



**REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Tuesday, April 21, 2026; 6:30 P.M.**  
**Bennettville Public Safety Complex**

**Minutes (Corrections)**

1. CALL TO ORDER Mayor Pro Tempore Jennings
2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Tyrone R. Davis
3. ROLL CALL  
All Council members were in attendance except for Mayor Abraham.
4. APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES
  - A. **Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, March 17, 2026**- Councilman McRae expressed his desire for his comments during the Non-Agenda Items section to be included in the minutes in its entirety. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. McRae. Motion passed unanimously.
5. PUBLIC REQUESTS/ PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
  - A. **Employee Anniversaries** Elaine German (Police) 16 years; Michael Coit (Public Works) 4 years; Walter Baker (Police) 3 years; Cory Brumett (Fire) 1 year; Charles Harley (Public Works) 1 year; Jeremy Jones (Public Works) 3 years; Denise Miller (Planning/Zoning) 3 years
  - B. **New Hires** - Timothy Gibson (Public Works); Marlon Witherspoon (Tourism, Parks and Recreation); Chase McDow, Wastewater Treatment Plant, and Spencer Sellers (Fire)  
**Promotions**- Whitney English (Police)
  - C. **PDRTA**- No Business (**Not in attendance**)
  - D. **NETC**- No Business (**Not in attendance**)
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items Only)  
**Brandy Howard**- Expresses concerns about PDRTA's proposed bus schedule changes and the need for funding. She also emphasizes the importance of the bus service for transportation to work, school, and medical facilities. Lastly, she mentions the connecting

bus service between different campuses and the impact of schedule changes on riders.

7. SECOND READING AND PASSAGE IN FULL OF ORDINANCES

**No Business**

8. FIRST READING AND ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCES

**No Business**

9. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS

**No Business**

10. GENERAL BUSINESS DISPENSED BY MOTION

A. **Lease Agreement – PEAC Solutions**-The City of Bennettsville is bringing the billing operation in-house.

**Approving Action:** A motion to approve the Administrator entering into an equipment lease agreement with PEAC Solutions to secure the PEAC Folder/Sealer MBM ES8500. Moved by Ms. Weaver. Seconded by Mr. Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

B. **Arbitrage Rebate Consulting Services**- Tax-exempt bonds, like the 2022B issue, are governed by strict IRS rules on arbitrage (earning more on invested proceeds than the bond interest rate). The IRS requires periodic arbitrage calculations (at least every 5 years) and a final rebate calculation at bond maturity. If the city earns excess arbitrage, it must be rebated to the federal government.

**Approving Action:** A motion to allow the administrator to enter into an agreement with AMTEC for financial consulting services. Moved by Mrs. Harpe. Seconded by Mr. Scott. Motion passed unanimously.

C. **Contract Cancellation Water/Wastewater Consulting Services**- The city council approved a contract with Stevens Pumping LLC for WTP & WWTP consulting services in July 2025. City Council has expressed interest in discontinuing this contract, and the vacant position has been filled.

Wanda Weaver: “My opinion is I make a motion to cancel the contract for wastewater consulting services.” Seconded by Mr. McRae.

**Approving Action:** A motion to allow the administrator to send a 30-day notice for cancellation of the contract with Stevens Pumping LLC for WTP & WWTP consultation. Moved by Mrs. Weaver. Seconded by Mr. McRae.

**In favor:** Ms. Weaver and McRae. **Opposed:** Mr. Davis, Mrs. Harpe, Mr. Jennings, and Mr. Scott. Motion carried.

D. **Project Funding**- Bond Issued by US Bank in the Amount \$2.4M for Engineering & Supplemental Costs Associated with the SCIIP Grant. The bond earned approximately \$100K/year for three (3) years. As the final SCIIP projects are completed, the total payout for Engineering Costs = \$922,000.00, which

leaves a balance of \$1,778,000.

**Approving Action:** William Jennings made a motion to accept Mr. Simon's recommendations to use the SC grant money that has become available due to interest earned, without sending it back to our federal government, on the four projects that he described. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. McRae. Motion passed unanimously.

- E. **ARPA reallocation-** City Administration is requesting a modification of the budget assigned to the following projects:

<b><u>FROM</u></b>	<b><u>TO</u></b>
Pole Change Out (\$60K)	Tennis Courts
Pole Change Out (\$20K)	McLeod Street Park

**Approving Action:** A motion to approve the reallocation of funds from the “Pole Change Out” project to the “Tennis Courts” and “McLeod Street Park” projects. Moved by Mrs. Harpe. Seconded by Mr. McRae. Motion passed unanimously.

