



REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, May 20, 2025; 6:30 P.M.
Bennettsville Public Safety Complex

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER Mayor Tyron Abraham
2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Gregory Scott, Sr.
3. ROLL CALL
District 1-Wanda Weaver
District 2-Tyrone Davis
District 3-Allen Taylor (Absent)
Mayor- Tyron Abraham
District 4-William Jennings, Jr.
District 5-Cy'Heim McRae
District 6- Gregory Scott, Sr.
4. APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES
 - A. **Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, April 15, 2025 -**
Correction: Mr. McRae wanted to vote no for the Regular Council Meeting; Minutes for Tuesday, April 15, 2025. He was not a part of the city council at the time.
Mr. McRae made a motion to approve the minutes with the corrections from the Regular Council Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, March 18, 2025. Mr. Scott seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.
5. PUBLIC REQUESTS/ PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
 - A. **Employees Anniversaries** Mrs. Angela Ward announced our Employee Anniversaries: Sheikela Brown (Police) 2 years, Anthony Chavis (Police), 2 years Michael David (Planning/Zoning) 8 years, Bryant Galloway (Public Works) 3 years, William Hall (Police) 15 years, Tammy Hamer (Human Resources) 4 years, Caleb Lopez (Police) 1 year, Patrick Smith (Gas) 21 years, Marques Stanton (Public Works) 10 years, Pete Wilkes (Administration) 7 years
 - B. **New Hires**
Cory Brumett (Fire)
Tyler Norris, Gas Line Worker (Gas)
Christopher Letterman (Police)
Cy'Heim McRae (Councilman-District 5)

Charles Harley – Operator (Public Works)

Promotions

Harold Kessler – Sergeant (Police)

Haden Graham – Corporal (Police)

Jason Tompkins – Sergeant (Police)

- C. **NETC (Andy Ingram)** - Mr. Andy Ingram gave a presentation. He highlighted the expansion of their Marlboro County campus, which is scheduled to open in August or September, employing 158 people with an annual payroll of \$9.6 million. NTC's spring enrollment was 1,316 students, of whom 514 were dual enrollment students, with 389 from Marlboro County.
- D. **PDRTA (Yolonda DuPree)**-PDRTA requested additional funding to avoid service cuts in Marlboro County. PDRTA is facing a 25% cut in services if additional funding is not provided. Marlboro County uses PDRTA buses more than any other county, highlighting the need for continued support.
- E. **Emergency Watershed Protection Program-** Mrs. McCoy was not present.

6. **PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items Only)**

Sophia, a Development Specialist with the Woda Cooper Companies, has been working in partnership with the City of Bennettsville to structure a ground lease with an option agreement. This collaboration will enable Woda Cooper to move forward with an application to South Carolina Housing for a proposed 54-unit affordable housing development. The planned development will be general occupancy, designed to serve individuals and families in need of affordable housing within the Bennettsville area. The proposal includes the construction of four residential buildings, two of which will be two-story structures. The site for the development is located at 401 Center Street.

Importantly, the existing park and playground located at the rear of the parcel will remain undisturbed. The new residential buildings will be added to the front portion of the property, preserving valued recreational space for the neighborhood while addressing the growing need for quality, affordable housing. This initiative reflects Woda Cooper's continued commitment to creating sustainable and inclusive housing solutions across South Carolina.

7. **SECOND READING AND PASSAGE IN FULL OF ORDINANCES**

No Business

8. **FIRST READING AND ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCES**

- A. **Transfer of Municipal Elections to the County-** The city council has expressed interest in allowing the county to assume the responsibility of municipal elections. The attached joint ordinance received 1st reading approval by the Marlboro County Council.

Approving Action: Mayor Abraham entertained a motion to approve the joint ordinance transferring municipal elections to the county. Moved by Ms. Weaver. Seconded by Mr. McRae. The motion passed unanimously.

- B. **Rezone property, located on 401 Center Street, from (A-1, Single-Family Residential) to ROI-1, Residential, Office, and Institutional, to accommodate multi-family use.**

A motion to defer item 8B and item 9A to our next meeting. Moved by Ms. Weaver. Seconded by Mr. Scott. The motion passed unanimously.

9. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS

- A. **Ground Lease for Affordable Housing** The City of Bennettsville entered into an agreement with the WODA Company for the development of affordable housing. The next step in the process is to execute a ground lease with the company; this lease, along with the rezoning, will complete the application to the state.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the administrator to execute a ground lease with the WODA Company to support the affordable housing project. Moved by Ms. Weaver. Seconded by Mr. Scott. The motion passed unanimously.

10. GENERAL BUSINESS DISPENSED BY MOTION

- A. **SCDOT (Road Improvements) CTC-**Per the Marlboro County Transportation Committee's approval, \$371,367.20 was allocated for local paving project C PCN P044621. The project is identified as resurfacing McKellar St., Henrietta St., and S. Jordan St., in the City of Bennettsville. The City of Bennettsville will have full responsibility for the procurement, construction, maintenance, and inspection of this project.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Administrator to submit the required documentation to move forward with the project. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. Davis. The motion passed unanimously.

- B. **City Ordinance Re-Write** -The city administration met internally and with the Public Services Committee. The volume and magnitude of the ordinance changes, as well as council expectations, will require the services of a professional firm. The city administration wishes to write an RFQ for code re-write services.

Approving Action: Mr. McRae made a motion to approve the Administrator to create and advertise an RFQ for code re-write services. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Ms. Weaver. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. **Contracting Grant Services-** The city administration wishes to enter into an agreement with Rachel Taylor Virtual Services for grant writing/management services.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Administrator to enter into an agreement with Rachel Taylor Virtual Services (Rachel Williams) for grant writing services for a period of three (3) months) or until a new person is hired. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. McRae. The motion passed unanimously.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Non-Agenda Items Only)

Neal Fair Had already exited the meeting.

Willie Earl Covington-He highlighted issues with tree debris and overgrown areas in Shady Rest and First Avenue.

Pamela Best- Would like for Code Enforcements to be “Enforced,” which may help address many issues being raised.

12. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

- A. **Planning Commission (Case #: PC-25-001: Rezoning)**- 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)** -The finance committee reported a need to stay within budget, noting an 8% overspend last year. The city's financial health was emphasized, with multiple oversight levels ensuring accountability.
- B. **Public Services Committee (Chairperson Weaver)**- She discussed the importance of community engagement and plans for neighborhood assessments to address local concerns.
- C. **Public Safety Committee (Chairperson Taylor)** -Was not present at the meeting.
- D. **Lake Authority**- No representative was present.

14. REPORTS AND INFORMATION PRESENTATION

- A. **Finance Report**- Mr. Sam Sparkman didn't have anything to add to Mr. Jennings finance report. However, he stated, “We had more revenue than we projected.”
- B. **Grants Report**- Ms. Brittany Jones provided some updates on actively moving projects.
 - **SKIP Grant Projects**
 - **Water Meter Replacement**- We are currently awaiting final plans for the water meter replacement contract. Once received, it will go to bid. This infrastructure effort is also progressing smoothly.
 - **Downtown Mural Project**- The mural downtown, funded through the South Carolina Arts Commission Grant, is nearing completion and should be finished within the next week.
 - **Grants and Public Safety**- We've submitted applications for:
 - 1. **Body-Worn Camera Grant** for our police department
 - 2. **School Resource Officer (SRO) Grants** (as we do annually)
 - **Sewer System Evaluation**- We are in the final stages of preparing the bid packet for our sewer system evaluation, which will utilize inline camera inspections. Engineers have provided a preliminary map of areas to be inspected, excluding zones where water and sewer lines have already been recently upgraded. This will help us stretch our resources and prioritize effectively.
 - **Disaster Assistance Program**- We are actively reaching out to homeowners and conducting thorough reviews of applications. In many cases, we're double- and triple-checking financial and household information to ensure full compliance before repairs begin. This is crucial, as funds cannot be submitted for reimbursement until after the work is completed, and any inaccuracies could result in denial. We are required to have half of these funds

spent by October, so we are working diligently to stay on track. Several contractors have shown interest in participating. If you know of any local contractors who might be interested, please encourage them to reach out—we are committed to keeping these funds within our community.

- C. **Upcoming Events** – Ms. Jaharra Graves provided all Upcoming Community Events. Bingo Bonanza (Wednesday, June 5, 2025; 6 pm-8 pm), Annual Fireworks Show & Summer Kickoff (Friday, June 28, 2025, 3 pm-10 pm).

