REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, September 15, 2026; 6:30 P.M.
Bennettsville Public Safety Complex

Minutes (Corrections)

1. CALL TO ORDER — Mayor Tyron Abraham

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE — Tyrone Davis

3. ROLL CALL
All Council members were in attendance with the exception of Mr. Scott and Mr. McRae. McRae arrived at 6:34. Mr. Scott arrived at 6:35.

4. APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF MINUTES
Regular Council Meeting; Tuesday, August 18, 2026 – Mr. Jennings moved to accept the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting for Tuesday, August 18, 2026. Seconded by Mrs. Harpe. Motion passed.

5. PUBLIC REQUESTS/ PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
   A. **Anniversaries**- Mrs. Ward recognized all the September Anniversaries as follows: Patricia Bethea (Finance) 10 yrs; Jessica Champman (Public Works) 4 yrs; Amber Hendrix (Police) 10 yrs; Jo Ann Jackson (Water Plant) 4 yrs; Audra Johnson (Public Works) 11 yrs; Maddox Perdue (Fire) 1 yr; Christy Quick (Water Plant) 7yrs; Megan Robinson (Finance) 2 yrs; Amani Sinkler (Electric) 3 yrs; Ethan Smith (Water Treatment Plant) 1 yr.
   B. **New Hires-**Ricky Clark (Public Works), Tristan Rivers (Fire), Vickie Dees (Utility Billing)

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
Catherine Foust-Expressed concerns regarding the Marlboro County Humane Society contract and urged the council to address the root causes of the local animal crisis, such as irresponsible breeding and lack of spaying/neutering.
Pamela Best- Emphasized the need for better animal control and highlighted the dangers of neglected animals in the community. She argued that the Humane Society is overwhelmed by a continuous cycle of abandoned animals that cannot be solved through transport alone.
Rocky, Brown- Raised concerns about financial transparency, noting that recent check registers use invoice numbers instead of clear descriptions. Mr. Brown requested better

documentation for grant updates to be attached to meeting minutes. He also questioned specific credit card charges, including potentially fraudulent Facebook expenses, and promised to submit Freedom of Information Act requests.

7. SECOND READING AND PASSAGE IN FULL OF ORDINANCES

A. **Administrator's Duties** (Ordinance #26-07-005)
The City Council wishes to formally establish duties for the City Administrator.

Approving Action: Mayor Abraham entertained a motion to accept the Administrator's duties, including taking out Item C and also adding and taking out (14) consecutive days, but adding 90 days. Seconded by Mr. Jennings. Motion passed unanimously.

B. **Equipment Purchase Agreement (**Ordinance #26-08-001)
The City Council wishes to purchase large equipment to sustain services for the City of Bennettsville. The set premium was approved during the budget process, which was set not to exceed an annual payment of $200K.

Approving Action: Mayor Abraham entertained a motion to approve the Ordinance for the purchase of large equipment to sustain services. Mr. Davis moved. Seconded by Mr. Scott. Motion passed.

In favor: Ms. Weaver, Mr. Davis, Mrs. Harpe, Mayor Abraham, Mr. Jennings, and Mr. Scott.
Opposed: Mr. McRae. His dissent is "It's too loosely written. Not specific enough.

8. FIRST READING AND ADVERTISEMENT OF ORDINANCES
No Business

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. **Center Street Housing Project Ground Lease Amendment-**
The Planning Commission has recommended a 15- year extension of the ground lease for the Center Street Housing Project. The developers made a request to amend the lease to the Planning Commission based on consultation with their lender. The next step in the process is to submit a full set of plans for review by the Planning Commission.

Approving Action: Mr. McRae made a motion to approve the amendment to the lease agreement with the WODA Company. Seconded by Mr. Scott. Motion passed.

In favor: Mr. Davis, Mayor Abraham, Mr. Jennings, Mr. McRae, and Mr. Scott.
Opposed: Ms. Weaver and Mrs. Harpe

B. **Environmental Policy Innovation Agreement**
EPIC will provide management assistance, contractor oversight, and limited funding to support an Alternatives Analysis for drinking water sources and assist

with funding applications related to the implementation of preferred alternatives. These services are provided by EPIC at no cost.

