



REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, March 18, 2025, 6:30 P.M.
Bennettville Public Safety Complex

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER Mayor Tyron Abraham
2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE William Jennings, Jr.
3. ROLL CALL
District 1-Wanda Weaver (**Absent**)
District 2-Tyrone R. Davis
District 3- Allen Taylor (**Absent**)
Mayor-Tyron Abraham
District 4-William “Bill” Jennings, Jr.
District 5-**Vacant**
District 6- Gregory Scott, Sr.
4. APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES
 - A. **Regular Council Meeting: Tuesday, February 18, 2025** – Mr. Jennings made a motion to approve the Regular City Council Meeting minutes of Tuesday, February 18, 2025. Mr. Scott seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
5. PUBLIC REQUESTS/ PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
 - A. **Employees Anniversaries**--Mrs. Angela Ward, Asst. The City Administrator expressed appreciation for all March employees’ Anniversaries. She thanked all employees for their dedication and hard work for the City of Bennettville. Terry Bridges (Planning/Zoning) 1 year; Dustin Bruce (Fire) 2 years; John Cartwright (Electric) 6 years; James Hagan (Fire) 1 year; Griffin Norris (Water/Sewer) 9 years; William Porter (Fire) 3 years; Dennis Ridges (Public Works) 1 year; Jordan Smith (Water Treatment) 5 years; Steven Wilkes (Utility Billing) 12 years; Ashton Williams (Electric) 1 year
 - B. **New Hires & Promotions**
New Hires Aaron Frazier – Meter Reader (Utility Billing)
Promotions- Robert Tryon – Sergeant (Detective Division/ Police); Tyler Smith – Detective (Police)

- C. **AMI Bennettsville -Joshua Brown-** Director Joshua Brown gave a presentation and update and shared the accomplishments and needs of AMI Bennettsville. Lastly, a young man who is set to graduate on Thursday delivered a speech regarding his progress at AMI.
 - D. **Bennettsville Police Department Recognition-** Acting Chief Crosland recognized two patrol officers for their quick thinking during a routine patrol, which saved a life during a time their presence was made.
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items Only)
None
7. SECOND READING AND PASSAGE IN FULL OF ORDINANCES
No Business
8. FIRST READING AND ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCES
No Business
9. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS
- A. **Fair Housing Resolution**
The City of Bennettsville rejects discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, disability, and/or familial status in the sale, rental, or provision of other housing services.

Approving Action: A motion to approve a resolution designating April 2025 as Fair Housing Month. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Scott. The motion passed unanimously.
 - B. **Safety Resolution**
The City of Bennettsville will support compliance with all Federal and State safety regulations; provide and require the use of personal protective equipment by all employees; and ensure that all employees are advised of and understand their loss control responsibilities in the performance of their work.

Approving Action: A motion to approve a safety resolution as presented. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Scott. The motion passed unanimously.
10. GENERAL BUSINESS DISPENSED BY MOTION
- A. **Real Estate Transaction**
The property located behind the Public Works Department, identified as parcel number #032-35-03-015 is available for purchase. The owner has been contacted, and who quoted a price of \$4,500.00 to the city. The acquisition of this property will allow for expansion of the public works grounds. The market appraisal is \$3,282.00.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Administrator to make an offer on the adjacent property in the amount of \$2,500.00 - \$5,000.00. Moved by Mr. Jennings. Seconded by Mr. Scott. The motion passed unanimously.

B. **AECOM Technical Services Agreement**

AECOM was selected by the panel to provide services for the city per the criteria of the awarded grant. The agreement defines the scope of work per the requirements of the grant.

Approving Action: A motion to approve the Administration to enter into an agreement with AECOM to provide services per the grant for the evaluation of the wastewater treatment plant & capital improvement plan. Moved by Mr. Jennings. Seconded by Mr. Davis. The motion passed unanimously.

C. **Election Filing Fee Pro-Ration**

In cases of special elections where a candidate files for an unexpired term, the fee is currently not prorated. Proration calculation will divide the total fee by the total months of the term, and the candidate will be charged for the remaining number of months in the term.

Approving Action 1: A motion to refund a prorated fee for the three candidates that have filed for Special Election in District 5. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Scott. 3-1, the motion passed.

3 approved: Mr. Davis, Mayor Abraham, and Mr. Scott.

1 opposed: Mr. Jennings.

Approving Action 2: A motion to approve the proration of filing fees in cases of candidates filing to run for unexpired terms. Moved by Mr. Jennings. Seconded by Mr. Davis.

11. **PUBLIC COMMENTS (Non-Agenda Items Only)**

Besty Canty- Concerns about her utility bills and why they doubled from the past.

John Bostic- Concerns about the increase in his utility bills in the last three months.

