

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

March 1, 2022

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

The Edgefield County Council held its regular meeting at 6:00 P.M. Tuesday, March 1, 2022, in the County Council Chambers, 225 Jeter Street, Edgefield, SC. Notice of this meeting was provided to The Edgefield Advertiser and others as requested.

Members Present

Dean Campbell, Chairman
Albert Talbert, Vice Chairman
Scott Cooper, Councilman
Tiffani Ireland, Councilwoman
Jackie Kennion, Councilwoman

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Others Present

Roger LeDuc, Administrator
Andrew Marine, County Attorney
Taz Potts, County Finance Director
Aretha Eubanks, Clerk to Council
Hart Clark, Building and Planning Director

Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. The invocation was given by Pastor Willie Patten of Republican Grove Baptist Church. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Campbell asked Council if there are changes To the agenda. Hearing none, Councilman Talbert made the motion to approve and Councilman Cooper seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

No minutes to approve.

Guest Speaker

Will Williams, Economic Development

Will Williams thanked the Chairman and Council. He said that Edgefield County has had a phenomenal year from an economic development standpoint.

He said that 2021 was an exciting year for economic development in Edgefield County. February 10 was the one-year anniversary of Generac’s historic announcement. Since that time, they have also announced an expansion. They began operations right after July 4th 2021 and currently have more than 750 employees on the payroll. They will begin adding an additional 200,000 square feet to the existing building later this year. This was an exciting project to be a part of and without the support of the five of you, this would not have been possible.

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Several improvement projects for the park are in process. One of those is updating the signage at the entrance. Bids have been accepted and completion is expected by the beginning of the third quarter of 2022. A grant from the SC Department of Commerce is helping the County complete the project. Generac Way is being extended by 600 feet. This project is being paid for by the CTC, the County and grants from Dominion Energy and AT&T. A 600-foot water line extension is also in process and is being paid for by a grant from the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority. Due Diligence in the park is also being updated. Having this is critical as we pursue other companies to locate here.

The remainder of our manufacturing entities continue to do well. Bondex has completed another expansion at their facility. Chairman Campbell and I will be going out next week to meet with existing plant managers. Maintaining good relationships and ensuring Edgefield County is remaining business friendly to facilitate more growth from these existing establishments.

EDP in partnership with the county are working with Retail Strategies to attract retail establishments to the county. Primarily, in the county created incentive zones located adjacent to the towns. But if locations not within those areas but within the county are chosen this will still benefit the county and citizens. After their initial due diligence period when they actually visited Edgefield County and looked at those incentive zones as well as traffic patterns etc, they attended a smaller version of the ICSC Show in Las Vegas back in December. They made contacts with several chain and franchise retail and restaurant groups. Because the citizens of Edgefield County really like small home-grown Mom and Pop type of establishments, they looked out 150 miles to towns of similar size to Edgefield, Johnston, and Trenton. They found small mom and pop businesses who were doing well and asked about the potential of them expanding their footprint to Edgefield County. Some weren't immediately interested but some said reach back out to them again in six months to a year. They recently had been in contact with some national retailers and regional and national restaurant brands. They are awaiting feedback from them. Like industrial recruitment, retail recruitment is a long game.

At the beginning of 2021 Edgefield County's unemployment rate was 4.51% (state average 5.3%) which translates into 480 unemployed citizens of the county. We finished 2021 at 2.8% state average 3.5%. This was 297 citizens unemployed. In January 2020 there were 320 unemployed Edgefield County residents. It peaked at 1,131 out of work in May of 2020. The last four months of 2021 the numbers unemployed were fairly consistent in the upper 200's. Antidotally I believe there are people that want to work but lack access to available and affordable childcare. This is something we plan to do a deeper dive on. I don't know what we can do about it, but once we have concrete data then we can move forward.

After Will Williams completed his report, Chairman Campbell asked if they have any questions for Will Williams.

Councilwoman Kennion asked when will the sign be ready for the industrial park. Mr. Williams said he needs to show the council a couple of pictures because the brick selected has a three-month delay. Otherwise, they are ready to go as soon as we make that decision on the color of the brick. He said it may happen in the summer.

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Chairman Campbell said that we certainly appreciate what you do for us and we credit you for working with Generac and others. Mr. Williams said that Council has given them the tools to continue to improve the industrial park.

Executive Session

Chairman Campbell stated that an executive session at the end of the meeting. But since we have Mr. Williams here now, we are going to ask Council to go into Executive Session. He asked Council for a motion to go into executive session for a contractual matter relating to the proposed location of an industry or other business in Edgefield County. Councilman Cooper made the motion and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously. Council exited for executive session.

