

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL RETREAT

January 10, 2023

5:00 PM

County Council Chambers

The Edgefield County Council held its Retreat at 5:00 P.M. Tuesday, January 10, 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
Tiffani Ireland, Councilwoman
Dr. Jackie Kennion, Councilwoman
Jerry Moody, Councilman

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Others Present

Roger LeDuc, Facilitator
David Caddell, Administrator
Aretha Eubanks, Clerk to Council
Hart Doc Clark, Building and Planning

Chairman Campbell called the retreat to order at 5:00 PM. The invocation was given by Administrator David Caddell.

Chairman Campbell: Most of you have not had the chance to participate in a County Council Retreat that leads to a Strategic Plan. So, I want to give you a quick, broad overview before I turn it over to Roger to lead us through it.

First, Roger is a very nice man, but he will move this process along. We have a lot to cover tonight, and we cannot get bogged down in one area. Remember, we are not here tonight to solve the issues that will come up. Tonight is about identifying a path forward on many topics that we all think are important.

Think of it this way: Tonight, is just the beginning, not the end. Between tonight's session and our joint meeting with the Planning Commission in two weeks, we will have given staff a good data set to put together a useful Strategic Plan.

A Strategic Plan that helps our staff and the public understand what our priorities are.

Also, I want to point out that a Strategic Plan doesn't cover and won't cover every possible thing we do or decision we can make. It generally covers the big items, the most impactful items for our citizens.

For example, if we decide economic development is a category to put into the Strategic Plan, we couldn't possibly put every element of economic development into it. But it would cover what we see today as the meaningful work we need to undertake in that area. But as new items come up in that area, we would certainly address them, no matter what the Strategic Plan says.

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We will also discuss in future meetings many items that are important and will be taken up as they arise but won't be in the Strategic Plan. For example, the Strategic Plan isn't going to say we need to appoint good people to our Boards and Commissions because we already know and do that as a routine matter.

Finally, I will add that we have had citizen input for over a month into this process that the Administrator has collected and will work into our plan at the appropriate places. He also received input from elected officials, department heads, and county employees as well. All the input and our discussion will produce a robust and comprehensive Strategic Plan.

Are there any questions about what I've discussed?

I will turn the floor over to Roger.

Discussion of projects for inclusion in the next Edgefield County Strategic Plan

Roger LeDuc: We are going to talk about nine broad topics which we will discuss tonight. Once we are through those nine topics, we will take a short break and resume the retreat. At the end of the retreat, I will have a list of all nine topics. I will ask you to vote on the order of importance from the nine topics so we can get a consensus.

The Administrator has 3 major roles.

1. Serve the citizens of the county by listening to their needs and helping to resolve their problems if possible.
2. Work with the staff and give them the tools they need to fulfill their jobs. This is critical.
3. Work with Council to build an agenda, resolve the larger issues, and serve the members of the Council's needs.

An Administrator can handle about three major issues a year as well as some minor ones. In 2021, we had three major issues. Those major issues were:

1. Moratoriums and Development
2. Comprehensive Plan and Zoning
3. Law Enforcement Center

Those were the three major issues we worked on in 2021, not including the minor ones such as

- Classification Study
- Sheriff Department salary increases
- EMS changes

By the end of the six-month period, there were not as many concerns in the county. Before then, there were some issues because citizens felt like they were not being heard.

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In 2022, we were faced with three major issues. Those issues were:

1. Redistricting
2. Law Enforcement Center
3. Animal Shelter

The minor concerns were:

- Hiring of an IT employee
- Completing the Classification Study
- Communications and Radios with towers

The Administrator does not do all these alone. He receives help from various departments, but the Administrator needs to make sure that these things are accomplished in a timely manner. That is why I am asking you to start looking at what topics you want to be accomplished in the next six to nine months. You will be able to get about three completed and a few other little issues done also. The top three topics will be what the Administrator will focus on to get completed.

