



**REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
6:30 P.M., Tuesday, April 18, 2023
Bennettsville Public Safety Complex**

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER Mayor Prince
2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Tyrone Davis
3. ROLL CALL
All City Council Members and City Attorney are in attendance.

Mayor Prince entertained a motion to add Resolution Item 9B to the Agenda. PeeDee COG has asked City of Bennettsville to approve a Resolution on behalf of 7 counties that make up PeeDee COG. They received the information late, and it's due tomorrow. If it's not submitted, we will not be receiving anymore FEMA Assistance for National Disasters. Moved by Mr. Abraham. Seconded by Mr. Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

4. APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES
 - A. Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, March 21, 2023-Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Scott. Motion passed unanimously.
5. PUBLIC REQUESTS/ PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
 - A. Employee Anniversaries-Elaine German, Police, 13 years; Kevin Miller, Police, 6 years; Michael Coit, Public Works, 1 year
 - B. Annual Anniversaries-None
 - C. Wendy Woods-PeeDee Coalition- Stated that April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Child Abuse Prevention Month. She went on saying that every 68 seconds someone is sexually assaulted. To be aware in our community. She mentioned a Women's Self-Defense Class that will take place on Saturday, April 29 at the First United Methodist Church, which starts at 9am. Lastly, she thanked the City of Bennettsville Council for always supporting Niya's Lemonade Stand for Child Abuse for the month of April. She thanked the Mayor and Council for coming out to support and ended her comments with "Good things that are happening in Bennettsville and Marlboro County." Mayor Prince added that the Police and Fire Department always show up and out for support, as well and wrote a check for a donation. Wendy left information on the table for the public.
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Neal Fair- stated that he would speak from his seat because he doesn't see very well. He stated he came down to the Police Department one day last week to get some information, since there is a Freedom of Information Act. He was sent to City Hall. He would like Max and attorney to check and see why he has to go through so much to get what he need. He felt like someone should have written the information down for him, since he doesn't see well. He is a taxpayer, and he needs to know how to get the information he need.

Pamela Best- stated she is piggyback on what Neal Fair stated about getting records of her past interaction with the city and 911 calls. She has been to the police several times about her concerns, as well as every Animal Control officer. Ms. Best stated that she has email, and text everybody that she needed to. "I have been coming here, June will be two years. I think I've missed three meetings." Lastly, she was told that she needed to file a formal complaint and she did that to the Assistant Administrator. She read an email that was sent to her from Angela Ward. The email is attached.

Kristin Miller- Stated that she was in attendance because she's a concern citizen, mother of 2 boys. Who has been living in the city for 6 years. She stated there are a lot of good things and a lot of division. She asked that the council support the citizens and the town. "United we stand, Divided we fall" she went on stating that we can't help the color of our skin, but she can help the way she treat people, show love and compassion. She wants to see solutions and she's not being

negative or condescending. There are a lot of grants and collaborations out there.

Rachel McDonald- stated that she was a resident and a small business owner and a professional journalist reporting back to the South Carolina Press Association and a number of Carolina Independent Media. She went on saying that several months ago the City Administrator announced his retirement, and this council was tasked to find a suitable replacement. “At the March 21 City Council session, this body discussed applications they received. The general conscientious from that meeting was that in two weeks, on April 11th you would all need to screen applications in a Workshop. The Administrator was asked if he would entertain the remaining in his position until a suitable qualified replacement.” She stated, “Three days later, an emergency session was called where half of the city council could attend, and no quote emergency was never communicated to the public. The meeting was held regardless, effectively disfranchising half of this community. Why? The only reasons in my personal opinion can be politics over power. Over objections, interviews were held at the same time public employees ultimately refused citizens entry to this very building lobby and threaten those citizens with police action.” Next, she stated that, “One member of this body engaged in open conspiracy to limit reporting of these proceedings to the public which is a violation of the Freedom of Information Act South Carolina, Chapter 30-4-70A one through group six and that same person illegally demanded that all citizens and police, “vacate this building.” “The officers who supported the right competing to assemble have since faced retaliation by members of this body. These abuses of power have been cataloged. Disenfranchisement, retaliation, prevention of an accurate public record from being reported, blocking citizens from peaceful assembly. This room is not the political property of anyone in this city. It is the property of the citizens of this city. These meetings are not your meetings, these meetings are the meetings of the people of this city. Not some of the people, but all of us.” Lastly, she ended saying, “We all demand real transparency, equal access and equal rights in how our community is managed. Thank You.”

