

**MINUTES OF CALHOUN COUNTY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
March 27, 2023
5:30 P.M.**

Calhoun County Council held its regular meeting on Monday, March 27, 2023.

The following were present:

Chairman James E. Haigler, who presided
Vice-Chairman Ken Westbury
Councilwoman Rebecca Bonnette
Councilman Richard Carson
Councilman Cecil Thornton
Administrator John McLaughlin
Deputy Administrator Richard Hall
Clerk to Council Shayla Jenkins
Human Resources Director Brandy Roberson

The following press was notified of the meeting by mail, electronic mail, or by fax in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act: The Calhoun Times, The Times and Democrat, and Sandy Run News. An Agenda was also posted on Calhoun County's website calhouncounty.sc.gov.

Call to Order

Chairman Haigler called the meeting to order.

Invocation

Invocation was offered by Councilwoman Rebecca Bonnette. Chairman Haigler requested a moment of silence for the school shooting in Tennessee.

Approval of Agenda

Councilman Carson made the motion to approve March 27, 2023 meeting agenda as outlined and was seconded by Vice-Chairman Westbury. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments

Chairman Haigler made comments on efforts to fine tune the appropriate ordinance, and stated those commenting would be allowed five (5) minutes instead of three (3) minutes to speak.

Ron Chestnut commented on the vacancy for County Treasure, which is currently being filled by the Deputy Treasurer. He told that Council does not have the authority to preclude the Governor, and that a Special Election needed to be held. He asked who authorized the "circumvention of the Governor's Office."

Julian Wiles, Jr., resident of Fort Motte commented on proposed solar installations and told that his family was working on a lease for their property. He told that a properly managed solar farm can be productive, and highlighted the potential for tax revenue for the county.

Melody Pedings told that she was undecided on solar farms, but as a recreational beekeeper, she has in mind the dangers to come because of pesticides. Natural pollinators are being killed. She referenced the amount of water being used for irrigation systems and the implications for the future.

Luther Wannamaker commented that the moratorium was a great thing due to the issues surrounding them being complicated. He felt that it would be beneficial to come to a common, sensible solution by forming a committee.

Michael Moss has plans to potentially have a solar farm, and sees no problem with the moratorium. He does not see solar farms as a problem and spoke regarding financial implications for FILOT agreements and revenue in the county. He voiced concerns that taxpayers will have to pay.

Public Hearing

Chairman Haigler opened a Public Hearing on **Ordinance 2023-2** AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE IV, WITH RESPECT TO THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION. There were no questions or comments; therefore, the Hearing was closed.

Third Reading of Ordinance 2023-2. Councilman Thornton made a motion to pass Third Reading of Ordinance 2023-2, and seconded by Councilman Carson. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Haigler opened a Public Hearing on **Ordinance 2023-5** AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON APPLICATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSING FOR APPROVAL OF SOLAR PROJECTS OR FARMS OF MORE THAN ONE ACRE SOUGHT OUTSIDE OF INDUSTRIAL AREAS AND WITHIN THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF CALHOUN COUNTY; AND INVOKING APPLICATION OF THE PENDING ORDINANCE DOCTRINE.

The following comments were made:

- Richard Watkins, as a St. Matthews resident and Fort Motte landowner, told that he understood that additional solar installations are being contemplated and that this underscores the need for the moratorium. It seems prudent to allow time for planning and the county's comprehensive plan.
- Amanda McNulty spoke regarding solar being a part of the future and the implications for groundwater and that there would never be the option to replace water, so the topic was critical to discussions of the future.
- Administrator McLauchlin addressed changes to the language to provide clarification of initial approval and planning and zoning approval.
- Vice-Chairman Westbury told of his plans to vote no for Third Reading on the moratorium. He explained that he no longer had to abstain because of the passing of his family member

with interest in the solar farm. He no longer had a conflict of interest. He stated he did not want to take property rights from landowners and he has a personal interest.

The Hearing was closed.