Discussion Topics

Budgeting – It sets the foundation of what can get done in the county. Most departments are under what we call the General Fund. Other departments are under major fund sources such as the millage for EMS or the User Road Fee for the road crew. There are many others that use different funds for their departments. We had about \$88,000,000 in new development. Two years prior, it was \$59,000,000 in development. But when I look at the last four months of the year, they compared very favorably to 2020 and 2021. After speaking with Building and Planning Director Hart Clark, we see that trend probably continuing. When you take \$60,000,000 to \$70,000,000 of new development. That equates to 4% taxes. We have about 82 mills which equates to \$3,200 per million dollars. That is about \$200,000 of new revenue that we are bringing in because of the growth. That also adds up to a 2 ½% to 3% increase in pay for all employees. All this growth in the county sounds wonderful but it can be wiped out. It is a fine balancing act as an Administrator to meet the needs of the employees and citizens. We should always know that we have a definite amount of funds available and where the new funds are coming from. You are not going to want to raise taxes or User Fees, especially with a new Administrator. We have a constraint on how much money we have coming in and how much we can spend. We do not want to start taking funds out of the reserve unless we must.

County Buildings – We want to start there because we have four buildings that are going to be available soon. We need to make decisions on what is going to happen to those vacant buildings. The Council authorized in the last budget to purchase County Council Chambers. If it comes at a good price, then you will purchase the building. If not, you may want to take those funds and put them into the Magistrate’s Building and make that building into what you want for chambers. This is an issue we need to be talking more about in the coming months.

Development – We are talking primarily about residential development. But it could be residential or commercial. First, where is the development in the county? I would say 80 to 90%

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of the development is along US 25 and Sweetwater Road. Due to the growth, we are experiencing more incidents for the Sheriff's Department, and more emergency calls for EMS. We need more EMS in that area. But with all that growth, it puts more pressure on schools, EMS, and the Sheriff's Department. Several counties in South Carolina have used User Fees to offset the cost of new growth. State laws say you have to be very specific about how it is instituted and for what reason. Ridgeland and Beaufort counties were the two counties that started this back in the 1990s because they had so many people moving into their area. They understood that they could not keep up with the needs caused by growth. They started instituting a User Fee for new residents or new homes. You will see this in cities on water and sewer. This is something we may want to consider so that the burden is not on existing Edgefield residents. Instead, put a little bit more on the new residents. This could be implemented by adding to a building permit for a new home for example. This is something for you to consider in the future as to how we will pay for some of the infrastructure that is going to be needed to support the growth.

Two weeks from today we will be having the same meeting except you all will be sitting down on the floor in chairs with the Planning Commission for a joint meeting. You will discuss with them what are the three to five issues they need to be taking up in 2023. This is your chance to sit down with them and jointly discuss these topics to determine the most needed.

The last thing I want to say about the residential development is, what we started working on in 2021, broadband. It is still being placed in homes. The area where no one could provide broadband is going to be serviced through Aiken Cooperative. They asked the state for funds to use toward this concern. The State has \$400,000,000 to use for broadband. Broadband is infrastructure that in my opinion is just as critical as water and sewer. If our county is going to grow, we need to keep in mind how important broadband is to our community. We need to make sure everyone has the opportunity to be serviced by broadband.

Economic Development – Economic development is important because it helps provide employment, generate tax revenue, Fee in Lieu Of, and receive additional tax funds from partnering counties. These funds help to pay for the infrastructure needs of the parks. We currently do not own the land where the park is located. It is owned by Mr. Donnie Thompson and others. It is for sale and reserved, meaning they cannot sell this property without Council's permission. It is a process that must be done before the property can be sold with the agreement of the majority and what is best for the county. There is land available along Highway 25, near Generac that we may consider purchasing for future possibilities. Last year we extended the road and put in new waterlines in the Edgefield County Industrial Park. When we consider economic development and what type of industries we are trying to bring into our county, we must consider the infrastructure needs and what is required to support these industries in the future. This will help determine what we will look like 5 or 10 years from now economically. Currently, our industrial park is for trucking transport. It is in the perfect location for trucking due to the ease of access to various exits. The future of this county depends on economic development for jobs, growth, and for the revenue that we have now.