7. SECOND READING AND PASSAGE IN FULL OF ORDINANCES

- A. An Ordinance Adopting the FY 2023-2024 Budget- Included in the packet are the proposed Annual Budget documents for FY 2023-2024 including the Budget Overview, Ordinances, Department O & M requests, Business and Hospitality Funds, and 5 Year Capital Plans. 1st reading was approved on March 21, 2023, and a Public Hearing held at 6:00PM on April 18, 2023. No changes have been made since First Reading approval.

Approving Action: A motion to approve 2nd Reading of an Ordinance Adopting the FY 2023-2024 Budget. Moved by Mr. Abraham. Seconded by Mr. Scott. Motion passed unanimously.

8. FIRST READING AND ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCES

- A. An Ordinance Conveying 102/104 W. Main Street- Included in the packet is an Ordinance to convey property located at 102/104 West Main to Kendricks Douglas for an amount not to exceed \$20,001.00. At the Regular Meeting on March 21, 2023, city council approved “a motion to award a bid to Kendricks Douglas for \$20,001.00 for his purchase of 102/104 West Main Street and authorization staff to prepare the Ordinance to convey the property.

Approving Action- A motion to approve 1st Reading of an Ordinance to convey property located at 102/104 West Main to Kendricks Douglas for an amount not to exceed \$20,001.00. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Abraham. Ms. Weaver and Ms. Quick abstain. Mr. Taylor, Mr. Scott, Mr. Davis, Mayor Prince and Mr. Abraham voted in favor. Motion carried.

- B. An Ordinance Amending the Current Business License Ordinance- - Included in the packet is an Agenda item from the Finance Director requesting approval of an Ordinance and related documents to amend the current business license ordinance. Christy Overstreet will review the item.

Approving Action- A motion to approve 1st reading of an Ordinance Amending the current Business License Ordinance and related documents. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Ms. Weaver. Motion passed unanimously.

- C. An Ordinance Amending the Hospitality Tax Ordinance- Included in the packet is an Agenda item from the Finance Director requesting approval of an Ordinance Amending the Hospitality Tax Ordinance. Christy Overstreet reviewed the item.

Approving Action- A motion to approve 1st reading of an Ordinance Amending the Hospitality Tax Ordinance. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Scott. Motion passed unanimously.

9. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS

- A. Fair Housing Resolution - Included in the packet is an Agenda item from Angela Ward requesting approval of a Fair Housing Resolution. Angela will review the details.

Approving Action- A motion approving the Fair Housing Resolution. Moved by Ms. Weaver. Seconded by Mr. Scott. Motion passed unanimously.

- B. PeeDee Regional Council of Government- There are 7 counties that make up PeeDee COG, Dillon, Marlboro, Chesterfield, Marion, Florence, and Darlington. They received the information late, and its due tomorrow. If it's not submitted, they will not be receiving anymore FEMA Assistance for National Disasters.

Approving Action- A motion approving the Resolution for the Adoption of the Updated Hazard Mitigation Plan for the PeeDee Region of South Carolina. Moved by Mr. Abraham. Seconded by Mr. Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

10. GENERAL BUSINESS DISPENSED BY MOTION

- A. Knuckle Boom Truck Purchase-Bill Parrish- Included in the packet is an Agenda item from Bill Parrish requesting additional funding to purchase a Knuckle Boom Truck. Bill will review the request.