15. **COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL AND CITY ADMINISTRATOR**

- A. **City of Bennettsville Job Fair-** Was held, and a lot of applications were taken.
- B. **Financial Institution Change-** Making some banking changes, which will help us save on fees.
- C. **Request for Proposals/Qualifications**
- Crooked Creek Bank Cleanup (RFQ)
 - Pole Inventory Project (RFP)
 - McLeod Park Basketball Court Resurfacing (RFP)
 - Woodland Park Playground Equipment (RFQ)
- D. **City Council Strategic Planning Session (memo)**

16. **NON-AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCIL**

Ms. Weaver- Had nothing to say.

Mr. Davis- Thanked all employees and every member who makes up the city. He thanked everyone for their continued hard work and dedication, along with the representative from Northeastern Technical College (NETC). Their efforts truly make a difference, and it's clear that everyone is committed to moving forward.

Mr. Jennings- Asked if there were any updates on the firetruck? Any follow-ups on the Public Utility Director position? Mr. Simon stated, We have three good applicants, and we did two Zoom interviews. We are getting qualified applicants, but they'll be required to move here. We welcome someone who wants to relocate from another state to South Carolina.

Mr. McRae- Thanked the council for being transparent. He also thanked Mr. Sparkman for printing out statements he requested. Next, he thanked the city employees for attending the meeting tonight. Lastly, he stated, "We need to start combating the lies and rumors, because they are just flat out wrong for spreading false information. So, that's what I would ask all of us is when we see misinformation about the city, we find a way to combat it. It doesn't have to be aggressively, but we just need to tell them what it is and what it ain't."

Mr. Scott- Wished a speedy recovery to Councilman Taylor. He went on to say, the meeting was good, but there are still neglected areas. For example, people in his community are frustrated about funding for the lake that doesn't seem to benefit them. He has been critical of the lake authority because they need transparency about how funds are allocated. In the Richland Park and Shady Rest areas, promises have been made, but they haven't been followed through, especially regarding the dam, which poses a risk. While some progress was made, it's not enough. We need to honor our commitments to avoid further tragedies. We've been promised a lot, but the impact hasn't matched those promises. He ended by mentioning, Mrs. Miller and the city are still working hard to help, but we can't forget those who want to stay in our community and need our support. If we don't deliver on our promises, the situation could become tragic. It's frustrating to see assurances made in public yet lacking real impact in the community.

Mayor Abraham- Thanked our city employees for their hard work over the past month. I also ask all of you and Mrs. Ward to please inform the department heads with employees working outside to ensure they stay hydrated, especially as the weather begins to warm up. He wished everyone a great and safe Memorial Day weekend. I would like to express my gratitude to our school district and all the students in our county. He encourages everyone to have a safe and enjoyable summer and to continue reading to help advance their education. Mayor Abraham informed citizens that he has been visiting different cities to gain insights and gather ideas on what we can bring back to our community. Many cities have been doing great things, and during these visits, he not only gathers information but also shares about the wonderful initiatives we have here in the City of Bennettsville. He clarified that the city does not cover his travel expenses; those expenses come out of his pocket. He takes the initiative to travel to different places, so he asks the city not to incur any expenses on his behalf. There have been some concerns regarding activities in the community. However, he has been working in the community for over 25 years, and he genuinely cares about our youth. He mentioned that some events are happening soon, and all council members are welcome to join. Tomorrow, he will have our first "Mayor for a Day" contest for fourth and fifth graders. He thanked Ms. Jahara, Ms. Miller, Ms. Ward, Ms. Brittany, and Ms. Lucas for their assistance. Additionally, he stated that council members receive \$1,000 to use for activities in their districts, while I have \$1,400 as the mayor. However, he decided not to use that money for 2025, as he has other initiatives in mind. Instead, he took \$500 of his personal funds to support an event on June 10th. He wanted to clarify this because there were some misconceptions about how these activities are funded. Lastly, he ended by saying, if anyone has questions, please come directly to the source before spreading rumors. If you have complaints or issues in the city, feel free to call City Hall. If that doesn't resolve your concerns, contact your council members, and if needed, reach out to him. He would appreciate you calling them first out of respect, as they represent the districts you voted for. He wishes everyone a happy and safe Memorial Day, and he looks forward to seeing you next week.

17. ADJOURN
Meeting adjourned at 8:46 pm.

Public Comment Policy:

Citizens desiring to speak at any regular meeting must make a written request to notify the City Clerk prior to the 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.