County Staff – Our staff is the key to everything. Currently, with our workforce as with other counties in South Carolina, insurance has changed and increased in cost. In the past, the benefits

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package was beneficial for the staff. But as the cost of insurance began to rise in cost, most local governments began charging the employees more. In 2011, Lee Ann Anderson and I sat down and discussed that at that time we had 175 employees. We agreed to have those employees keep the same benefits package they had at that time, but any new employee would be charged a premium amount according to the insurance cost. The reason for this decision was that our employees did not pay any part of their health insurance at that time. Currently, we have 47 employees that were grandfathered in with those benefits. With that said, benefits are a vital concern for employees. During the classification study that was done last year, we saw that several of our employees were undervalued financially. We gave a 5% minimum increase in salary to all employees. But there was about 60% that was given over the minimum increase to put them at the average pay scale for their position based on the classification study. The increase in salary cost the county \$120,000 to bring our employees up to what we thought was necessary. We need to do a better job concerning our employee's salary increases and when they are to receive them to ensure they move off the minimum pay scale. Another action that needs to be implemented is cross-training so that when someone leaves a higher position, we already have someone in place to fill that position.

Recreation – Recreation is a quality-of-life issue that citizens want and need. Our county would like to see more leisure activities at our parks for everyone of all ages. As our county grows, more will be expected of our recreation department. Bettis Academy Park is a great park where many football and baseball games are played. It is utilized by our citizens for various activities, but in 2025, the lease will expire for Bettis Park. That park is not owned by Edgefield County, we are the stewards. It is unsure if the owners will renew this contract, but it is up to them to decide. I think we will be able to come up with some type of compromise concerning the future of Bettis Park because without proper maintenance the park could go into disrepair. The next question is if we want another park and where would it be located? It takes 3 to 5 years to develop a park. There are many different directions we can go in with recreation. We could consider adding or connecting with trails. Whatever you plan for recreation concerning a new park will not be seen for a few more years. Another point to consider is where would the funds come from to build a park. We need to be creative as to where the funding is going to come from for these various projects.

Leadership Academy – This is where employees and citizens from the county, area businesses, and towns gather once a month to learn about the industries, state and county government, and other businesses to have a better understanding of how these areas work. This training builds better leadership. The Leadership Academy is something we might want to initiate to bring more leaders forward within this County.

Solid Waste – This is one of those items that when we did the budget last March, it was presented to you that the amount of money we are bringing in is slowly not covering the cost. Because it cost more to get rid of landfill materials, I am not sure \$100 is going to continue to cover the cost. Again, this is an area where we need to be creative in deciding how we are going to provide services and where those services are most needed. We have added more employees to the Sweetwater Road convenience center due to the growth in residents. In the future, we are either going to enlarge those facilities or have a new facility added. If we decide on a new

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facility or expanding the current center, it will cost the county. That is where the impact fee comes in. If we did not have growth, we would not need to expand. We may consider expanding the hours at the busy centers or decreasing the hours for the centers that are not as busy. The Senior Center provides the employees and Mr. Ed Lamb leads them. We must do something to get a better handle on our Convenience Centers, especially on the South side of the county. Housing prices have changed within the last few years. Houses that used to cost \$150,000 are now \$250,000. As a point of reference, in 2004 the City of Aiken did a study to determine the average cost of a home as far as what they are going to bring in taxes and fees that will support all of the activities that we are providing. At that time in 2004, it was \$170,000 a house. According to this past calculation, any homes less than \$250,000 are not supporting services. Any home over \$250,000 is giving more in fees. You will receive more from commercial and industrial in terms of fees that will help the county. We need diverse development of residential, industrial, and commercial. I would like for you to see that with growth comes expenses for every new home concerning infrastructure. A concern that is being brought forth is whether every citizen that visits our Convenience Centers is from Edgefield County. Mr. Randy Doran checks the licenses at our various sites sometimes to ensure it is our citizens that are using our facilities.

EMS – This service is the most critical service that we provide because the service is concerning life or death to our citizens. Since 2018, the number of calls has increased by 30%. We have increased the number of ambulances in the fleet and are looking to add another one. Due to the different scenarios at medical facilities, ambulance workers are with patients for various hours until they are released to answer another call. Now the question is do we look to getting a non-ambulance or transport vehicle with personnel to transport non-emergency citizens? Before we add another ambulance, is there another alternative to help with these issues we are experiencing? Once we submit to the insurance companies, we only receive about half the cost. That is why we had the millage rate to help with these costs. Last year, the millage rate did not cover all of the costs. We will need to come up with a new solution to help with this concern. As with everything else, the cost of ambulances has also increased. We ordered a new ambulance, and it will take 18 to 24 months to arrive. By that time arrives, we will need another one. So, I encouraged us to order one then. We are considering building a new EMS Station on Sweetwater. We are going to need to go ahead and find a third location to accommodate the growth in calls and where they are coming from. EMS has a myriad of issues, and we are talking about them and how to fix them. The transport of non-critical patients is going to be the key in my opinion.