Chairman Campbell said that Council returned from executive session back into public session and no action was taken in executive session.

Comments from the Public

Gloria Bynum began by apologizing for Mr. Lorenzo Williams and myself. We had planned to come to the meeting in January but his family was quarantined as well as myself. Mr. Williams asked me to come tonight to give Council an update. The project is beautiful and wonderful. Mr. Williams and I would like to get on the agenda for April to do a presentation to get your approval to continue to go ahead with the project, provide you the cost and present to you the artwork samples that we have done.

Chairman Campbell asked if Ms. Bynum would speak with Administrator LeDuc to get on the April agenda. With no other speakers, Chairman Campbell closed this part of the agenda.

Reports

Chairman Campbell asked if Council have any question or comments on the reports. There were none.

Consent Agenda

Chairman Campbell acknowledged that there are eleven appointments or reappointments. He asked Council is there anyone that we need to withdraw from the consent agenda tonight. Hearing none, Councilman Cooper made the motion to pass the consent agenda and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Hearing

Chairman Campbell opened the public hearing on ordinance to amend section 2-288 Edgefield County Code of Ordinance. Economic Development Committee. He asked if anyone wanted to speak on this ordinance. Hearing none, Chairman Campbell closed the public hearing.

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Old Business

1. Consideration of Approval of Third Reading of Ordinance 21-22-798, An ordinance to amend chapter 24 of the Edgefield County Code of Ordinances Quarries and Mines. Chairman Campbell stated that we have spoken about this a couple of times but asked Administrator LeDuc if there any further details. Administrator LeDuc said no. Chairman Campbell asked Council if they have any questions or comments. Hearing none, Councilwoman Ireland moved to approve ordinance 21-22-798. Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Consideration of approval of Second Reading of Ordinance 21-22-799 to amend Section 2-288 Edgefield County Code of Ordinance, Economic Development Committee. Chairman Campbell stated that we discussed the details of this last time. He asked if Administrator LeDuc if anything new we need to know about this ordinance. Administrator LeDuc said no. Chairman Campbell asked Council if they have any questions or comments on this ordinance.

Councilman Cooper said he had a comment. He stated I think this is a great idea and I really applaud the idea of having a municipality committee as well. The one suggestion I have is, since we reduced the number of Council members on the committee, we rotate that second individual every month. One of the other Council members would attend the meetings. This would be beneficial to rotate.

Chairman Campbell said he think this would be easy to do because we no longer have liaisons for the other committee meetings.

Councilman Cooper said he is not saying change anything on the ordinance. I'm saying we should take turns participating in that meeting.

Chairman Campbell asked, any for other comments or questions from Council. Hearing none, Councilwoman Kennion moved to give second reading to ordinance 21-22-799. Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

1. Consideration of Approval Resolution 21-22-1145, "Fair Housing Resolution".

Chairman Campbell asked Administrator LeDuc asked if he would walk us through anything related to this that we need to know.

Administrator LeDuc said this is a resolution that Council approves every year either in the month of March or April.

Chairman Campbell asked for a motion to approve ordinance 21-22-1145. Councilman Talbert made the motion and Councilwoman Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Consideration of Approval of First Reading of an Ordinance 21-22-780, "To Revise Special Tax Assessment allowing up to twenty years for investments over \$1 million."

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Chairman Campbell said we discussed this in some detail at the last meeting and now it is coming back to us as an ordinance. He asked Administrator LeDuc if he have would walk us through some of the details.

Administrator LeDuc said we discussed this at the last meeting concerning the Kendall Mill. At the last meeting, Council approved the designation of the property as historic, which allows them to go forward with the special tax assessment. At this time, they will need to work with the Edgefield Preservation Association. Mr. Max Shanks presides over that group. They will review the plans and ensure they meet the criteria for maintaining the historical nature of the property. Then, once the property is completely renovated, they will go back out, re-inspect and give a certification that they met all the initial criteria. When it is complete, I get that information and send to the Assessor who will re-evaluate the amount of taxes that are paid on the property. Council has already given everything needed to move it forward for the ten years reassessment. Now it's going back to the Edgefield Preservation Association. What we are discussing tonight is the State law allows up to twenty years for special tax assessment for historic properties. Our current ordinance does not allow beyond the ten-year period of time. If Council would like to grant the extra ten years they can do so. Aiken County had a very similar project at Enterprise Mill and granted the twenty years. Administrator LeDuc gave an example of the market value and how it changes. He continued that the first reading of the ordinance currently is for twenty years. I would like Council to discuss and consider under what considerations you would allow twenty years. Possibly a small project would not be granted twenty years. Also, between years eleven and twenty, would you like to stay at the initial fair market value. Or would you like to double or triple the amount of that value. Those are the two possible items that we would need some direction on before the second reading. Otherwise, if no action is taken, we may have a repeat as with the hotel in downtown Edgefield where the roof collapsed. We could argue and say why should we give that any incentive.