- F. **Tennis Courts Construction Contract-** The tennis courts located near the community center will be upgraded as part of ARPA’s allocation to the Community Center and grounds. The contract included is a comprehensive proposal for the construction of a new surface for the tennis courts.

**Approving Action:** A motion to allow the administrator entering into a contract with Sport Master for the construction of new tennis courts. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Scott. Motion carried.

**In favor:** Ms. Weaver, Mr. Davis, Mrs. Harpe, Mr. Jennings, and Mr. Scott

**Opposed:** Mr. McRae didn’t agree with the price. He felt that other things could be done with the funds.

- G. **DJJ Memorandum of Agreement for Juvenile Detention**

**Approving Action:** A motion to allow the administrator to execute an MOA with DJJ. Moved by Mr. McRae. Seconded by Mr. Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Non-Agenda Items Only)

**Pamela Best-** Stated she hasn’t received a letter. She raised concerns about the City Administrator and the disruption of operations. Then she made inappropriate comments to the City Administrator, and she was then removed from the meeting by law enforcement.

**Joshua Burns-** Addresses animal welfare issues, including the need for proper shelter, access to clean water, and spay/neuter programs. He then highlighted the risks of neglected animals becoming aggressive and the potential for disease spread. Lastly, he calls for accountability and enforcement to prevent these issues from escalating.

**Dean Moore-** Discusses excessive utility charges and suggests a review of contracts and software for accuracy. He then emphasizes the need for proactive measures to manage

utility costs and ensure fair rates.

12. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS (Denise Miller, Director of Planning & Zoning)
  - A. **Planning Commission (No Cases)**
  - B. **Board of Architectural Review/Tree Committee (No Cases)**
  - C. **Board of Zoning Appeals (No Cases)**
  
13. COUNCIL COMMITTEES
  - A. **Finance Committee (Chairperson Jennings)-** Provided an update on the budget, noting positive financial projections and ongoing Budget Workshop Sessions. He also highlighted the importance of conserving resources and working together to address utility bill issues.
  - B. **Public Services Committee (Chairperson Harpe)-**Public Service Committee's recommendation to move animal control under the police department for better training and equipment. She discussed the need for pet registration and addressing space issues in the current animal control building. mentions the committee's focus on promoting economic growth and enhancing business incentives.
  - C. **Public Safety Committee (Chairperson McRae)-**He provided an update on the Public Safety Committee's meeting, including discussions on reviewing and updating outdated ordinances. He congratulated Chief Burks on being accepted into the South Carolina Firefighters Association Leadership Institute and welcomed the new Fire Marshal, Spencer Sellers, and expressed confidence in the city's public safety efforts. Lastly, he mentions ongoing efforts to improve Public Safety through training and equipment enhancements.
  
14. REPORTS AND INFORMATION PRESENTATION
  - A. **Finance Report – Samuel Sparkman, Chief Financial Officer-** Discusses the current budget status, noting positive financial projections and ongoing Budget Workshop Sessions. He highlights the importance of proactive measures to manage utility costs and ensure financial stability, and the need for careful review of utility bills and the potential for substantial savings. Lastly, he emphasizes the importance of community involvement and collaboration in addressing financial concerns.
  - B. **Grants Report - Brittany Jones, Director of Business & Community Development-** Provided an update on the management of over \$16 million worth of grants, including water meter replacements and roadway construction. She mentioned the application for \$15 million in grants for various projects, including Water and Wastewater Treatment, Planning and Zoning, and the Bennettsville Police Department. Lastly, she highlighted the upcoming Beeville Festival, including promotional activities, rides, petting zoos, and local artist involvement. Miss. Brittany Jones encourages community participation in the festival and the district-wide student art contest.
  - C. **Upcoming Events – Jaharra Graves, Director of Tourism, Parks, and Recreation-** Thank everyone for coming out and enjoying the Gospel on the Gulf event. She also thanked the TPR Department, Police Department, and the Gospel Committee for their hard work and those who attended. Lastly, she announced our next event that will be held on May 7th. The City will be honoring the National

Day of Prayer at City Hall, and that will be from 5 to 6:00 p.m.

15. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL AND CITY ADMINISTRATOR

- A. **Administrator's Report**- Mr. Simon discussed the engagement in community cleanup efforts, contracting with Aspen for right-of-way maintenance. He emphasized cutting back vegetation to improve safety at intersections and ensured a clear line of sight. He then encouraged community members to report neglected areas for cleanup and highlighted the importance of beautifying the city and making intersections safe. Next, he mentioned the budget process and the survey participation, thanking the community for their participation in the survey, noting significant increases in responses compared to previous years. He also mentioned the lack of public attendance at budget hearings in the past. Moreover, he discusses the stabilization of utility bills and the reimplementation of budget billing. Lastly, he announces the return of the Bennettsville 101 program, starting in June, to educate citizens on city operations and projects.
- B. **Project List -(Updated)**
- C. **Can Hospitality Tax Fund a Position? No**
- D. **Flat Fee for Trash Pickup**- Council has expressed interest in implementing a \$5 fee on residents, and it would yield anywhere from 330 to \$350,000 in revenue. This is only here for information, no purpose.
- E. **Fee Schedule increase**-He stated, "I am running additional numbers, as all of you have asked me to do, potentially for \$707 50% \$7.50 fee, and even a \$10 fee. And I'll give those numbers to all of you before our next budget workshop, but administration is running those numbers per your request. The only thing we don't have tonight is the fee schedule increase, because I think the last time we spoke with some of you, we wanted to, not consider a blanket increase, but to maybe break it out and see which lot items would affect residents and businesses and things of that sort. So, we need a little bit more time in order to do that."
- F. **Cash Reserve Policy Draft**- He discussed putting a cash reserve policy in place. We are not there yet, but the administration did go as far as to put a draft in place. A copy was given to council members in their packets.

Mr. Simon took a moment of personal privilege just to address some things, "I just want to say, personally speaking, for those who support me, I certainly appreciate that. For those who don't support me, I will continue to work, work for you. Just know that I noticed some news has circulated regarding me potentially leaving the City of Bennettsville. I was named a finalist in another town, and what a lot of people don't know is that, a few weeks ago, I sent a letter to that town saying that I love Bennettsville. This is where I want to stay. I just didn't share that. I let the social media rats kind of do their thing. But just know that as your Administrator, while I'm here, I'm going to do everything I can to do the best job that I can. Is my administration perfect? We are not. Are we going to make mistakes? Yes, we are. Are we ready to fight for what's right? You best believe those that want to criticize and constantly demean this city when it doesn't call for that, bring it on, we are ready. Trust me when I say that, because we have so many good people here and so much, so many good things to do, so many potential projects, so much progress that we can make as a community. While I'm here, I am not going to drop the ball and do anything less. So just know that,

right? Just sorry, Mayor Pro Tem, I just want to take a moment there to share that so we can put some of the rumors to rest, and I thank you for that, and that's all I have regarding communication between the City Council and City Administrator.”

16. NON-AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

**Gregory Scott, Sr.**-He was excited about all the things that I heard in the meeting about the projects that the city is attempting to do. He thanked employees for being still employed with the city, naming Elaine German at the Police Department for her dedication of 16 years in law enforcement. Next, he addressed the administrator about the cleanup of Crooked Creek and the Shady Rest area. Mr. Scott went on saying, “We kind of get on a slippery slope instead of letting the administrator do what he's supposed to do. I know there are some things that we would like to know, and there are some things that we need to know, and we need to separate those because sometimes, you know, the things that we need to know are really important, and there's nothing wrong with the things that we just like to know. There's no harm in asking a question. But sometimes we get really serious on things that we just would like to know. Lastly, he stated we need to engage with the activities that the city organizes. He also reminded us to keep the Mayor and his wife in our prayers.

**CyHeim McRae**- Stated he was happy to see everyone. Next, he talked about the events that the city held, and he enjoyed them. He thanked the TPR Department and Mr. Simon. He thanked Mrs. Miller for the Resilience Training and Asplundh for doing such a great job in his district. Mr. McRae is excited about Bennettsville 101 because we need to find ways to engage our citizens, so they understand how government and operations work. He announced that on July 18, in District Five, we will be having a kickball tournament at Smith Park. It's going to start at 11, so be ready! There are only a few more slots left, so make sure you sign up. It's free of charge.