Fire Department – There has always been some tension between the fire departments. In 2007, the head of the Town of Edgefield Fire Department, Ken Durham worked together with various other departments to come up with an agreement. As of now, 18 years later, nothing has changed concerning that agreement. The Fire Board typically meets four times a year but after Covid hit. Every fire department would meet once a quarter with a meal. After Covid restrictions were lifted, they were thrown off. A concern for the fire departments is the age of the firemen. Some are up in age and are concerned with carrying their gear into these buildings to fight fires. Another concern is the certifications. In the past, they would take a class on Tuesday nights for six months to receive their certification. Now they must take classes that require time in various

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programs. We have several firemen that are not trained. And those that are trained are in their 60s and 70s. We are looking at providing some funding to help retain firemen as well as encourage new ones. They need funding for equipment which EMA Director, James Foster has been helping with concerning grant funding. We have seven fire departments that will need his help to get funding for needed equipment. We need to work with these fire departments to encourage them to work together so they may all benefit from grant funding. But they must work together with Council and seek the assistance needed to apply for and possibly receive grant funding.

Those are the items received from you, the citizens, elected officials, and the departmental heads. Are there any other issues that we want to discuss other than what I just went over? If no other comments, we will take a break.

Chairman Campbell: Council will have a 10-minute recess.

Chairman Campbell called the meeting back to order. Council has returned from recess.

County Buildings

Roger LeDuc: Let us begin with the first item, County buildings. Do you have any questions or concerns about this item?

Councilwoman Ireland: Specifically, regarding the Sheriff's Department, can that building be salvaged? Or what could we possibly use it for? I do not see how there could be any salvaging of that building.

Roger LeDuc: Over the next year to a year and a half, we will be going through each of those buildings to see if there is some value in it.

David Caddell: I formed a working group, and we are going through each of the buildings to assess the basic condition. Then we will brainstorm the possible uses and present that to Council not as an agenda-driven item but as what we would like to do.

Councilwoman Ireland: What buildings do we have as salvageable? I like that idea.

David Caddell: The courthouse annex and the magistrate's building are good. We have not gone through the Sheriff's office.

Roger LeDuc: We are also considering purchasing the Council Chambers.

Councilwoman Ireland: Do we know when we will make that decision?

David Caddell: We are waiting on a response from the owner and his attorney.

Roger LeDuc: Next we will discuss development in residential and commercial. I will ask Administrator Caddell if he has any information from the Planning Commission.

David Caddell: In their next meeting on the 12th of this month, they will be discussing their priorities. I will send an email to Council this week to ask for their input as well.

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Roger LeDuc: We will all meet later in the month to discuss this item. This will give us the opportunity to think ahead three to five years from now as to where and what our county wants to see in a good economy.

Chairman Campbell: The one thing I would add under residential development is the philosophical part of development concerning subdivisions and their designs. Is it ten units or more?

Hart Clark: Building and Planning recently changed that in our last rewrite. Now it is five or more lots that do not meet the requirements of the state law for exempt subdivisions.

Chairman Campbell: So major sounds like we are talking about hundreds where major is five or more. My point is I want to make sure that we are addressing any concerns, particularly the citizens have obviously who live around subdivisions that we have the right ordinances in place that either they are right and we are all happy or they are not right and they need to be overhauled. Or they are good and need to be tweaked or whatever it is in terms of how big the lots are. Then the water and sewer and all the things that go with it. I want to personally make sure we have that discussion because that keeps coming up. The size of a lot keeps coming up and we recently had to deal with that with a developer who backed out. I want to make sure we are on the right track.

Roger LeDuc: Every 10 years you go through a major update, but every year there should be some changes to the plan. The last time we went through the plan, we changed the density in some of those developments. It may be time to look at those plans again and make some changes based on zones or areas of the county. Even though we set zoning up to all areas of the county last year along the major thoroughfares and on the south side. We should be looking at that and how we want to develop buildings.