Pamela Best- She mentioned that the situation with stray dogs and cats has not improved. She read a statement explaining why she feels she shouldn't attend meetings regarding her concerns, citing City Ordinances. Taking matters into her own hands, she has begun catching stray cats and bringing them home. She invited council members to join her one day to observe her daily activities with the stray animals.

12. **BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

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** (Chairman Jennings)-Two successful meetings have taken place, and the Finance Committee has put in a significant amount of hard work. The financial reports included in the packets were excellent. More progress will be made in the upcoming year. Jennings remarked, "Very good things are happening; we just need to see it through to the end."

B. **Public Services Committee** (Mayor Abraham)-Working on Ordinances.

- C. **Public Safety Committee** (Chairman Taylor)-Mayor Abraham indicated that there has not been a meeting since the previous one. (Taylor was not in attendance).
- D. **Lake Authority** (No Updates)

14. REPORTS AND INFORMATION PRESENTATION

- A. **Bennettsville Lofts - Ownership Change (Update)**
The Bennettsville Downtown Lofts wish to change ownership. The project has two mortgages with the city and must get permission from the city to make the transaction. The Administration has forwarded this information to the city attorney for review and to assist with modifications to the agreement requested by the city.
- B. **Affordable Housing Development (Update)**
Woda Cooper is in the process of completing their application to the state and has asked for supporting documentation from the City. A decision will be made in September or October (if there is no delay).
- C. **Finance Report & Audit Report** (Sam Sparkman)- Gave an overview of city finances. He stated that the finances are in good shape. According to budget projections, revenues and departmental expenditures are aligned as expected. Lastly, the auditor will present the 2003-2024 audit report for financials at the next City Council meeting.
- D. **Grants Report** (Rachel Williams)- Gave an update on grant information:
 - SCIP, Lake Wallace Area Sewer was started on January 27th.
 - SCIP, Contract 5: Lake Wallace Area Water Upgrades has gone to bid on March 7th
 - Downtown Mural Project – Blank Canvas Mural Company is completing a new mural downtown. We met with the artist, Adam Schrimmer, last Monday at Marlboro County High School to facilitate a focus group with the students to get their input on concept ideas. We expect to have conceptual designs from Adam by Monday at the latest.
 - WWTP and CIP, an engineering firm, have been selected, and contracts are being reviewed to move forward
 - We have multiple infrastructure projects in progress, as well as new grant applications being finalized for our public works department, police department, and fire department.
 - Accepting applications for the Disaster Assistance Program for eligible homeowners
- E. **Upcoming Events** (Jaharra Graves)-She thanked AMI Kids for all they do for the City, along with other organizations from the Marlboro County High School. Their work doesn't go unnoticed, we are very appreciative of everything they do. An upcoming city event (Community Clean-Up) will be held on Saturday, March 22, 2025, from 9 am to 12 pm.

15. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL AND CITY ADMINISTRATOR

- A. Citizens Follow-up (Update)
- B. Lake/Dam/Crooked Creek (Update)
- C. Utility Bills & Meter Reading

16. NON-AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

Mr. Davis- Thanked all employees for their hard work. He feels optimistic about the progress the city is making. Everyone is beginning to come together in agreement. He expressed gratitude to the council for their collaborative efforts in getting things done. Lastly, he thanked the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) and all representatives and officials for their help in cleaning out the creeks on McLeod Street. He is pleased with all that is happening.

Mr. Jennings- The 2025 Palmetto Heroes Program was mentioned, which honors educators, first responders, and community service personnel across various fields, as well as active-duty military members, SC Army National Guard, SC Air National Guard, and veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. This program recognizes dedicated community service personnel who provide essential support to their communities. Its goal is to empower homeowners and contribute to the growth of South Carolina communities. Additionally, he noted that the budget worksheets are very easy to understand.

Mr. Scott- Stated, "It touched my heart when the gentleman stated that he made a change right here in Bennettsville. That's good for the community when we can help someone." Also, he thanked all the employees for their contributions to the improvement of the city. When he asks questions, it's not to belittle anyone; rather, he asks because he genuinely wants to know, and he appreciates receiving the correct information afterward. He expressed his gratitude to Mr. Simon for hosting the retreat for the council and the community, and he also thanked Jaharra for organizing events for the community. Additionally, he acknowledged the various agencies that participated in the cleanup of the creek and the Richardson Park area, commending them for their excellent work. He concluded by saying, "The good Lord has blessed us and the City of Bennettsville."

Mayor Abraham- The mayor thanked the Council, Mr. Simon, and the staff for their efforts. He emphasized that the administration is dedicated to moving forward and demonstrating to citizens that we care about the community. He concluded by reading a heartfelt letter of appreciation to everyone, highlighting that without the citizens, there would be no Council. He expressed his gratitude to everyone for their support, especially to the citizens. Thank you all for everything!

17. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 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.