Approving Action-A motion to Authorize the Administrator to provide the additional \$10,000.00 assuming it's coming from contingency. Mr. Alderman stated that this is one of the many projects included in the 5-year lease purchases, because of a delay and in a couple months, the city will be asking for a reimbursement for that purchase from the lease purchase. Mr. Alderman spoke with the bond attorney today and he'll have on the Agenda in May a Resolution to council that will say, we are asking for reimbursement of these items because, it's a document that will need to be taken to the bank to get reimbursed for items such as this, before the lease purchase. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Ms. Weaver. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Quick stated he deserves whatever. Two Knuckle trucks. We need it. I mean, the citizens pay for the service. So, you have to have the equipment.

- B. Public Works Employees Salary Increase- During April 11, 2023, Workshop Council Member Abraham requested the council to consider salary increases for the Public Works employees. As requested by City Council in April 2022, a developed proposal for a pay increase of \$2.00/hour for Public Works. The council discussed the proposal in Executive Session at the May 17, 2022, Regular Meeting and no action was taken. If the council desires to again consider a raise for the Public Works Department, update the previous spreadsheet and present it at the May Regular Meeting.

Approving Action-A motion to authorize a recommendation to give a \$2.00 increase like you said to the hourly employees and a pay upgrade for the equipment, Maintenance Supervisor. Excluding the Director and Assistant Director. Moved by Mr. Abraham. Seconded by Mr. Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Taylor suggest that it would be take across the board minimum wage. Raise it like \$14 or \$15 an hour, so that nobody is making a certain amount. Making \$14 to \$15 no matter where they start, that way nobody working with the city will be making less than \$14-\$15 an hour. Mr. Alderman said he would bring it back to the May meeting. Mr. Alderman asked, Mrs. Ward if any employees were under minimum wage? She replied, no.

- C. Mobile Home Ordinance- - During the Workshop on April 11, 2023, Council Member Scott requested the City Council consider Amending the Mobile Home Ordinance to allow Mobile homes within the City limits. In March 2021 the motion to "Reinstate the Mobile Home Test Area and Authorization for staff to prepare the Ordinance." The motion failed. If the council is again considering this, the same motion would be needed to prepare the Ordinance.

Approving Action- A motion to authorize the Administrator and have staff provide information for allowing mobile homes with the requirements for necessary setbacks. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. Abraham. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Scott stated that the original Ordinance was not for the city. It was for an area in my District 6, Burchill down to Court St. He believe that was kind of what was in the way of getting passed. It was not for the entire city. It was just for that area, but not said for the city. What the citizens in his area was saying, that where they live at, on the Mill Farm area, they

haven't had a new home constructed in that area for over 30 years and they have abandoned houses that have been torn down this year and now have overgrown lots. The citizens would like to know if they could put mobile homes there. It would look better than looking at those eye soars. The people in the community have no trouble with that and they would have certain restrictions.

Mr. Alderman stated that if council wants to approve a motion requesting the staff to prepare a draft Ordinance to accomplish that and then we can put that in.

Mayor Prince stated that looking back some of the documents from before, the Ordinance was referring to a test area or part of the same that is referred to a mobile home park. So, there was some confusion about the Ordinance. Mayor Prince wants to make sure that we're looking at the test area where it just has some mobile homes, not a mobile home park. Lastly, Mr. Scott stated that it is unfair for them to have property that they can't put more mobile homes on, and you force them to maybe go somewhere else.

Ms. Weaver wanted to know exactly what a mobile home test area is? Mr. Alderman replied, "Back in the day, we had a test area, where mobile homes were allowed in that particular area, for whatever reason that was ended." He think it was side ordinance they had back at that time, for mobile home parks, but that was outside of a test area and then we came along and developed an Ordinance that had a lot of requirements." Lastly, he suggest that council authorized the first step and then work through all the details as to request the staff to prepare an Ordinance to allow mobile homes with certain requirements and then we can first do a draft of the Ordinance and change it as you desire and bring back all the information for you. Ms. Weaver added that she would rather put a mobile home on a lot, than see people living in storage units.