Chairman Campbell: For clarification, I am not talking about additional zoning. I am talking about major subdivisions as they currently exist. And then I was really talking about the comprehensive plan.

Economic Development

Roger LeDuc: Let us talk about Economic Development.

Chairman Campbell: Most people do not realize that one small to medium size industry can give you more tax money than a 500-housing-unit subdivision. Think about that for a moment. Industries do not draw near the resources as residential does. Nor do they draw what school systems do either. The industries themselves and the people they hire are not draining our resources, but they are contributing a lot in tax money. While Economic Development has its own issues and challenges, those are usually the winner's problems you want to have to solve.

Hart Clark: Industries will not come to Edgefield County if they do not have employees to employ or commercial businesses are not going to come in if they do not have the residential density required to meet their needs. Edgefield County has one of the lowest unemployment rates. It sounds like a great thing, but when an industry is scoping our county for a possible

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location, it is detrimental to recruiting efforts not to have someone to recruit. That is something that we must factor in when thinking about economic development.

Roger LeDuc: We look for our existing industries to expand and we can provide them with the needed employees from the county. Our chairman could visit them and see what the plant managers may be in need of that we may be able to help with. One of the industry's needs is to make sure the workforce is educated about them. That has been a problem in the past. We will look for ways to encourage our industries and help them by possibly providing what they need.

Chairman Campbell: Spoiler alert, Will Williams is coming to our next Council meeting.

Roger LeDuc: In the past, I have had meetings with the CTC and how they determine what is needed. During those meetings, I was able to see how formulas were used to make decisions about roadway repairs. That meeting was highly informative and helpful.

Chairman Campbell: I have spoken to Sam Crouch and we are trying to get a joint meeting scheduled for probably March.

County Staff

Roger LeDuc: Our next discussion is about the county staff. They are the key to everything. We need to come up with some type of merit pay for the employees.

David Caddell: I think I have outlined it well to the council. Just to comment on what Roger spoke about concerning merit pay or a step program as a recruiting tool for new staff. If you can point to some type of metric that expresses how if you work here for two years and passed your evaluations, then this is where you will be concerning your salary, notwithstanding any cost-of-living increases. That would be a separate movement within the pay bands. I think that is so important to recruiting people. If you hire a new employee with no experience who will have the same salary as an employee who has been here for four years, that is a demotivating factor. We should really push to implement a step program for our employees.

Chairman Campbell: I want to be cautious because I agree with you 100%. But to do a merit increase you have to have a reason for merit. You would have to have a program where people are getting performance reviews to explain why they are receiving the merit.

David Caddell: That is correct. If you implement a step program, you must implement an employee evaluation.

Chairman Campbell: That means all department heads would have to do it and it would have to be county-wide.

David Caddell: Correct. It does not need to be overly complex in language that does not apply to the position, but there needs to be a basic evaluation program.

Roger LeDuc: Through these steps, you would allow department heads to create goals for the employees and in turn, employees would possibly feel they are valued by the increase.

Councilwoman Kennion: This should be going on anyway.

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Roger LeDuc: I understand, and I agree with you, but it just has not been done. A merit system would make a difference for the employees.

Hart Clark: Individual department heads do give performance evaluation reviews to our employees for internal purpose use. It is not used on a county-wide basis. We do not send our evaluation reviews to upper-level management or to Council. It remains within the department with that department head for their internal purpose.

David Caddell: That is correct what Hart Clark said, but we would need to standardize it so it would be on the same scale and we would be able to compare. If Council moves in that direction, then we would develop the appropriate program.

Councilman Moody: What about Employee Appreciation every quarter? Has that been officially implemented? I know it has been discussed.

David Caddell: I have a working group on employee compensation and recognition. Roger was working on it during his tenure, and you will see an update on it soon.

Councilwoman Ireland: I would like to see us do something to recognize our retiring employees as well. We have employees that have given their entire working careers to this county, and I believe they need to be honored for that. I would like to see that implemented.

David Caddell: I think that is a great idea.

Roger LeDuc: These things can and are possible to be attained. Putting together an employee evaluation system, merit program, and recognition program can be done. The foundation has been established for these programs. Unfortunately, we just have not moved on it. We need to do this. If this is a priority, then we need to put more effort into it versus other things.

