground Lease for Affordable Housing-** The Agenda item was amended to be removed And visited at a later date.

11. GENERAL BUSINESS DISPENSED BY MOTION

- A. **Personnel Matter** – Chief of Police (Executive Session)
- B. **Mayor Pro Tempore Appointment-** Mr. Taylor motioned that Mr. Bill Jennings serve as Mayor Pro Tempore. Ms. Weaver seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Non-Agenda Items Only)

On behalf of the PeeDee Coalition, Ms. Woods thanked the residents of Bennettsville, including council members, auxiliaries, and city programs like the fire and police departments, for their ongoing support. She announced the ninth annual Lemonade Stand event that will be held on Thursday, April 17th, at 2:00 PM on Parsonage Street. This year, they will also hold a mini parade to raise awareness about child abuse. The pinwheels will symbolize the innocence and joy every child deserves. Additionally, April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. To honor this, the PeeDee Coalition invites everyone to participate in Denim Day on April 30th by wearing denim to raise awareness about sexual assault. Ms. Woods asked if we could share photos with them on their Facebook page. Lastly, she thanked everyone for their support in addressing important issues, as such.

13. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

- A. **Planning Commission** (No Cases)
- B. **Board of Architectural Review/Tree Committee** (No Cases)
- C. **Board of Zoning Appeals** (No Cases)

14. COUNCIL COMMITTEES UPDATES

- A. **Finance Committee-** The committee met last night and will continue its work. Mr. Jennings mentioned that it's important that they gather various opinions. They are certainly pleased with last year's budget but want a little more freedom to do even more this year. The committee as a whole will participate in the entire finance discussion, but we also remain realistic about our limitations. Mr. Scott is correct; it can be discouraging when we realize what we can or can't do. He appreciates the time they have had to discuss finance, which is his passion. He's been

involved in it forever, and even when he was working with the city, he kept a close eye on it. "We do good things, and we enjoy strong support not just from the committee members but also from the citizens." He wishes we heard more feedback from citizens about the positive developments and the things they would like to see.

Overall, "I believe the committee is very valuable. I don't think we ask too much, and I do hope we continue our work after the budget process. This budget work is an ongoing effort, as it involves securing votes throughout the year."

- B. **Public Services Committee** (No Update)
- C. **Public Safety Committee** (No Update)
- D. **Lake Authority** (No Update)

15. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL AND CITY ADMINISTRATOR

- A. **Memo-** Financial Memo that was read and given out.
- B. **Personnel Matter Updates (Executive Session)-** Mayor Abraham entertained a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:19 pm. Ms. Weaver moved. Mr. Scott seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Abraham made a motion to exit Executive Session. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Mr. Davis. The motion passed unanimously. Mayor Abraham stated no votes or actions taken on Personnel Matters.

Councilman McRae made a motion to appoint Mr. Sammy Crosland as Police Chief of the City of Bennettsville, effective May 1st. Seconded by Ms. Weaver. The motion passed unanimously.

Chief Crosland stated, "For 20 years, it's been hard. My hard dedication to the city has always been true, alright, to share. But I was on it because I came up, because we didn't work together. I have a good recommendation to share. All we're gonna do is take off and make the city great. And mayor, city, city council, and city administrator and Assistant Administrator, so get ready to go to work."

16. NON-AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

Ms. Weaver -Stated, "I'm glad to be back. I think we're going to do good things, and I feel like I'm out of the loop a little bit, and that's why I want to look over the budget and others." She ended by saying, "But today, something happened. It's a minor thing, but it goes in with the city's polite, professional, and patient badge. I can't lift anything, and of course, it was a trash can. My trash was in the back. So, I walked out, and I asked him if he could move it. He got out of the truck, took it with no problem. So, I don't know who it was, but it made me feel really good. Thank you for that. We'll share that."

Mr. Davis- Stated, "First of all, I would like, thank our Administrator for working so hard on the budget and just doing a lot of work, powerful work, positive work, and keeping his head up. We are lucky, very lucky to have you." He thanked the employees for all they do and for how they keep the city going, along with department heads. Lastly, he is very happy that all employees are at a wage where they can maintain and move forward.

Mr. Allen- Stated, "I just like to say thank you to all the employees, staff, and administration, thank you. Very busy time for the budget right now, so I appreciate all the hard work. Lastly, he welcomed Councilman McRae to council.

Mr. Jennings- Stated, “I appreciate the confidence in becoming Mayor Pro Tem, but I will certainly do my best and continue to make more time available. I’m trying to get better at that as well. I do appreciate it. It is an honor. I’ve been there before, in a different group, and I know I’m not going back in time, and this is a very progressive Council. We are limited in some ways, but we’re overcoming and getting better financially. We had a great discussion, and I appreciate all the discussions.

Mr. McRae- Stated, “First and foremost, thank all of y’all for welcoming me today. I think we got a lot done in this meeting, and it was so good that we were able to have a healthy debate. He thanked Mr. Simon for taking a few hours out of his busy day to answer questions. “I’m so happy to be here, and it was so good at my swearing in. I challenged some people to come out to meet me and fill these empty seats, and it looked like it was a lot of people over there. So hopefully, one day in the future, we’re looking for a much larger venue to open it up, give us a fresh spirit where people won’t be complaining about the quality of the audio. He congratulated Mr. Jennings and Mr. Sammy Crosland, Police Chief.

Mr. Scott- Thanked all city employees for the work they do. He mentioned that when you have law enforcement that have been on the job for 15 years, that’s good because some people don’t stay on the job 5 years. He thanked Mrs. Miller for the meeting on the Buyout Program last Thursday. “We are still doing things to help them in those areas, and there was a lot of information that was there to be shared. But the sad thing about it, no one was there. We didn’t have any participants. But I want them to know once again that we still care about them, and we are still trying to do everything we can to make a bad situation good.” Lastly, he congratulated Mr. Jennings on being elected Mayor Pro Tem. He welcomed Councilman McRae to the council and Ms. Weaver back after her surgery.

Mayor Abraham- Stated, I appreciate everything, and it’s good to hear positive feedback from citizens when they say we’ve been moving forward. We are looking good.” He thanked Mr. Simon and Mrs. Ward for all they do. “Mr. Michael Coit has been assigned nothing but downtown work, and he’s been going in, introducing himself to the business owners, and they appreciate that. He’s been going around, and he’s on the job. He has the personality for it.” Next, He mentioned that he is looking forward to seeing the city doing more, bigger things, and not just being complacent. We got a lot of great ideas. Following, he stated he was organizing an event called “Mayor for a Day” for our fourth and fifth-grade students. They will write an essay on leadership traits, choosing three traits to discuss. They can either write 300 or 500 words or create a short five-minute video. The prizes for the top three entries are as follows: first place will receive a \$100 gift card, second place will get \$50, and third place will earn \$25. The winner will have the opportunity to wear a special sash that says, “Mayor for a Day” and will come to City Hall, where we will present some ordinances we’ve prepared. Mayor Abraham truly believes in our children and stated they are our future! Lastly, he welcomed Councilman McRae aboard.

17. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 9:39 pm.

Public Comment Policy:

Citizens desiring to speak at any regular meeting must provide a written request to notify the City Clerk prior to the agenda deadline. Citizens interested in commenting at a regular meeting shall sign in to speak and limit comments to no more than 3 minutes.

Mission Statement: To utilize all available resources for the development of plans, programs, and projects to improve services to the citizens of Bennettsville and establish and maintain an active role in economic and community development.