



**CITY/COUNTY CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2025 – 9:00 A.M.
CITY CENTER – 4TH FLOOR – PECAN ROOM
324 WEST EVANS STREET
FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Lethonia Barnes, City Council Committee Co-Chair
Chairman C. William Schofield, County Council Committee Co-Chair
Jerry W. Yarborough, Jr., County Council Committee Member
Reverend Waymon Mumford, County Council Committee Member
Bryan A. Braddock, City Council Committee Member
J. Lawrence Smith, II, City Council Committee Member

ALSO PRESENT

Scotty Davis, City Manager
Kevin Yokim, County Administrator
Casey Moore, Municipal Clerk
Greg Robinson, CEO – Florence County Economic Development Partnership

MEDIA PRESENT

Abby Ann Ramsey with the Post and Courier and Curtis Graham with WBTW News Channel 13 were present for the meeting.

Notice of the City/County Conference Committee meeting was posted in the lobby of the City Center and provided to the media informing them of the date, location and time of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Barnes called the February 5, 2025 meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

INVOCATION

Councilman Mumford gave the invocation for the meeting. The pledge of allegiance to the American Flag followed the invocation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Schofield made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2024 meeting of the Conference Committee and Councilman Smith seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.



CAPITAL PROJECT SALES TAX

Mayor Barnes said the community is looking to both Councils to address safety, infrastructure and quality of life. She asked the committee to begin considering ways to partner and address these issues with Capital Project Sales Tax (CPST) monies. Chairman Schofield suggested that the city designate its portion of funds from CPST towards water quality and let the county make up the gap on roads. Mayor Barnes shared concerns on roads in the city not receiving priority under this arrangement.

Mr. Kevin Yokim, County Administrator, said the county has already been looking at CPST IV projections, which will be completed in November 2027, and it is anticipated funds will range from \$200-210 million. Preparations for the referendum will begin in the next 1-2 years and a commission will be formed to review county and city proposals to be included on the referendum. Mr. Yokim said it is not too early for the city to start looking at what roads they would like paved.

Mayor Barnes said they need to consider the growth and expansion of Florence. Chairman Schofield agreed and referenced a new 900 home development in the city occurring along Hoffmeyer Road into Darlington County and spoke on the need to widen the road from Ebenezer Road to the Darlington County line. While the state has indicated their desire to help with this project, it is important for the city and county to be proactive.

Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager, referenced the CPST III in which the city requested \$80 million in funding and received only \$40 million. He said approximately 60% of the CPST dollars are generated inside the City of Florence. Mr. Davis said infrastructure is critically important, but it is also important to look at what comes with growth such as additional fire and police coverage and sanitation routes. The city doesn't realize the monies from growth or annexation for several years after homes are built. The city may need to consider CPST funds for additional fire stations, police districts, sanitation trucks, et cetera.

Mayor Barnes asked Mr. Davis to explain the importance of the placement of fire stations. Mr. Davis said each fire station has a service area for which they provide. The city has an ISO rating of 1, the lowest and best rating for insurance companies, and allows citizens of the city to have much lower insurance rates. In order to maintain the ISO rating, the city will need to build new fire stations as growth occurs.

Chairman Schofield said the city and county, in several instances, have constructed fire stations within close proximity of each other and they should communicate so this doesn't continue to occur. The county is currently considering property along Freedom Boulevard for an additional fire station and is also considering adding another EMS facility near the AESC plant to accommodate growth on the eastern side of Florence. Mayor Barnes inquired on the possibility of a shared facility to house both city and county fire departments to help lower costs and asked if the city would also need a new fire station to accommodate growth to the east. Mr. Davis responded yes; the anticipated growth would necessitate an additional fire station in the future,



CITY/COUNTY CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MINUTES – FEBRUARY 5, 2025

but the location needs to make sure city residents are protected and an ISO rating of 1 is able to be maintained.

DOUGHNUT HOLES/LED LIGHTING

Chairman Schofield said the doughnut hole areas in Florence are neglected in terms of street lighting. He proposed a partnership between the city and county to light up the doughnut holes and suggested starting with strategic areas such as South Cashua Drive. Mayor Barnes shared concerns on areas that need more lighting for safety reasons and stated safety should be a priority.

Mayor Barnes asked Mr. Davis how much the city currently pays for streetlights in the city and Mr. Davis responded the city currently pays over \$1 million per year in streetlights. Mr. Davis discussed several benefits to both residents and businesses that annex into or are located in the city, one of which is the benefit of streetlights. The benefits provided to properties located in the city are funded from property taxes, business license fees, et cetera. What is currently being proposed is that the city will provide a benefit to a county resident or business that they are not paying for, and the city could be subject to some legal challenges. Chairman Schofield expressed his desire for the city and county to work together and said all doughnut holes will eventually be in the city. Mayor Barnes said doughnut holes are a problem and it's important to keep the issue in front of state legislators. Councilman Braddock asked if an audit of the doughnut holes could be completed. Mr. Yokim said he can get GIS maps for the group.