Recreation

Roger LeDuc: Our next discussion is recreation. The Bettis Academy Park lease is up in 2025. They may want their park back and not renew their lease.

Councilman Moody: What is the percentage that we may lose that lease in 2025?

Roger LeDuc: That is hard to say at this moment. We will be discussing this more with the Mt. Canaan Association.

Councilman Moody: I think they need to realize that if we leave, the money leaves with us as far as maintaining the park.

Roger LeDuc: We would no longer be responsible for the park. Maintaining a park is expensive.

Councilwoman Ireland: Something they may need to consider is that we apply for the PARD Grants that have allowed us to purchase almost everything we have out there. Would they be allowed to apply for some grants, or would they be on their own?

Roger LeDuc: No.

Councilman Moody: That point needs to be very well spoken to them during the discussion.

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Roger LeDuc: We understand and that is why we are discussing this now. We do not want to wait until 2025 to make this decision. We have a couple of years but that is why I am putting an emphasis that maybe we should be doing something this year and not wait until April 2025.

Chairman Campbell: I want to point out to Council on this topic, it is easy to say we want to get out of the lease or renew it. That only takes a pen and a piece of paper to complete that. The hard part is creating a new recreation park. It will almost be to the level of trying to build a new law enforcement center. It is expensive to create a new recreational park.

Councilwoman Ireland: This needs to be a priority now. We have known for a long time that this was coming. This is a prickly subject and there are a lot of people who do not like us putting money into projects that we do not own. It is time for us to do something better.

Councilman Talbert: There have been discussions concerning this topic.

Roger LeDuc: We understand. That is why we are discussing this now and how we will move forward. You just approved \$160,000 last week for the town of Edgefield for the activity center. It is called an activity center for a reason; they did not want it just to be a gym. They would like for the community to participate and be involved in recreational activities to better their daily life. This could become a great community center for the town. This beautiful facility came about because of the relationship between you the Council and the Town of Edgefield. You are doing the same thing in the town of Johnston. You can utilize some of the facilities that are here now and begin looking toward the future concerning recreational facilities. Or you can let everyone who lives on the south side of the county go to North Augusta for recreational needs. Because that is what is happening now, and they are paying out-of-town fees for their recreational needs.

Councilwoman Ireland: The Planning Commission met several months ago and one of the things they did discuss was recreation and the need for it. The thing that I remember most from that discussion was not centered around the youth, but what we could do for the other demographics in our community.

Hart Clark: They would like to see a community center with more rentable activity space because Edgefield County has a building that we do rent out. Aretha Eubanks can tell you that it stays booked months in advance. There is not enough rental space in Edgefield County. Even if it is a day-long event, you might be three months out to get a rental. That is one thing the Planning Commission saw as something that would pay for itself if we could put up a recreational facility and then rent the inside spaces for a fee. Eventually, the building would pay for itself. Now, buildings never pay for themselves under that sort of scenario, but eventually, it would recover their cost.

Roger LeDuc: We have done lots of studies on recreation rentals. It is something that is necessary, but you cannot recover all the costs pertaining to a rental property. You must look at the maintenance, utility bills, and any needed repairs associated with the upkeep of the facility. Recreation rentals are a quality-of-life issue or investment into the quality of life that your citizens want to go to in your community.

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Leadership Academy

Roger LeDuc: The next item we will discuss is Leadership Academy.

Councilman Moody: Major Ramey, have we covered everything? Do you have anything to add to this?

Major Ramey: We discussed the leadership academy where you can train potential employees that you see are willing to learn and express the desire to move forward in their workforce. The opportunity to educate an employee for the next level in their job skills. He discussed briefly how his personal experiences in a leadership program that have increased his knowledge and gave a better understanding of government and himself in his position and the next one he is to attain.

Chairman Campbell: Some years back between the 1980s maybe through to the 2000s, Clemson Extension used to offer a six-month leadership class. I was one of those that attended these classes while they were offered. I attended one night a week over six months. They did that for people who wanted to learn more about government and its different pieces. Clemson eventually stopped offering the classes due to a lack of participation. I think this is a great thing and I hope the interest is there from people who want to learn more about the government. It does help you understand as a citizen how things work and that helps you better communicate better with your elected officials.

