

BARNWELL COUNTY COUNCIL
November 13, 2018
Council Meeting Minutes

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, the news media was notified & notice was posted 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Barnwell County Council met for its regularly scheduled Council meeting on November 13, 2018 at 6 pm. Attending were Chairman Lowell Jowers Sr., Vice Chairman Ben Kinlaw, Councilman Harold Buckmon, Councilman Jerry Creech, Councilman Don Harper, Councilman Freddie Houston Sr., Councilman David Kenner, Administrator Tim Bennett, County Attorney JD Mosteller, and Clerk to Council Kim Futrell.

Also in attendance were Terri Smith, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, Kay Maxwell, Vice President of Marketing at the Southern Carolina Alliance, Steve Griffith, Chief Deputy with the Barnwell County Sheriff's Office, and Logan Anderson with the People Sentinel.

The meeting was called to order, the invocation and the pledge of allegiance were given and a quorum was declared. Vice Chairman Kinlaw moved to approve the agenda. Councilman Houston seconded the motion and it passed. Councilman Houston moved to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2018 Council meeting. Councilman Buckmon seconded the motion and it passed. Chairman Jowers welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for public comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Volunteer fireman Jamie Towne said he was unhappy with the EMS services in Barnwell. In the past year he had witnessed multiple instances in which the EMS had taken 30 minutes, and in some instances 45 minutes to an hour, to respond to a call. Hilda Fire Chief Thomas Sharpe detailed 3 instances in which EMS did not arrive at all, arrived lacking the proper equipment, or failed to do their job upon arrival. Chief Sharpe said the Hilda EMS Station had not been manned 3 days in October 2018 and that the Fire Commission had requested additional funding to replace fire trucks and add first responder supplies, but had not received additional funding. Barnwell Rural Chief Elmore said 2 mills had been taken from the fire departments years ago and the Fire Commission only had \$382,000 to operate 10 fire departments. EMS services received \$950,000 per year to operate 4 ambulances, most of the time. Bobby Smith said his wife had needed medical attention and he had been satisfied with the EMS response time but was concerned with the cost. Because Medshore was not in Blue Cross Blue Shield's network, he was left owing \$1,500.

UPDATES

Chamber of Commerce

Terri Smith said due to losing members and the inability to keep a part-time director, the Chamber of Commerce, now Southern Palmetto Regional Chamber, had moved toward regionalism joining forces with Allendale County. In the last year the membership had increased from 75 to 162 and was continuing to gain new members.

Southern Carolina Alliance

Kay Maxwell reviewed the regional quarterly activity through October 19th and provided SCA report detailing the numbers, projects, and jobs created, both in the region and in Barnwell.

Sheriff's Office

Chief Deputy Steve Griffith said the Sheriff's Office had met with the City and Towns to share the presentation given during the August 21st Council meeting and after viewing the presentation, the City and Towns had agreed to continue their support of the Drug and Gang Task Force Equipment Fund. The Sheriff's Office has been awarded \$58,018 from a JAG grant to purchase 12 new 800 megahertz radios. A \$15,000 Palmetto Pride grant, which would be used for litter control, is pending. Since January, the Central Dispatch had fielded 62,273 calls.

County Council Chairmanship

Vice Chairman Kinlaw said that he and Councilman Harper had been elected in 2016 and that per the rotational procedure in Council's Rules of Procedure, the chairmanship would have rolled to the 3rd District (Councilman Harper). However, because Councilman Harper was newly elected, the chairmanship had rolled to the 4th District (Councilman Jowers). Vice Chairman Kinlaw said he had been serving as Vice Chair since 2016 and that Councilman Harper did not object to the Chairmanship skipping District 3 and rotating to Vice Chairman Kinlaw's District (District 5). Vice Chairman Kinlaw said if District 3 were skipped, it could be another 12 years before it would have representation as the Council Chair. Attorney Mosteller said it was Council's Rules of Procedure, and the rotational process could be modified by a vote of Council. Councilman Harper confirmed that he had no

objections to District 3 being skipped and moved that Vice Chairman Kinlaw serve as Council Chair in 2019. The motion was seconded and it passed. Council agreed that Councilman Buckmon should serve as Vice Chair as he represented the next numerical District (District 6).