The Administrator stated that for every million dollars in investment, this equals six thousand dollars in taxes. We could gain one hundred and twenty new apartment each with one or two vehicles of which the county would gain vehicle taxes and revenue from franchises fees. The money that they would be spending locally with businesses in Edgefield or just outside of Edgefield doubles and triples for every dollar they spend. So, especially on existing buildings, we need to find ways to infill them. This ordinance would help make the difference. The bottom line is without this, there is less likelihood of that happening. I am encouraging you to approve the twenty years. I would recommend a million dollars as the minimum value and that you would double the fair market value between eleven and twenty that they would be taxed.

Chairman Campbell thanked Administrator LeDuc. Then he said to Council, there are three things we need to consider. One is twenty years of which state law allows. Second is the threshold for investment. He said I am a proponent of having a reasonable threshold because we want people to invest in Edgefield County. If it is too high, no one will invest in us. No investment equals no tax money for the County. Personally, I would like to see a million dollars, but I'm not stuck on it. I wouldn't go any lower but I don't know about going any higher because

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a million dollars spent on historic properties, there is just not that many of them. So, with that I will ask, is everybody okay with a million-dollar threshold?

No comments from Council were given.

Chairman Campbell: The last question is the doubling the value. Whatever we decide, we would be saying to somebody that at the value of the property for the first ten years was two million dollars. Then, it doubles to four million dollars in years eleven through twenty.

Administrator LeDuc commented that the reason we are talking about doubling is because that is what Aiken County approved. It's not that we are in competition but if I'm a developer and one county is giving me incentives and the other county does not there's more likelihood that they are going to invest in the county that offer better incentives.

Chairman Campbell asked the Council, how do you feel about doubling the investment?

Councilman Talbert: I do not have any problem with that.

Councilwoman Kennion: I really don't have a problem with it as long as, like you said, we do not go over the one million.

Councilman Cooper: Is this going to come back to us next month or when they do the project?

Administrator LeDuc: In this case, the purchase price from my understanding was at a million and a half. So, the first ten years they would be paying taxes based on the million and half dollars on the purchase.

Councilman Cooper: The purchase price not after investments?

Administrator LeDuc: Correct, therefore if the investment was twenty million, instead of being taxed on 21.5 million dollars, they would be taxed on one and a half million.

In 2020, you provided this incentive to the former Wells Fargo Building, their investment was under two hundred thousand dollars. Because their investment was under two hundred thousand dollars, they would only be able to apply for the first ten years. They would not have been able to apply for year eleven through twenty. If they had an investment at one and a half million dollars, we would take their purchase price, say it was three hundred thousand dollars, doubling it to six hundred thousand and they would be able to get that incentive because their threshold of investment or improvements would have been over one million dollars.

Chairman Campbell: Do we have other questions or comments from Council. He asked Attorney Marine if we just include what we just said in the motion or do we need to amend the ordinance.

Attorney Marine: Why don't you just pass this and then we will amend that. By the next reading I'll be able to have the language together.

Chairman Campbell asked that Council pass this tonight on first reading. We will get the amended language that will come in and we will amend it then based on what we just said.

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Councilman Talbert made a motion to give first reading to ordinance number 21-22-780. Councilwoman Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Consideration of Approval to add Assistant Administrator title and duties to an existing Edgefield County employee's duty.

Chairman Campbell said this is an important step for Edgefield County and called on the Administrator to explain.

Administrator LeDuc said you know that twice before when I was with the county, I asked Council to allow us to have an Assistant County Administrator. He discussed the year and persons of past Assistant County Administrators. He acknowledged that you have been kind to him that you allowed this to happen. He further continued the discussion pertaining to his current tenure and relationship with the County. But due to the work load with the county and two other towns within the county, I would like some relief. I would like to get down to 20 hours a week working but I can't do that unless there is someone I can turn to for help on certain projects or when we have an issue when I am not here. My schedule varies from week to week depending on what Council wants and what citizens ask. This would help me out a lot and also allow me to consider staying a little longer. I will be speaking with the Chairman and Vice Chairman about that in the near future. Edgefield County's agreement with me ends at the end of the month. If Council would be so kind to do this then I would be asking someone here to be our Assistant County Administrator and consider the position. I would like for you to vote on this before this position is offered.

