



**REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
6:30 P.M., Tuesday, April 19, 2022
Bennettsville Public Safety Complex**

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER Mayor Prince
2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Gregory Scott

3. ROLL CALL

All council members are present with the exception of Jean Quick. Shortly after, Ms. Quick entered the meeting.

Mayor Prince suggested that city council amend the April 19, 2022, Regular Meeting to move item 12B, “The Executive Session” up to 5C, to receive legal advice because the legal advice that we expect to receive from Counsel may be related to some of the items on the agenda. So, it’s best to have that information before we go forward.

Mayor Prince entertained a motion to amend the April 19, 2022, Regular Meeting Agenda to move item 12B, “The Executive Session” up to 5C. Moved by Mrs. Weaver. Seconded by Mr. Taylor.

4. APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

A. Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, March 15, 2022, 6:30 PM– Mr. Davis made a motion to approve the Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, March 15, 2022, 6:30 PM minutes. Mr. Taylor seconded the motion. Ms. Quick entered during the Approval/Correction of Minutes.

5. PUBLIC REQUESTS/ PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

A. Employee Anniversaries- Mr. Alderman stated the Employee Anniversaries for the month of April is Kevin Miller, Police, 5 years. Mayor Prince thanked him for his services, and he was awarded a check and a resolution.

B. Annual Employee Anniversaries- Mr. Alderman stated the annual employee anniversaries for the month of April are Heather Hair, Finance, 21 years; Elaine German, Police Department, 12 years.

C. Executive Session to Receive Legal Advice- Mayor Prince stated she will entertain a motion to go into Executive Session to Receive Legal Advice. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Ms. Weaver. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Prince stated let the record show Mr. Taylor moved and Mr. Scott seconded with a unanimous vote to come out of Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Prince stated she wanted to make a motion to add an item to the agenda under 5C. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mr. Taylor. The motion passed unanimously.

At this point, Mayor Prince added the item to entertain a motion to approve engagement of Mr. Robert Milhous to perform The Hospitality Tax Fund Analysis as detailed in his proposal, dated April 11, 2022. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Mr. Davis. The motion passed unanimously.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ron King- A former Economic Development Director and a community citizen who’s concerned with the city’s use of Hospitality tax. He read, “while serving as Economic Development Director, I was acutely aware of the importance of the image of Bennettsville as the county seat and the conditions of the entryways in the city and into the downtown are critical as to the impression that we give business, industrial prospects, as well as people, new residents coming into town. We would expect the tourism monies to be spent to improve the conditions so that more people come, more business come, and more industries are interested. It is apparent a lack of public investment in the entryways and in our downtown over the last 10 to 15 years. You can see that evidence with public neglect in the form of boarded up windows, collapsed roofs missing and torn awnings and a hodgepodge of trash receptacles, street furnishings, and lights. Particularly, alleyways that give business rear access to their buildings are disgraceful.” He went on comparing Bennettsville to Hartsville 15 to 20 years ago and how the two cities looked very similar, but today we don’t. Lastly, he stated “as a city council, you have a fiduciary responsibility for those people you serve and a

responsibility to spend the hospitality tax money in a way that's it's designated by state statute, and I would encourage all of you to continue with your efforts to have the audit done and then appropriately address whatever those findings are."

Wendy Woods- With the PeeDee Coalition on Marlboro St. stated they wanted to give awareness to April. It's Sexual Assault Awareness month and Child Abuse Prevention Month and they wanted to thank the City of Bennettsville for all that they do for the PeeDee Coalition and that the work is plentiful. They are located on 108 Parsonage St. for those who have domestic violence and sexual assault. She went on saying, that people come into their site from different walks of life and everybody who's in need they try to serve them as best as they can because EVERYBODY is SOMEBODY and at the end of the day, they want Marlboro Conty to know that they are here to serve them in those issues and to prevent family violence. Lastly, she added an event that will take place on Thursday at 2:00, Niya's Lemonade Stand which the City of Bennettsville supports.