“I want to take a moment of personal privilege too, because we, Mr. Simon, touched on it a little bit, but that \$5 fee. So I just want to be transparent. As you all know, we in the budget season, and we have to make some cuts, you know, because we are supposed to present an equal and balanced budget. So by adding this small fee that would be to take the place of brown goods, proposed take the place, you know, the brown goods. And so basically, that's the leaves and limbs that you put on the side of the road. And when you throw your furniture and your couches and all that good stuff on the side of the road, a city truck comes and picks it up, and when that truck comes and picks it up, they have to take it out of town to go dump it, and that costs because they weigh it. So, I do think that the fee is needed, but we will go further in the budget process, and I think I identified. I hope I'm not out of order when I say this real quick. I'm in a hurry up, because I have no idea talked over my time today, but I think that we will be all right, because I was looking through the budget and I found a discrepancy, a typo. So I think that I found a way to save around \$200,000, but I could be wrong, and I probably should have said that. But under the fleet lease, it went from 224 909, and then now it's presented as \$481,000, so we can go in and keep that look that I think that we should be in good hands, hopefully one raising a raise. But I just wanted to put that out there, because I know somebody go come and say it was Councilman McCrae that wanted to raise do that \$5, it was me. But I want you to know the reasoning behind it. I am not for cutting two positions at the police department, and so I want to explore any way possible to keep those positions, because

we need them. I know I have calls in the middle of not going to have to have to call people you know and tell them to come and look at some things that I get a little scared. And so I want to find any way possible to retain those two positions. I will not support a budget that has that in it. I will not. So, that being said, I want to give y'all facts about that \$5 fee so you can go tell a friend, tell a friend, so you get them back to information other than that. Thank you all so much for coming. Oh, and Mr. Simon, I would like the information on those fire department renovations, because they get pushed down and pushed down and pushed down and pushed down. So, I want us to figure out what it is. Oh, last, but not least, we talked about utilities that Director of Public Utility has. Have we had applicants for that? Yeah. Okay, so where are we at now? Unqualified. Okay, so what do we do in that case? Continue advertising. So, if we speak, we don't interview the people. We don't call them for an interview, even if they aren't qualified.”

“I just think that we will have that position open for more years to come, if we don't find a way to kind of do something. I'm not saying we got to throw out all the requirements, but we do need to find some kind of way to get someone over that department, no matter if we got a bucket down for like a manager or something like that, and send them to get the proper training. But I think if we keep on looking for, I mean, reality is, and I know it sounds bad, but everybody is not to be qualified to get any job, some jobs you need to go get training. And so I think we need to kind of look into doing something for that. But even if those people aren't qualified, let's be sure that we reach out to them and tell them that they aren't qualified. Are we moving forward? Because I have received some complaints about the length of this hiring process for multiple people, so and not just for that job, but I'm talking about jobs in general. We need to, you know, people are struggling, and the job market is terrible. If we'll give them the job, let them know if we're not, they don't. Simple as that, but we've got to communicate that to them.” But the HR department should at some point reach out to them and kind of let them know the status or something. That's what any job, anyone applies for capital, they send them an email to communicate. All I'm saying, communicate with these people, because we plan with my opinion. So I disagree. That's just my opinion, right?”

**Caraline Harpe-** Stated she was piggybacking off Councilman McRae. Some positions require very specific requirements or certifications. She thought maybe expanding our recruiting process would be sufficient, since those positions seem to be the ones we struggle with the most and the ones that require specific technical degrees. “ I certainly uh would rather have the positions open than hire someone that is not qualified. It's not fair to the city or the person being put in the position. You know, it doesn't hurt to go back to the drawing board and look at other options. We certainly need to get the positions filled.” Lastly, she thanked Mr. Simon and the staff for working so hard to find a way to fund infrastructure projects. They're very desperately needed, and she knows that's very time-consuming.

**Tyrone R. Davis-** Thanked Mr. Simon and his staff for the job that they're doing. He sees the hard work everyone is doing.

**Wanda Weaver-** She didn't have anything at the time.

**Mayor Pro Tempore Jennings-** Stated he certainly misses Mayor Abraham, and he hopes things go well for him and his family. He did appreciate everyone's patience. A lot of positive things happened tonight, he said. More than he has ever seen in Council Meeting. He ended by saying the cash reserve policy, “Will do absolutely the greatest

improvements if we could discipline ourselves to not charge more, not do more, but save where we can. It would open the door to so many projects, so many grant matches, so many ideas that would be money available to work on. And no, this won't happen in 6 months, a year, or five years. But as long as you're doing it each year, just like a personal financing tool, when it's needed, it'll be there, and we don't have to cut something else out. We need to do what we got to do.”

17. ADJOURN  
Meeting ended at 8:35 PM.