Chairman Campbell asked Council is there a motion to add the Assistant County Administrator title and duty to an existing Edgefield County employee duty. Councilwoman Ireland made the motion and Councilman Cooper seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Administrator LeDuc offered the position to Hart Clark as Assistant County Administrator. I like to thank you for allowing this. I have already talked with Doc as well as most of you about this. I believe this is going to go a long way to moving the county forward. We have accomplished an awful lot in the last year. But there is still a lot more I would like to accomplish including the upcoming budgeting session. So, with that said, I will be around here for a little longer. Thank you for all for doing this and thank you Doc.

Chairman Campbell said to Doc, I am assuming you accept this position.

Position accepted by Hart Doc Clark.

4. Approval of bids for Stormwater Remediation.

Chairman said he will again ask the Administrator if he would like to talk about this work and these bids.

Administrator LeDuc said this is exciting. We have had a couple of roads washed out in the past couple of years due to the storm water pipes being inadequate and needing to be refurbished. By approving this, we will be removing 12 crossings and putting in new pipes. With these repairs.

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we should be in good standing for the next couple of decades. The County Transportation Committee was kind enough to pay for all engineering. Last year we committed to paying for this work with the American Recovery Plans Funds. The cost was estimated seven hundred and fifty thousand but we came under five hundred thousand dollars for the work. I am very happy about coming below the bid budget. I recommend Cherokee who resides in the Columbia area for four hundred and fifty-seven thousand four hundred twenty-two dollars. The next lowest was Tristar who is a local company. We have in our purchasing ordinance an incentive for local Edgefield County companies to receive the bid, but it was not enough to make a difference. This is something we will look at further in the future. If you approve this bid tonight, they will get started in the next thirty to sixty days.

Chairman Campbell asked Council if they have any comments or questions on this item. Hearing none, Councilman Talbert made a motion to approve the low bid of \$457,422 to do this stormwater remediation. Councilman Cooper seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Administrator LeDuc told Council that we have one final stormwater project that we are working on in the Barton Road area. It is right off of Brightharp Road near Bondex. This area floods on a frequent basis. We have a preliminary design but we have to talk to a couple of the homeowners downstream where the water would go to existing ponds. We would like to determine what it would cost to make improvements to their ponds. Once we have those details, we will go ahead and look at some designs and present them to Council. Thirty to forty percent of the water that goes into that basin comes off state highways. Because of this, we will present this issue to SCDOT and ask for some financial assistance. We believe this project will cost between a million to 1.2 million dollars. If we receive funding from the State, we will use our American Recovery Plan fund money for the rest. This should solve that problem and take care of the major areas that we have been discussing for many years. Fred Peterson was a frequent visitor who spoke about this area and the problems they were facing. We are looking forward to completing this work which should handle most if not all the major stormwater concerns in the county.

5. Approval to Purchase Stretchers and Ambulance for the Emergency Medical Service.

Chairman Campbell ask the Administrator LeDuc to address these two items.

Administrator LeDuc stated that two items are vitally important for the County and EMS. We recently purchased an ambulance in December that cost about \$250,000. We were able to get a demo model. Next week it will be in Myrtle Beach to show other people the latest and greatest ambulance. Edgefield County has not always had the latest and greatest to show off to anyone. However, we need to be forward thinking and purchase another ambulance due to the amount of time it takes to build a new one. It takes about 16 to 20 months to build an ambulance now. We would like to go ahead and order an ambulance that will not be delivered until year 2023. The payment will not be due until the ambulance is delivered. We have two ways to pay the cost for this ambulance. We could go back to the Hospital Board as we did before and ask them to purchase it. Or, we could use the American Recovery Plan Funds. We have about three million dollars available that we have not committed. The second item are stretchers. Stretchers have a

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long-life span but over time we became concerned about a breakdown of the stretchers and we certainly don't want to put anyone in danger of a stretcher breakdown due to weight capacity when being transported. The stretchers have gone beyond their normal lifespan. We have a price from Striker who provided our EMS equipment provider for ambulance stretchers. This is a sole source bid for these items. We could either go to the Hospital Board or use the American Recovery Plan Funds for this item because we will be purchasing these immediately. With your approval, I will be speaking with Sam Speight who is the Chairman of the Hospital Board for their help. He was very encouraging the last time we spoke and they unanimously approved the ambulance that we purchased in December. Tonight, we ask permission to purchase these items and then go to the Hospital Board to ask for their funding of the two items.