7. SECOND READING AND PASSAGE IN FULL OF ORDINANCES

A. An Ordinance Rezoning 117 First Avenue- Included in the packet is an agenda item from Planning and Zoning with details of a request from Mr. Woodrow Blair to rezone property located at 117 First Avenue. The request and authorization for staff to prepare the rezoning ordinance was approved on February 15, 2022, and First Reading of the ordinance was approved on March 15, 2022.

Approving Action: Mayor Prince entertained a motion to approve Second Reading of Ordinance Rezoning 117 First Avenue. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Mr. Davis. The motion passed unanimously.

8. FIRST READING AND ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCES

A. An Ordinance Adopting the FY 2022-2023 Annual Budget- Included in the packet are the proposed Annual Budget documents for FY 2022-2023, including the Budget Overview Ordinance, Department O & M budgets Business and Hospitality Tax Funds and the 5-year Capital Plans. I will review the documents. Alderman stated that it is the same budget from March meeting, but there were some changes made based on the previous workshops. Mr. Alderman presented the details, reviewed the budget overview and related details for council.

Taylor had a comment "that he wanted the public to know that passing a budget doesn't mean it's a set and tone budget. We can come back at any time and make an amendment if we so choose to. Surpassing a budget tonight or anytime, taking a vote on it doesn't mean it's set and stone. With certain allegations that are being made, I find it necessary to do the audit/forensic audit as we have voted on tonight and if we decide to move forward with first reading and approve it, it is just that. It can be changed and if something is found, it will be amended and fixed. If not, then we can move forward, but at this time, it's my belief that people need to know that just because its done, if it is passed tonight, first reading, it is not set and stone. We can adjust it if we need to, and we will. Pending the findings of the forensic audit." Mayor Prince agreed and stated that Taylor was exactly right, and the budget has been amended since she has been on council.

Approving Action: Mayor Prince entertained a motion to approve the First Reading of An Ordinance Adopting the FY 2022-2023 Annual Budget Ordinance. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Mrs. Weaver. (3-3-1)

3 voted in favor, Mayor Prince, Mr. Taylor and Mrs. Weaver.

3 voted against- Mr. Scott, Mr. Davis and Ms. Quick

1 abstain- Mr. Abraham Attorney King stated the motion doesn't carry.

Mr. Taylor interjected and stated he wanted to make one clarification for the public that this proposed budget goes into effect anyway. Until we make a decision.

B. An Ordinance to Adopt Special Property Tax Assessment- Included in the packet is an agenda item from Planning and Zoning requesting approval of an Ordinance to adopt special property tax assessments for rehabilitated historic properties. Holly Swann will review the details.

Approving Action: Mayor Prince entertained a motion to approve First Reading of an Ordianance Adopting special tax assessments for rehabilitated historic properties. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Ms. Quick. The motion passed unanimously.

C. An Ordinance Providing for Fire Department Fees Cost Recovery- Included in the packet is an agenda item from Chief Burks requesting approval of an ordinance to allow "for the recovery of costs by fees from users of fire protection and emergency Medical Services." Chief Burks will review the details.

Approving Action: Mayor Prince entertained a motion to approve First Reading of an Ordinance providing for recovery of fire department service fees. Moved by Mr. Davis. Seconded by Mrs. Weaver. The motion passed unanimously.

9. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS

A. Fair Housing Resolution- Included in the packet is an agenda item from Holly Swann requesting a resolution authorizing the month of April Fair Housing month.

Approving Action: Mayor Prince entertained a motion to approve the Fair Housing Resolution. Moved by Mr. Scott. Seconded by Taylor. The motion passed unanimously.

10. GENERAL BUSINESS DISPENSED BY MOTION

A. Police Department Recruitment and Incentive Plan- Included in the packet is an agenda item from Chief Miller requesting approval of a "Recruitment and Incentive Plan Proposal." Chief Miller will review his request.

Approving Action: Mayor Prince entertained a motion to approve the Police Department Recruitment and Incentive Plan. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Ms. Quick. Mayor Prince abstains.

B. SRO Agreement- Included in the packet is an agenda item from Chief Miller requesting approval of an agreement with the Marlboro County School District for the Resource Officer Program. Chief Miller will review the item.

