

**COMMITTEE OF THE FLORENCE COUNTY COUNCIL ON
JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY MEETING, THURSDAY, APRIL 20,
2023, IMMEDIATELY AFTER REGULAR COUNTY COUNCIL
MEETING, COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM, ROOM 804,
COUNTY COMPLEX, FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jason M. Springs, (Council District 1), Committee Chairman
Roger M. Poston, (Council District 2), Committee Member
Jerry W. Yarborough, Jr., (Council District 4), Committee Member

ALSO PRESENT:

Kevin Yokim, County Administrator
D. Malloy McEachin, Jr., County Attorney
Samuel K. Brockington, Jr., Fire/Rescue Services Coordinator
Chief John Delung, Windy Hill Fire Department
Chief Billy Dillon, Howe Springs Fire Department
Chief Howard Worrell, West Florence Fire Department
Chief Jeff Dennis, Sardis-Timmonsville Fire Department
Chief D. M. Floyd, Olanta Fire Department
James Goff, Finance Director
Hope M. Jones, Clerk to Council

Copies of the meeting Agenda were posted in the lobby of the County Complex, and provided to the media and others requesting copies of meeting agendas, provided to the Florence County Library for posting at the main library as well as all branches, and on the County website at www.florenceco.org/council in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act requirements for notice of meetings.

Committee Chairman Springs called the meeting to order at 11:18 A.M. Councilman Poston provided the invocation and Councilman Yarborough led the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag. Chairman Springs welcomed everyone that was in attendance.

MINUTES APPROVAL

Councilman Poston made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2023, Committee meeting. Councilman Yarborough seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

TRANSFER OF DEEDS:

Mr. Sam Brockington stated the deeds were approved for West Florence and Howe Springs. All of Johnsonville Fire Department's property is already in Florence County's name. Chief Delung will sign the deeds for Windy Hill today and it includes the two sites with cell towers.

Mr. Malloy McEachin gave an update on the Windy Hill property. He received confirmation from the tower company that they will not invoke their first right of refusal of the property transfer to the County. That does not mean the County will sell it for value later on, and the County may. The company sent paperwork to me to send back to them for transferring the title into the County's name.

CONTRACT DISCUSSION:

Chairman Springs mentioned the change in the contract term of one year. Personally, he thinks the committee needs to look at a two-year contract as they review the Consultant Study of the Unified Fire District. It will coincide with that.

Chairman Springs said that there were spelling and formatting errors in the contract. On line three titled "Capital Expenditures", the second sentence states: "All expenditures will be authorized by the Administrator and Fire/Rescue Coordinator." Is it supposed to say "all or capital" expenditures? Mr. Yokim responded that it is "capital." Chairman Springs stated let's have it reflect "capital".

Paragraph five talks about the cooperation of the contractor and lists some duties and the roles of the advisory committee and the Fire Coordinator. Chairman Springs needed clarification if these are the roles of both, the roles of them individually, or if it is the role of the Fire Coordinator. Councilman Yarborough agreed with Chairman Springs on the clarification of the roles. Chairman Springs stated he believes that the duties need to be listed separately for each.

Chairman Springs continued, in paragraph eight, the last words are cut-off. Are there supposed to be more words or was it the end of the sentence? Mr. Yokim stated he will have to go back and review.

Chairman Springs stated that in item twelve, the word "fire department" should be changed to "contractor." Section 13.11 says "The county will provide an SCBA fit test." He asked if the County owned a machine. The County does have one. The Emergency Management Department has it. Mr. Yokim stated that if any further changes need to be made to the contract please forward it to him or Mr. Brockington. After the revisions, a revised copy will be sent to the chiefs.

SHORT/ LONG-RANGE GOALS

Chairman Springs stated that this is a starting point and we need to move forward to build on the groundwork you have laid. Chief Dillon suggested providing an updated document

with footnotes for when a Justice & Public Safety committee is scheduled. Chief Dillon stated that he will send the document to Mr. Brockington and Mr. Brockington can disperse it to the Councilmembers.

NEW BUSINESS:

CONSULTANT STUDY OF UNIFIED FIRE DISTRICT:

Chairman Springs stated a study was done ten years ago. The consultants did it without the input of the chiefs. Chairman Springs wants to use the previous study and update it with the chiefs' input and the goals that they have developed. Chief Dillon stated we would be leery of using the same firm. The final product looked like a cut-and-paste job. He suggested before County puts it out for an RFP or bid that the chiefs and the Fire Coordinator have input on what needs to be in the study, so that the County will get the most out of the study for the cost.