- D. Police Department's Recruitment and Incentives Plan- Included in the packet is an Agenda item from Chief Miller requesting, "Approval of the revised Bennettsville Police Department's Recruitment and Incentives Plan. Chief Miller will review his request.

Approving Action- A motion to authorize Approval of the revised Bennettsville Police Department's Recruitment and Incentives Plan. Moved by Ms. Weaver. Seconded by Mr. Scott. Motion passed unanimously.

11. REPORTS AND INFORMATION PRESENTATION

Mr. Alderman stated there will be a zoom meeting at 5PM on Wednesday, May 3, 2023, at the Public Safety Complex to discuss the details of the Redistricting Plan.

Mr. Alderman received an email from Nancy with the Buy-out Program that read, "There's not much news to report for the Bennettsville Buy-out today. Again, hoping to complete the environmental review shortly and move forward with the appraisals."

12. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL AND CITY ADMINISTRATOR

A. Executive Session to Discuss City Administrator Interviews- Mayor Prince entertained a motion to go into Executive Session, to discuss the City Administrator interviews. She asked all, with the exception of City Administrator, Assistant Administrator and Attorney to vacate the building for Executive Session, if there is not enough room in the lobby. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Abraham. Vote was unanimously to exit Executive Session.

13. NON-AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

Reconvene From Executive Session Mr. Davis moved. Mr. Scott seconded. Vote was unanimous. Mayor Prince entertained a motion to authorize the Assistant Administrator to send City Council and Mayor all other applications that we have not received until today April 18, 2023. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Ms. Quick. Motion passed unanimously.

14. POSSIBLE ACTION ON MATTERS DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Prince entertained a motion to authorize the Assistant Administrator to send City Council and Mayor all other applications that have not been received until today April, 18, 2023. Moved by Mr. Davis. seconded by Ms. Quick. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Prince entertained a motion to close advertisement on all forms of media the City Administrator position, as of today, April 18, 2023. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. Abraham. Approved 7-1, with Mr. Taylor voting No, to close advertisements on all forms for the Administrator positions effective today, Tuesday, April 18, 2023.

Mayor Prince entertained a motion to schedule a Special Called Meeting, 5 PM on April 25, 2023, to review the applications that were asked for previously. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. Abraham. Motion passed unanimously.

15. NON-AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

Ms. Weaver added that everyone try to be in attendance that day, but if you can't please let somebody else know.

Mr. Taylor stated that he is the only council member with a small child, and they have met five nights in 30 days, and he has "missed a lot of time with his child and I don't mind doing my job, but we need to do it properly and consistently if that's not being followed, then I have a problem with that and that's all I'm going to say. My child is involved in things, and we should be able to manage this a little better."

Mayor Prince stated that things were clarified, and that they agree to make sure they are doing things positively. Unfortunately, this month has been full of meetings and hopefully they can get some things ironed out.

Mr. Davis agreed with Mr. Taylor about being fair but doing it in decent order works out all the time. Mayor Prince ended by saying she understood that Mr. Taylor has a small child, but others have other obligations, as well. "Moving forward, we are going to be on point."

Mayor Prince entertained a motion to go into Executive Session to receive legal advice regarding a Freedom of Information request. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. Abraham. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor stated that "we are asking the public, media, employees and everyone to leave this room with the exception of Council, Administrative Assistant, Administrator and Legal Attorney.

Exiting Executive Session, Ms. Weaver moved. Mr. Scott seconded. Vote was unanimous.

Lastly, Ms. Weaver thanked everybody for working together and having a productive meeting although it was long. We should continue to work together as a team.

16. ADJOURN

Mayor Prince

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.