Proposed Pay Increase for Employees

Administrator Bennett reviewed the minutes from the May 31st Special Called Council meeting in which Council had approved the Option B pay raise contingent on receiving Pax Ice Storm reimbursement funds. Administrator Bennett said the Pax Ice Storm reimbursement funds had been received on October 9th and that staff would move forward with implementing the employee raises in January. There were no objections from Council.

Administrator's Report

Administrator Bennett reviewed the Courthouse renovation timeline from architect Meadors Inc. and said the project was within budget. Administrator Bennett said Council would be briefed in December on any asbestos found and how it would be handled. In January or February, Council would be briefed on the procurement process. After being vetted by Meadors Inc. and a County screening group, the recommendation of a general contractor would be brought before Council in July. Administrator Bennett said Building Inspector Michael Grubbs had passed a significant test in October and was studying for another major test which would make him if he passes it, a certified Building Official. Administrator Bennett praised Joyce Brooks in the Veterans Affairs office and volunteer Museum Director Barbara Harber for each of the events they had held to commemorate veterans. Administrator Bennett also praised Tim Freer and P.F. Beck at the Airport for hosting another annual Corvair College event.

Financial Report

Concerning Capital Project Sales Tax revenue, Administrator Bennett said the County would average \$1.6 million annually from the State and would be paying out \$1.2 million annually leaving a difference of \$360,000. The County borrowed \$8.8 million and would pay \$913,000 in interest. The County's total debt service was \$9.7 million which is where the County would total out. Administrator Bennett said the County had received a re-interpretation from Parker Poe that one project did not need to be completed before starting another. Attorney Ray Jones would be briefing Council in December on the CPST status, sequencing, borrowing capacity and potential interim funding for the SCA building. Administrator Bennett said he was working with Parker Poe on documenting the County's Financial Incentive Agreements and with an accountant regarding unfunded mandates. Administrator Bennett said, in an effort to bring about more flexibility and response time in reimbursing the County for money expended, the County Transportation Committee is looking into bringing the Road Building C-Fund checkbook from the SCDOT to the County. The CTC would be voting on this item in January and it would be a recommendation for Council. Administrator Bennett said he hoped to work with Bamberg County on a consolidated front to address the increases in costs for the medically indigent. Vice Chairman Kinlaw asked if the County was tracking where it should be on the CPST and Administrator Bennett confirmed and reviewed the steps taken when a payment request was received from the City and Towns. Administrator Bennett said that both he and Treasurer Megan Croft looked closely at payment requests submitted to verify they were related to the project and said that Treasurer Croft brought one payment request to his attention. In that particular instance, the Town had already contacted Parker Poe to confirm that it would be a permissible expenditure. Council agreed that because the County's projects were large and could possibly go over budget, it would be best to complete one project before moving to the next.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Boards and Commissions

Councilman Creech moved to appoint Claire M. Barnett (residing in District 3) to the Animal Shelter Board and Allen Jennings Owens (residing in District 5) to the Museum Board. Councilman Houston seconded the motion and it passed. Re-appointments were made for the following Boards and Commissions members, but their terms would not expire until April of 2019 (Per Ordinance 1999-139). Clerk to Council Futrell contacted the Councilmen representing these Districts and they indicated they would wait to re-appoint these Boards and Commissions members at the April 9, 2019 Council meeting in keeping with the Ordinance.