There was further discussion on South Cashua Drive and which properties are located in the city or county. Chairman Schofield suggested the city add streetlighting from Second Loop Road to Celebration Boulevard. He said the city invested significant money on streetscaping and streetlighting on Celebration Boulevard and the path there should be lit up as well.

Mayor Barnes asked if the county has any streetlights. Mr. Yokim said they have some but not as many as the city. Councilman Smith referenced the South Cashua Drive proposed streetlight project and asked if Duke Energy is able to bill the city for lights located on city property and bill the county for lights located on county property. Chairman Schofield said he wants to find out how much the project would cost and Councilman Braddock agreed. Mr. Davis and Mr. Yokim agreed to begin working on the study.

There was discussion on the ownership of the Memorial Stadium property. Mr. Davis clarified that the property is owned by the Memorial Stadium Commission. A number of years ago, the property was deeded to the commission jointly by the city and county. The deed includes a reversionary clause that states the property may return to the city if the commission does not use it for recreational purposes. Mr. Davis said the school district had a long-term lease on the property, but they are no longer have a need for the property. Mr. Davis said he has been working with the chair of the commission for over a year to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to locate a group to manage the property.



CITY/COUNTY CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MINUTES – FEBRUARY 5, 2025

GREG ROBINSON – GUN RANGE UPDATE

Mr. Greg Robinson, CEO, Florence County Economic Development Partnership, provided an update on a potential gun range economic development project, the Pee Dee Marksmanship Academy. He said the county owns a closed landfill property located on a major thoroughfare that offers a lot of opportunity to be repurposed. Mr. Robinson referenced a gun range in Talladega, Alabama that was created through the Civilians Marksmanship Program (CMP) and said it is a good example to replicate or partner with. Mr. Robinson spoke of the potential partnership and inquired on what the partnership looks like regarding accommodations and funding mechanisms. The idea is to set the program up so that it becomes self-sufficient after the initial investment of seed money. Mr. Robinson asked the city and county what they are willing to assist towards this project so that he can develop a white paper to present to CMP.

Chairman Schofield asked how much has already been spent and Mr. Robinson said approximately \$75,000 has already been spent on this project in analysis, architects, and professional services.

Councilman Smith spoke of officer safety, saying this would give officers around the region a place to train and asked the City Manager to explore this partnership.

Mayor Barnes spoke of concerns due to guns being a controversial issue and said this project should be marketed to address everyone's concerns.

WATER UPDATE

Mr. Davis presented each member of the Committee with a booklet on the Frank E. Willis Pee Dee River Regional Water Treatment Plant. (A copy of this booklet is attached to and made a part of these minutes.) The booklet was originally prepared for a Media and Industry Day at the water treatment plant to give participants a behind the scenes look at the plant and answer any questions.

Mr. Davis said the city operates a dual-source system comprised of groundwater and surface water. The surface water treatment plant treats water from the Pee Dee River and has a capacity of 10 million gallons per day. The city has a total of 14 groundwater treatment plants with water being delivered from 33 wells. Mr. Davis spoke of improvements that have been made to the system. The city has recently brought several groundwater plants back on-line that were off-line for various reasons to include the Oakdale plant and East Florence plant. Additionally, repairs have been made to several wells to include the Harmony Street well, Lucas Street well and the Gulley Branch well. Technology within the utility has also made improvements. Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) has been added to a number of facilities and/or equipment to include the South Florence Water Plant and the Redbud Water Tank. SCADA can provide real time data to staff in order to make necessary adjustments immediately. The city has also upgraded lines and worked to loop dead-end lines which can contribute to discolored water.



**CITY/COUNTY CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES – FEBRUARY 5, 2025**

Funding has already been secured to add additional SCADA to the system to include the remaining eleven elevated tanks and the Alligator Road groundwater plant and to add seven pressure monitors added throughout the system for leak detection. The city is also embarking on an iron monitor beta testing project that is able to monitor iron levels in the water.

Councilman Braddock spoke of federal funding opportunities for joint projects between the city and county, such as extending water lines into the county. Projects could be favorable if they are submitted collectively.

ADJOURN

Without objection, the February 5, 2025 meeting of the City-County Conference Committee was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Lethonia Barnes", is positioned above the printed name.

Mayor Lethonia Barnes
City-County Conference Committee Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "C. William Schofield", is positioned above the printed name.

Chairman C. William Schofield
City-County Conference Committee Co-Chair