Approving Action: Mayor Abraham entertained a motion to approve the Administrator to enter into an agreement with the Environmental Policy Innovation Center. Moved by Mr. Jennings. Seconded by Mr. McRae. Motion passed unanimously.

10. OLD BUSINESS

No Business

11. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

A. **Planning Commission** (No Cases)
B. **Board of Architectural Review/Tree Committee** (No Cases)
C. **Board of Zoning Appeals** (No Cases)

12. COUNCIL COMMITTEES

A. **Finance Committee** (Chairperson Jennings)- Requested a meeting to address recent price increases and catch up on several months of pending business. The council discussed various dates and eventually settled on Tuesday, September 22nd, at 5:30 PM to address recent budget changes. There are no problems. They did not meet in the month of August.
B. **Public Services Committee** (Chairperson Harpe)- They have not met since the last Council Meeting.
C. **Public Safety Committee** (Chairperson McRae)- They met and they are trying to ease down on all of the meetings. Hopefully they will meet in October.

13. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL AND CITY ADMINISTRATOR

A. **Administrator's Report-** Mr. Simon reported that the city is winding down its SCIIP Grant Construction Projects and creating punch lists for final repairs. The administration plans to launch a campaign to encourage citizens to utilize budget billing for their utility accounts. Discussion was held regarding making budget billing assessments more accessible through Community Center sessions or online forms.

Infrastructure and Road Maintenance

Discussion arose regarding the immediate need for Public Works to fill potholes on West Main, Jennings, and downtown areas. Recent road projects involve only patching rather than complete repaving in certain sections. Mr. Simon explained that current contracts are strict and do not permit unauthorized changes to the scope of work, such as full repaving.

Project Updates

Mr. Simon provided updates on several active projects, including the Community Center, Fire Department remodel, Livingston, Henrietta, Jordan, and McKellar Street. The Fire Department remodel will focus on creating proper living quarters, office space, bathrooms, and kitchen facilities for firefighters.

B. **Humane Society Contract Renewal (executed)**- Mr. McRae feels there is significant confusion over which version of the Humane Society contract was officially approved by the council during the April 2, 2026, meeting. He raised concerns regarding a contract dispute with the Humane Society, noting that a version was presented for signature that did not match what was previously discussed. He mentioned the Humane Society president sent an email stating they would request the removal of all city animals and cease accepting shelter animals if the agreement was not signed by Tuesday, September 8, 2026. Mr. McRae acknowledged that the current situation with the Humane Society is a temporary "band-aid" and requires a long-term solution.

Mr. McRae states, “I'm just concerned with the contract that we have with the Humane Society. We entered into. All right, this is the contract that was discussed at our last workshop. Okay, want everybody to see this because I think some people forgot that we discussed this one, and um, but that's not the one that we had. We entered into We entered into one that was like this. Now, I will admit the Humane Society president did send us a copy of it. It was hard for some people to open it. Uh, and I'm willing to say that all council people didn't receive it because the emails that they were sent to are not the emails that council that some council people use. However, after this letter the other day said, Mr. Simon, this is the agreement that city council voted to approve as submitted on April 2nd, 2026, which it is not. I am leaving it for your signature. If the if the agreement isn't signed by a city official by close of business today, Tuesday, September 8th,2026, we will request that the city remove all city animals from our shelter, and we will no longer accept any animals from the city. We are prepared to go to court regarding this matter if we have to. This is the bare-minimum contract. Okay. We were supposed to be meeting and discussing and working on a new contract. That's what this is for. This is what we were go This is the one that we were basing on. We talked about this originally, and this is the one that we go vote on. This even has some handwriting from some of the people that was at the meeting. I just don't understand it. So, did we long story short to bring us back to Long story short, already passed. Long story short is it still my time?
So, like I was saying is, so we had this we had that contract. So, they voted at the meeting to enter into the contract, the one that we discussed at the workshop.
Well, maybe I wasn't there, or maybe I missed something, but I really don't think that I did. And we get this email, and the administrator sends us an email saying, "Oh, well, all right. You know, I got this. I got this." Oh, this is the email that he sent. He sent it to Mr. King and telling him, "Hey, this is what's going
on. I just got this. I just received this uh email and I don't know what to do. Well, some council people say enter in and enter into that one. And all I'm saying is enter into the one that we didn't discuss, per se. All I'm saying is how can you get someone to enter into a contract? How can you get your employees to enter into something that has not been brought or been discussed with council? I just don't think that's right. And we sit up here, and we do all this that we do now. If the administrator took it upon itself and entered into something that was discussed differently from council, we'll be right now we'll be going into executive session to try to terminate and that's just the reality. But when we do it and we make them do it, everything is all fine. I just think it's a double standard and all I'm asking is for council to do this thing the right way and enter into this contract the right way