Mr. Yokim met with the external auditors who made a presentation at the County Council meeting in March. Mr. Yokim stated that he wants to see two things come from the study. One, the goals referenced through consolidation. How do we go from seven to one? The second item, firefighters are not County employees. At what point, will they become County employees? A consultant that has been through it could help determine when this happens.

Chairman Springs stated that he is comfortable with the input from Mr. Yokim, Mr. Brockington, and the chiefs to develop a scope for the document and it will be something that can be used. Mr. Yokim stated that if the chiefs wanted to meet amongst themselves and give some points to Mr. Brockington, then in turn we would create a document before submitting it.

Mr. Brockington inserted that ESCI is owned by the International Fire Chiefs and is reputable. He stated he received a proposal to give to the chiefs. They are in the process of vendors making a presentation to the chiefs. Mr. Brockington's suggestion is to give them (the chiefs) scope of the project as it was originally proposed.

INSURANCE RFP

Chief Delung stated that his concern was the lease and insurance of the apparatuses. For them to have insurance on the vehicles, buildings, or property they have to be leasing the item. Mr. Yokim inquired about the insurance RFP that is in process now, is it covering the buildings and properties? Is the insurance policy between the County and carrier or the 501(c)(3) departments and the carrier? Chief Delung responded it is 501(c)(3). Chief Dillon interjected that everything is payable to Florence County. Mr. Yokim stated if the relationship is between the insurance company and the 501(c)(3) departments then there needs to be a lease.

Mr. McEachin asked to Chief Delung what was being insured? Chief Delung said that all inventory they previously owned (stations, fire trucks, property). Mr. Yokim stated the contract with the insurance company will be with the 501 (c)(3). In order for them to

have an insurable interest there needs to be a lease between the County and the 501(c)(3). Mr. Yokim stated the policy would either be with the 501(c)(3)'s or with the County because the Unified Fire District is not a legal entity. Mr. Yokim stated if there is one policy between the insurance company and the County there is not a need for a lease, but if there will be several separate policies between the insurance company and the 501(c)(3)s then there is a need for a lease. Chief Dillon stated the way the RFP is written it lists all departments. Mr. McEachin stated he believes the County has to be insured. Councilman Poston stated you cannot insure something that you do not own. Chief Dillon said that they are currently insuring Florence County vehicles through VFIS and the check is payable to Florence County, but if the non-profit goes away VFIS will not insure. VFIS is the largest insurance company for fire departments. Mr. McEachin asked Mr. Brockington to provide him with the underwriter's contact information. Mr. Brockington stated he has been working diligently knowing that there was a need for a contract and a lease because Florence County is the owner. Mr. Yokim stated it is insured by VFIS but do they have a valid legal insurable interest because the policy is with the 501(c)(3), but the property is owned by the County.

BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Mr. Yokim stated the current budget for Fund 37 is \$8 million and next year it will be \$8.3 million. The budget ordinance was introduced by title only at the Council meeting this morning and there will be a public hearing on the second reading. There are two things to consider: one is how to divide the additional \$300,000, second is to create a new department, Department 800, which will be non-departmental. It is to pull out items that are not operational (ex: vehicle maintenance, insurance). The chiefs can work with Mr. Brockington to figure out items deemed not operational and how much should come out of each department's budget to go into the new department. This information will need to be submitted before May 18.

Chief Delung asked what is the status of the recruitment and retention plan for the paid staff addressed last month? Chairman Springs stated that \$300,000 is available now and we are planning \$3,000 county-wide for employees. If we went in that direction, it would get you close to where you are. We have to see the \$300,000 that is available now, and where it works out in numbers. We lean on you to help us to see if we can take what we have and make it happen. Chief Delung stated that the chiefs were informed that they could not touch the money because it was already allocated. Chief Worrell said the Advisory Board has it earmarked for the volunteer incentive program replacing the money that was taken for the full-time employees to meet the COLA two years ago.

Chairman Springs asked the chiefs to work on the budget so that the committee may review and make decisions.

Chairman Springs revisited with Mr. McEachin in reference to the insurance. Mr. McEachin stated that the County does not have any of the Unified Fire District vehicles or buildings insured except for the building for the West Florence Fire Department.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Committee, Councilman Yarborough made a motion to adjourn. Councilman Poston seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:05 P. M.

Approved by the Committee at its meeting on May 18, 2023.


ATTEST: Hope M. Jones, Clerk to Council