



**REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, June 17, 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
District 4- William “Bill” Jennings-(Absent)
District 5- Cy’Heim McRae

Mayor Abraham made a motion to move Item 10F to 15F for Executive Session. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. McRae. The motion passed unanimously.

4. APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES
 - A. **Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, May 20, 2025** -Moved by Mr. Taylor.
Seconded by Ms. Weaver. The motion passed unanimously.
5. PUBLIC REQUESTS/ PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
 - A. **Employees Anniversaries**- Mrs. Angela Ward announced our Employee Anniversaries for June: Calvin Avant (Police) 2 years, Rahquise Brown (Public Works) 2 years, Chris Burks (Fire) 12 years, Evan Covington (Fire) 3 years, Don Galloway (Public Works) 8 years, Michelle Hodges (Planning & Zoning) 10 years, Michael Leggett (Water) 4 years, Talisha McCall (Municipal Court) 8 years, Ezekiel Miller (Gas) 2 years, Joel Oliver (Wastewater) 5 years, Terry Powers (Electric) 11 years, Chaka Ray (Utility Billing) 3 years, William Simon Jr. (Administration) 2 years, and Todd Woodham Water/Sewer) 4 years
 - B. **New Hires**
Brian Genwright-Sergeant (Police)

Destiny Watson- Community Center Manager (TPR)
Ronald Hamer- Meter Reader (Utility Billing)
Larry Cummings- Volunteer Firefighter

Promotions

Sammy Crosland-Police Chief
Anthony Chavis-Assistant Police Chief

Miss. Graves introduced Ms. Ann Heiser from the SC Forestry Commission, who presented on the city's Tree City USA status, highlighting the city's 14-year commitment to maintaining four standards. The four standards include a public tree ordinance, a tree board, spending over \$2 per capita on tree-related issues, and celebrating Arbor Day. Ann Heiser discussed the city's efforts in celebrating Arbor Day, including planting a southern magnolia at Smith Park. The Forestry Commission provided an award, reflective stickers, and a new banner to the city, which were received by Ms. Graves and Mayor Abraham.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items Only)
No Business

7. SECOND READING AND PASSAGE IN FULL 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 joint ordinance received 2nd reading approval by the Marlboro County Council.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the joint ordinance transferring municipal elections to the county. Moved by Mr. McRae. Seconded by Mr. Scott. The motion passed unanimously.

8. FIRST READING AND ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCES

- A. **Center Street Rezoning (Housing)-**Rezone property, located at 401 Center Street, from (A-1, Single-Family Residential) to ROI-1, Residential, Office, and Institutional, to accommodate multi-family use.
The rezoning was heard by the Planning Commission on Monday, June 9, 2025, and included a public hearing. The Planning Commission voted 3-1 to approve the rezoning. The Planning Commission is a recommending body to the city council.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the rezoning of 401 Center Street from A-1 to ROI-1 to accommodate multi-family use. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. Davis. Mr. Taylor opposed. Motion carried.

Mr. Taylor stated, “I want to note it in the minutes why I dissent. I am in favor of the project I voted for; I am definitely in favor of it. We have a need. It’s not that what I do have issues and concerns with is the lease that we entered into. How many did you explain the details? That was how many years? How much was it for? This means that the property stays in the name of the city of Bennettsville.

There will be no property taxes paid on that property 50 years for a private development. This isn't a government development, this isn't a state development. This is a private entity that we just entered in for 50 years. No property tax is going to be paid. The rents on these homes are going to be subsidized by federal or state income and government money coming in, and we're not going to get a dime because it belongs to the City of Bennettsville . We've been better off giving it to them for \$1 or putting it in their name so that we could acquire some type of property taxes over those 50 years. That's where my concern is with this thing. And we rushed to have this lease agreement signed, and I voted in favor. I am for the project. I am for it. I'm not saying. I'm not. It's the least that I'm concerned in the time that every agency in this county and state are wondering where money is going to come from. We just passed up 50 years of project taxes. and I don't think my opinion is very good for the city to be doing. Walmart didn't get this. McDonald's, right, got it. And any other private developer doesn't usually get this. If they do, it's some type of fee in lieu of taxes, where they pay a fee consistently until 10 years is up, and then they start paying regular taxes. That's why I dissented in my vote. It is certainly not because I'm opposed to the project, because I am very, very clear. My concern was with the lease that we are in, and that's why I dissented.”