Third Reading of Ordinance 2023-5. Councilman Thornton made a motion to pass Third Reading of Ordinance 2023-5, and was seconded by Councilwoman Bonnette. The motion passed with a 3-1 vote (Chairman Haigler, Councilman Thornton and Councilwoman Bonnette in favor; Vice-Chairman Westbury opposed; and Councilman Carson abstained).

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the March 13, 2023 regular meeting were presented for approval. Motion was made by Councilman Carson and seconded by Vice-Chairman Westbury to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Chairman Haigler reported that he and Vice-Chairman would be meeting to discuss changes to the ordinance outlining rules and procedures for Council. They have received input from Councilwoman Bonnette.

Appointments

Chairman Haigler is looking to make an appointment to the Lower Savannah Council of Governments Board.

Proclamations

None

Appearances

Dr. William Molnar of LSCOG gave a presentation and updates of the agency, and a PowerPoint copy was given to Council by the Clerk. He gave updates on the many programs and resources of LSCOG, highlighting individuals serving on behalf of Calhoun County, and the Council on Aging. He told that he is grateful of the support the county gives and Chairman Haigler and council thanked Dr. Molnar and the LSCOG staff.

Satidra Rivers spoke on behalf of Fredrick Rivers and told that the offer he submitted for land in the Houserwoods Subdivision has been wrongfully rejected. She gave history of the process and told that Mr. Rivers never received any restrictive covenants and cut trees on the property prior to closing. There have been several closing dates scheduled, but none have happened. She referenced the number of homes in the subdivision that are not compliant with the buffering rules of the covenants. Councilman Thornton asked for clarification of the Board being referred to and told Mrs. Rivers that council would look into the matter; Chairman Haigler reiterated that the issues would be discussed.

Resolutions

Resolution 4-2023 Resolution of Calhoun County Supporting the South Carolina American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission and Recognizing and Approving of the Calhoun County 250 Committee.

Winnie Rickenbaker appeared with Molly Fortune and Doug Doster. She spoke and gave background information on the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution. They are a part of the official Calhoun County 250 Committee.

Councilman Carson made a motion to approved Resolution 4-2023, and was seconded by Councilwoman Bonnette. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

None

New Business

Council gave approval to act as fiscal agent for Calhoun County 250 Committee, and Molly Fortune informed council of the grant opportunity and the funds being dispersed upfront if it goes through a city or county. Essentially, the county would be the “vehicle” to get the money, and Administrator McLaughlin told that the funds would go through Community Development. The motion to approve the County as the fiscal agent for Calhoun County 250 Committee was made by Vice Chairman Westbury and was seconded by Councilman Carson. The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinances

ORDINANCE 2023-3 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 30 OF THE CALHOUN COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES TO AMEND THE COMPOSITION, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND DUTIES OF THE GOVERNING BOARDS FOR THE CALHOUN COUNTY RURAL FIRE DISTRICT AND THE SANDY RUN FIRE DISTRICT; AND TO PROVIDE THAT THESE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS SHALL BE OPERATED AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION OF CALHOUN COUNTY; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING THERETO. was presented for **First Reading**. Vice-Chairman Westbury recognized Councilman Carson, Tris Waystack, Nick Stabler and the others who helped with ordinance drafts and gave input. Chairman Haigler thanked everyone involved for their input. Councilman Carson made a motion to pass First Reading of the Ordinance 2023-3. Vice-Chairman Westbury seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Administrator

Countywide Litter Pick-Up will be held on Thursday, April 20, 2023 from 9:00am – 12:00pm. The Purple Martin Festival will be held Friday, April 21 and Saturday, April 22, 2023.

Councilman Thornton provided clarification on the public comments section being in place to hear from citizens. He wanted to ensure the public was aware that Council was not ignoring statements

by the public during this portion of the agenda when and if there was a dialogue with citizens during the appearances portion of the agenda.

Chairman Haigler reiterated that this concern was an area being worked on in the ordinance in order to have guidelines and procedures.

Adjournment

Vice-Chairman Westbury made a motion to adjourn with seconding by Councilwoman Bonnette. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 6:44 p.m.



James E. Haigler, Chairman



Shayla C. Jenkins, Clerk to Council