Approving Action: Mayor Prince entertained a motion to approve the School Resource Officer Agreement for years 2022-2027. Moved by Mrs. Weaver. Seconded by Ms. Quick. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Fire Department Ride-Along-Program- Included in the packet is an agenda item from Chief Burks requesting approval of the Fire Department Ride-Along- Program. Assistant Chief Sides will review the request.

Approving Action: Mayor Prince entertained a motion to approve the Fire Department Ride-Along-Program. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Mr. Davis. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Mandatory Mask Policy- Council member Weaver requested this item to be placed on the agenda to consider changes to the current mandatory face mask policy. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Weaver. (Mayor Prince, Mr. Abraham and Ms. Quick passed). The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Scott and Mr. Davis voted against.

Approving Action: Mayor Prince started the motion; Mr. Alderman interjected and entertained a motion to approve "not requiring mandatory wearing a mask in public and city buildings. Moved by Mr. Taylor. Seconded by Mrs. Weaver. It was approved 5-2.

3 voted in favor- Taylor, Weaver, mayor Prince, Quick and Abraham

2 voted against- Scott and Davis

E. ARPA Premium Pay- During the City Council Workshop on April 12, 2022, council member Abraham requested the city council consider providing additional \$1,500.00 ARPA Premium pay to all eligible employees.

Approving Action: Mayor Prince entertained a motion to approve an additional \$1500.00 ARPA payment to all previously eligible employees. Moved by Mr. Abraham. Seconded by Mr. Davis. The motion passed unanimously.

Councilman Abraham requested the city council to consider providing an additional \$1,500.00 premium pay for all eligible employees and Mayor Prince agreed with Abraham. Abraham stated, "we need to do this for our employees, since we do have the money that can be used for that particular area. I think we really need to look at \$1,500.00 for each employee." Mr. Alderman added for your information, the cost is, and we can certainly use the ARPA funds for the additional premium pay for employees and the cost is about two hundred six thousand dollars and this will not affect the cost of living. Mayor Prince interjected and stated it was a one-time bonus. The motion was moved by Mr. Abraham. Seconded by Mr. Davis. The motion passed unanimously.

11. REPORTS AND INFORMATION PRESENTATION

A. Storm Water Study Update-Holly Swann- stated we received unofficial notification

from South Carolina Emergency Manage Department that the FEMA go Rick Building Resilience Infrastructure Communities Grant has been past. Everything is looking promising and as soon as we are able to get that going the engineers will begin working. This is for the Storm Water Study.

B. SCOR Buyout Update-Holly Swann-stated we will be having our town hall kick off meeting on April 28, 2022 @ the Community Center @6:00 PM. Every property owner was notified by mail.

C. Animal Control- Chief Miller - Chief Miller has requested to be included on the agenda to “update members of the council (information only) regarding the upcoming retirement of the current Animal Services Officer.” Chief Miller stated that the current Animal Control Officer will retire on June 16, 2022. We need to explore our options on hiring another officer if that.

D. SCDOT/COB Commercial Vehicle Project-Chief Miller- Chief Miller updated members of council (information only) regarding the upcoming plan by SCDOT to add/change truck route signs throughout the City of Bennettsville, in hopes of reducing complaints, traffic issues, and potential damage to streets and property.

12. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL AND CITY ADMINISTRATOR

A. FY 2022-2023 Budget Adoption Calendar, Public Hearing-6:00PM, April 26, 2022, 2nd Reading Special Meeting, 6:30 PM, April 26, 2022.

13. NON-AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

Mr. Abraham still feel as if the Public Works Department needs to get a pay increase because they do beyond their job duties. Mayor Prince suggested that an incentive be offered to Public Works, as well. Lastly, he thanked Jaharra Graves for the “Food Truck Friday.”

Ms. Quick had nothing to say.

Mr. Davis had nothing to say.

Mrs. Weaver told Fire Department “Good Job” for receiving

Mr. Scott thanked all city employees for their hard work and dedication. He mentioned one of his citizens in District 6, Ms. Eula Mae Prince celebrated her 91st birthday and Mr. Murray retired with 55 years of service from one of our local industries.

Mr. Taylor thanked all city employees for their hard.

14. 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.