because entering into it the right way is not by is by entering into the contract that is being discussed before the public body.

It's not right. And I think that many of us even know it's not right, but we still want to be content with it. What's good for the goose should be good for the gander. We need to be fair and transparent. And not only when it comes to people that we know and stuff.

Now I got some people, some friends and things like that. And guess what? If they have a situation, I don't look at them. I don't look at the situation being towards them. if that makes sense. I look at the principle of the situation. That's why a lot of times some people get mad up here, and they think I'm wishy-washy. They call me wishy-washy and things like that. But the reality is, I look at the principle of the situation and if it was right, if it was if it was done the right way and this was not done the right way. And we know it, and you can deny it all you want to, but we are losing credibility over a few dollars, and I just think that we need to kind of re-evaluate this thing. Yes, ma'am. Thank you."

Mrs. Harpe clarified that the Council had previously voted to approve the original contract submitted by the Humane Society on April 2, 2026. A debate ensued regarding whether the version presented for signing was the same as the one approved during the April meeting.

C. **Wallace Water Contract Update Recommendation-**No Report
D. **Finance Report-**No Report
E. **Grants Report-**No Report
F. **Upcoming Events Report**-No Report

14. MARLBORO COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY CONTRACT (Executive Session)
No Business

15. NON-AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCIL

Ms. Weaver- Requested a written incident report regarding the fuel tank replacement that occurred on February 25th, noting that a previous request made to Mr. Simon on September 4th was not fulfilled. Additionally, she requested that minutes from Special Meetings be provided to the council, though Mr. Simon clarified that Workshops do not typically have minutes; they will provide documentation from Special Meetings.

Mr. Davis-Thanked Mr. Simon for all the hard work he does along with his staff, and all other workers and department heads. As he said before, "Together we stand, divided, we fall."

Mrs. Harpe- Inquired about two checks totaling $64,264 issued to Chris Azar on May 7th, asking if these were related to mortgages on properties on Marlboro Main Street. Mr. Simon confirmed they were related to the mortgage. She requested a copy of the mortgage agreement and asked when the council voted to enter into those mortgages. Mr. Simon noted the information is recorded in the Deed's office but could not provide immediate details on the vote.

Mayor Abraham- Thanked everyone who came out and supported the 24-hour prayer at the Courthouse. Special thanks to Pastor Ore and his wife. The community pastors came together as well as church members and youth, as they read scriptures and did prayers. The mayor stated, "What's funny is the people that don't live in Marlboro County

are commending us, but a lot of people that live in Marlboro County is doubting us. So, let's change that. Let's work together."

I want council to be considering the cost of living for our employees. They haven't had one in I don't know how long. He ended by saying, "If we take care of our employees, our employees will make sure our citizens is taken care of."

Mr. Jennings- "I don't know about the roads in the downtown area. I know getting on a complaint, I mean there's nothing else we need to start petition on state roads; at least start petitioning to the state to do it in the next budget."

Mr. McRae- He acknowledged recent maintenance work performed by Mr. Genwright regarding potholes and sidewalk vegetation. Next, he asked that Council try to get a goal- setting session for October and have Mr. Barrineau go over parliamentary procedures during a Workshop, so that Council knows how to talk in meetings.

Mr. Scott- No Comment.

16. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting ended at 9:16 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.