Chairman Campbell asked the Council if they have any questions or comments on this. Hearing none, Councilman Talbert made a motion to approve the purchase of the ambulance and stretchers for EMS, first speaking to the Hospital Board for that money. Councilman Talbert made a motion and Councilwoman Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Comments from the Public

Cathy Eckery of Sandy Springs Road in Trenton. I have done research on the Dubin and Guru group concerning the Kendall Mill. I have questions and concerns pertaining to this. Do you know if the Guru group will apply for Federal Preservation Tax Credit? It's twenty percent off of their investment money, but their stipulations are a hard thing to get approved according to what the government has put out about the Preservation Tax Credit. This applies to moderate to low-income housing. So, that raised an alarm with me because we have expressed the twenty-three-million-dollar renovation, but we have not gone into if this is going to have stipulations after it is developed. Will they then sell it to somebody that's going to an investor that will want to manage these 120 housing units? I know the Administrator seems to think that it's going to be upper end high quality housing units. But that is not always the case. Do we as a county able to control who can buy that property after Guru finishes developing it? I lived through the Jimmy Carter economics. My husband and I were just starting out and we know how tight the banks became and how high the interest rates became. I know how hard it was to do business, so if this project is going to devolve over a period of time into Section 8 Housing. The taxpayers are going to be responsible for that. If we are going to give up our twenty years of deferred tax income for this development, then we are going to be responsible for that. We got to do the fire, police, water and all the infrastructure things. The state will also have tax credits that are available. It was a very lean web page for Dubin Guru that contained a lot of pictures and very little up to date information or nothing current. All of this raised red flags pertaining to this company wanting to buy in our county. I understand something needs to be done since the roof is out of date but, if the country is looking at a depressed economic future and we have bitten off a lot of big projects for twenty-seven thousand citizens to have to be tax responsible for. I would like to know more about this particular project. Thank you.

John Gault of Sweetwater Creek Drive. I'm struggling here because I am torn. But I'd like to salute the Administrator LeDuc for his service because he could be somewhere on a beach with an umbrella and nice drink enjoying the waves, but instead he dedicates himself not only to this

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community but to other communities. Thank you for your service. The reason I am torn is because Council said we communicate with the constituents. I am a constituent and you don't communicate with me. Nobody communicates with me and I don't think this county has a way of communicating with the constituents. I think instead of spending a lot of money on a lot of things, maybe you need to figure out a way to communicate with the people. I see you guys up here voting on hundreds of thousands of dollars with very few questions and very little discussions. It's like monkey see, monkey do. It concerns me because you are doing business behind these doors that the public doesn't get to hear. I would like for you to be more transparent. I would like to know what is going on and hear some of these discussions and see exactly what is driving this train down this road because if I don't like the way this train is being driven as a public citizen of this county. Then I should have a right to say I disagree with this; I don't like this. Again, on your web page you guys claim to be leaders. I say, no sir, no ma'am. You are representatives of me, these people in this building and the people in Edgefield. We have a right to know what is going on behind closed doors and we don't want to be kept in the dark. And, I feel that is what's going on. We are being kept in the dark. I have seen you all sit up here and vote yes on zoning and rezoning when you knew the majority of the people said no. But you all voted yes anyway with no explanations of why you voted yes. You were given petitions of people who signed it saying no, with a few people that yes. I know for fact because I met one of them that said I'm pro-zoning or rezoning. You have this guy over here working for Economic Development but I've never seen anything come across my mail talking about economic development in Edgefield. I've moved here because it's a rural county, and I want it to stay a rural county. I don't want economic development even though I know it coming because it's been planned for. I'm not in agreement with dragging this into our community and changing the face of it. Thank you.

County Administrator's Report

No Comments

Comments by County Council Chairman

I have two comments tonight:

- 1) March 15, 6 p.m., Council Chambers: Budget Workshop. Is everyone OK with that date? I'll ask the Administrator and Clerk to ensure they contact all department heads and elected officials this week so they know we are meeting then. I want to ensure Council hears about any needs they think we are missing. We'll hear from the public, too.
- 2) We appreciate Doc Clark stepping up to be the Assistant Administrator, something we don't take lightly, and we also appreciate Roger LeDuc for being so willing to continue. These moves will help us move forward with expertise and institutional knowledge in all of our areas, which is a real plus for Edgefield County citizens.

Adjourn

County Council meeting adjourned at 7:16 PM

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Dean Campbell, Council Chairman

ATTEST



Aretha Eubanks, Clerk to Council