- B. **Public Art Ordinance**-The Public Art Draft Ordinance Regulate Murals and Public Art in the Downtown Area for the City of Bennettsville, South Carolina. This version maintains the role of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) in providing input but vests final authority with City Council to ensure alignment with city branding and planning goals.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the first reading of the public art ordinance, knowing that the council can come back with a second reading before that to make any changes to the wording. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Ms. Weaver. The motion passed unanimously.

9. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS
No Business

10. GENERAL BUSINESS DISPENSED BY MOTION

- A. **Adoption of the proposed performance evaluation tool**-The City Council has shown interest in a new performance evaluation tool for employees for three (3) years. Council has expressed the importance of accountability for “ALL” employees. The council worked hard with the administration to honor the salary study to ensure that every employee is paid a competitive rate along with every employee being paid a livable wage. The council now wants to pivot to employee performance and that starts with training, setting expectations, and assessing performance. The current evaluation tool is 20+ years old.

Approving Action: A motion to adopt the proposed evaluation tool into the personnel policy. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. Davis. The motion passed unanimously.

- B. **KCI Engineering Professional Services**-The City of Bennettsville is responsible for relocating utilities as part of the overall SCDOT bridge replacement project (located near Dairy Dream). The city wishes to secure the services of KCI Engineering. The project is ongoing, and deliverables are time-sensitive.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Administrator to enter into a professional services agreement with KCI Engineering. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Mr. Davis. Mr. McRae abstained. The motion carried.

- C. **Contracting Utility Management Services**-The city administration wishes to enter into an agreement with Steven's Pumping Service, LLC (Angela Sellers), for utility management services. Mrs. Sellers is retiring at the end of June 2025. She currently serves as the Assistant Director of Public Utilities and is willing to assist us until we/they terminate the contract.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Administrator to enter into an agreement with Steven's Pumping Services (Angela Sellers) for utility management services for a period of three (3) months) or until a new person is hired or contract is terminated. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Scott. Mrs. Weaver and Mr. Taylor opposed. Motion carried.

- D. **Asplundh Contract (Renewal)** Asplundh is a company which specializes in tree pruning and vegetation management for utilities and government agencies. The city has been under contract with Asplundh for three (3) years and wishes to renew the partnership. The contract will be managed slightly differently with a focus on community rights-of-way.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Administrator to renew the contract with Asplundh. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Taylor. The motion passed unanimously.

- E. **Board Appointment- Bennettsville Housing Authority (Ms. Renea S. Allen)**
The term of Ms. Renea S. Allen as Commissioner of the Housing Authority of Bennettsville, South Carolina, expires on the 21st day of August 2025.

Approving Action: A motion to appoint Mrs. Renea S. Allen to the Housing Authority of Bennettsville Board. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Mr. McRae. The motion passed unanimously.

- F. **Real Estate Transactions ***EXECUTIVE SESSION*****- Item moved 15F.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Non-Agenda Items Only)

Shirley DeWeese- is interested in helping the city get a homeless shelter.

Neal Fair- shared his thoughts about issues in the city. He pointed out that the city spent \$16,000 on a fire truck that does not work, and he expressed concern that taking it to the same company repeatedly has not resolved the problem. Additionally, he requested that at least one council member move the public comments portion of the meeting to the

beginning, as citizens have to wait for a long time. Lastly, he inquired about the meaning of the term "projects," which was mentioned by a council member.