Generations Unlimited (At Large 1 & 2) – Janet Creighton and Edwin Felton
Library Board (District 7) – Jane Gray Hunter
Recycling Committee (District 7) – William Morris
Transportation Committee (District 7) – Chris J. Harrington
Transportation Committee (District 2) – Bishop George Burckhalter

Science/Tech. & Regulatory Matters

Vice Chairman Kinlaw said he had received an email from Rick Mcleod regarding a CNTA event being held on December 13th. Vice Chairman Kinlaw said he had asked for a breakdown of how Barnwell County would be impacted by the closing of the MOX facility and that he would be sharing that information with Council.

Judicial

Councilman Buckmon said the Judicial Committee had met twice and Administrator Bennett would be providing the details. Administrator Bennett said he would be addressing one of the items under Sheriff's Operations dealing with Personnel during Executive Session.

Services

Councilman Buckmon said recycling operations were up to speed but they had not yet received the containers that had been ordered. In June, 3 Rivers was going let the insurance lapse on the yard trucks and would be donating those to each County. Councilman Houston said on the Technology Board they learned that there had been a 50,000 ton shortage in waste this year in comparison to last year at the same time.

Personnel

Councilman Houston said each year Council had done something for the employees at Christmas, but he had not heard anything about it this year and wanted to know what was being done. Administrator Bennett said the County would be doing the same thing as in the past.

NEW BUSINESS

Contract Dolly Digital Media

Administrator Bennett said he was bringing this matter before Council because he wanted his practice to be that Council authorize the Chair to sign contracts instead of the Administrator. This annual contract was with Dolly Digital Media to promote recycling and other Solid Waste activities on the outdoor digital billboard and was paid for through a 3 Rivers solid waste grant. Councilman Houston asked Administrator Bennett the reason he was bringing the contract before Council for the Chair to sign instead of the Administrator. Administrator Bennett said, unless Council agreed to authorize him to sign contracts up to a certain amount, he wanted it to be his practice to have the Chair sign contracts, Attorney Mosteller said he believed the threshold had been that the Administrator was authorized to sign contracts \$5,000 and under. Council's consensus was to continue this practice.

Museum Grant / Retroactive Approval

Administrator Bennett said it had been his practice at previous places of employment, to bring grant applications received from departments reporting to the Administrator to the governing body for approval. Councilman Houston said all grants, be it departments reporting to the Administrator or otherwise, needed to be approved by the Administrator because of potential liability to the County. Councilman Houston said grants applications from the Fire Departments, JAG, etc. had a limited timeframe and Council only met once a month. Administrator Bennett said he would handle smaller grants for the Fire Department and Law Enforcement, but he would feel more comfortable if the larger grants such as the CDBG, USDA etc were brought before Council. Chairman Jowers said he felt that it should be handled at the Administrator's level. Administrator Bennett said he would be glad to shoulder it, but wanted to go on record that he did lay it out before Council and that either way, Council would be fully informed. Councilman Houston said Council wanted to be informed, but did not need to make all the calls and did not need to be involved in the day to day operations. Councilman Houston said Council's consensus on the contracts was \$5,000 and under so if something was above that, Administrator Bennett should bring it before Council. Councilman Kenner asked Administrator Bennett to keep Council informed and if it were a larger grant that needed to be approved by Council, a Special Called meeting could be held.

Mutual Aid Agreement Snow and Ice Agreement

Administrator Bennett said he would handle this agenda item. Councilman Houston confirmed with Attorney Mosteller that mutual aid agreements needed to be approved by Council because they were outside the County. Councilman Houston moved to approve the Mutual Aid Snow and Ice Agreement. Councilman Creech seconded the motion and it passed.

A motion was made to enter into Executive Session. The motion was seconded and it passed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Potential Litigation and Contractual Matters Related to EMS Services

Discussion Related to Personnel Matters

Discussion Related to Settlement Negotiations Regarding the EDC Lawsuit

Pre-Contractual Matters Related to Legal Services RFQ

No action was taken in Executive Session.

A motion was made to adjourn. The motion was seconded and it passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:51 pm.



Kim A. Futrell, Clerk to Council


Charles Lowell Jowers Sr., Council Chairman