Pamela Best- Showed a video she had recorded on her phone of 6-7 dogs that were across from Burger King, going from house to house to looking for food. Lastly, she read a FB post that was made by someone up north.

12. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

- A. **Planning Commission** (Case # PC-25-001: Rezoning)
- B. **Board of Architectural Review/Tree Committee** (No Cases)
- C. **Board of Zoning Appeals** (No Cases)

13. COUNCIL COMMITTEES

- A. **Finance Committee (Chairperson Jennings)-** Was not in attendance.
- B. **Public Services Committee (Chairperson Weaver)-**No updates
- C. **Public Safety Committee (Chairperson Taylor)-**No updates

14. REPORTS AND INFORMATION PRESENTATION

- A. **Finance Report (Megan Robinson)** Not in attendance, but some information was placed in the packets.
- B. **Upcoming Events (Jaharra Graves)-**
 - Annual Fireworks Show, June 28, 2025, 3pm-10pm; Marlboro County High School Parking Lot
 - Concert at the Community Center, Thursday, July 28, 2025, 6pm-9pm
 - National Night Out, August 5, 2025, 5pm-8pm; City Hall
 - Bingo Night (sometime in July)

15. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL AND CITY ADMINISTRATOR

- A. **City Vehicle Policy**
 - Noting the need for a comprehensive policy covering emergency personnel and other administrative positions.
 - The lack of a real city vehicle take-home policy, except for the police department, and the need for a draft policy.
 - Agrees to create a draft policy and present it for council consideration, emphasizing the importance of a well-defined policy.
- B. **Purchase of new Fire Truck-** Moved to a later date.
- C. **Bingo Bonanza Update**
 - Expresses commitment to organizing more events, seeking donations from businesses to support these initiatives.
 - Suggests creating banners to acknowledge sponsors, emphasizing the importance of community support and engagement.
- D. **Two-Year Annual Review-**
 - Mr. Simon celebrates his two-year anniversary as city administrator, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to serve the community.
 - His accomplishments include improvements in utilities, downtown development, and partnerships with the COG.

- Acknowledges the challenges faced by the city, such as blight, high utility bills, and power outages, and the efforts being made to address these issues.
- Emphasizes the need to tell the city's positive story and counter negative narratives on social media, encouraging community participation and support.

E. **Citizens' concerns follow-up**

- Discusses the need for an official complaint process, mentioning a previous attempt to hire a city ombudsman to handle complaints. The ombudsman would take ownership of complaints, working directly with departments to ensure resolution and follow-up.
- Acknowledges the need for better citizen engagement and participation in city boards and commissions.
- Emphasizes the importance of addressing complaints and ensuring that citizens feel their issues are being heard and resolved.

F. **Real Estate Transactions ***EXECUTIVE SESSION***-**

A motion to go into Executive Session at 7:59 pm. Moved by Mr. Davis.

Seconded by Mr. Taylor. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to exit Executive Session and return to Regular Meeting at 8:31 pm.

Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Mr. McRae. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Ms. Weaver- Enjoyed the Bingo Bonanza; it was a well-planned event. The need for animal control updates.

Mr. Davis -Thanked employees for their good work, along with Mr. Simon. He ended by stating the importance of city unity.

Mr. Taylor-Did not have any comments to provide at this time.

Mr. Jennings-(Absent)

Mr. McRae- Thanked everyone for their assistance at his recent town hall event, despite the rain, he expressed gratitude for the city staff's support. He mentioned meeting with city officials to discuss district needs and looks forward to future collaborations.

Mr. Scott- Emphasizes the importance of council unity and thanked the council for their efforts to move the city forward. Discusses the impact of recent rain on his area and the lack of progress on promised studies and reports. He expresses frustration over unfulfilled promises and how citizens blamed the city for issues beyond his control, although some things aren't the city's responsibility.

Mayor Abraham- Thanked all citizens as well as staff for all they do. He mentioned that he wants to start on Christmas ideas now, and he wants Christmas decorations to be better each year.

17. **ADJOURN**

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 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.