Hart Clark: There is the National Association of Counties Leadership Academy. Both Garrett Lynn and I are graduates of that academy, but, that being said, it is not really about what the Administrator, Police or Council positions do on a daily basis. The class offers a bird's eye view of issues that the government face. These classes are for those who are in Administration staff or Council's level of government learning. These classes are not for a regular employee just starting their career or a citizen who just wants to be in the know. Also, it could be for the level of education.

Roger LeDuc: The Leadership Academy could be directed toward private industries, government, and law enforcement. You could build it around whatever you need to enhance your employee's knowledge and skills in.

Solid Waste

Roger LeDuc: The next item for us to discuss is Solid Waste.

Chairman Campbell: Councilman Talbert and I have been on the committees that deal with solid waste for a while. Councilman Talbert serves as the Vice-Chairman of the Tri-County Solid Waste Authority. The committee consists of Saluda, McCormick, and Edgefield counties. They work together to manage the Convenience Centers that collect all the local trash from citizens. Then that trash is transported to Three Rivers Landfill. I am currently serving on that board. That board serves nine counties whose waste is transported to Three Rivers Landfill which is located on the Savannah River Site. Three Rivers Landfill can maintain waste for the next 100 years on its multiple acres. Trash is always an issue and I hope 100 years from now it won't have any trash. Hopefully, by then it will be disposed of immediately. There are counties in South

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Carolina that cannot recruit industries because they have no place to put their waste because they have produced too much in their landfills. All of this comes at a cost regarding rules and regulations. There is a price for managing trash and it is expensive.

Roger LeDuc: It is hard to believe how much it costs to pay for waste management and the prices keep going up. Solid Waste disposal has gone up by 25%. We did not gain an additional 25% in revenue.

Chairman Campbell: The reason for that was COVID because when people could not work, they stayed home. All the waste they accrued from their house, yard, and everything else they could throw away has built a giant wave of garbage that we have never seen before. And it is still going on.

Councilwoman Ireland: Is there any discussion on starting the recycling back again?

Chairman Campbell: A year and a half ago, China stopped accepting recycled material from anywhere in the world. They would only deal with their own recyclable material. At that time, everyone in the world was shipping their recycled material to China. Now we have nowhere to send our recycled material. Due to this, the cost of cardboard, aluminum, and steel has plummeted because the supply was so high. No one can recycle and make money and that is why you are not hearing of recycling centers.

EMS

Roger LeDuc: The next item for us to discuss is EMS.

Councilman Moody: I have spoken with Garrett Lynn numerous times, and he has some good ideas concerning where the substation and the new station are going to go. I spoke with the Sheriff a few moments ago and he would like to be involved in the building of the next station because it could be multipurpose. He also just mentioned to me that the Magistrates were extremely interested in putting a magistrate in the lower end of the county. This would be paid for, not the building, under Senator Shane Massey's department. Sheriff Rowland believes the growth is enough in the south end of the county to support this. He is bringing this discussion to us by request of the magistrate.

Chairman Campbell: Councilman Moody, I just want to make sure wherever we decide to set the EMS station or substation it is not based on politics. Meaning, just because any of the five of us have a loud voice should not mean that it goes in our area. I want to make sure we look at all of the statistics.

Councilman Moody: We are not sure where it is going.

Chairman Campbell: If we see that the south end of the county is going to grow exponentially, then we can figure it out. But if we see other parts of the county are growing, we might want to think about that area as well. I want to make sure we are doing the right thing in terms of studying this before we spend money on it.

David Caddell: Chairman Campbell, on the issue of EMS, we are developing a call map that will show where all the call density is within the county in relation to the current stations. That will

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help us make the informed decision you are speaking about. As soon as we get that map developed, we will provide it to Council. That map will be the driver for the possible location and how we might reallocate resources for the facility. But that is very important to know where the call volume is coming from.

Chairman Campbell: Yes, it is important, but we would also need to know what things are happening in the community that might affect these decisions. I just want to make sure we have done our best to cover all the bases before we make a decision.

David Caddell: Absolutely.

Councilwoman Ireland: How much do we pay for transport?

Garrett Lynn: There are set fees for certain transports through private transportation such as dialysis, nursing home, and nonemergent medical calls. We would like to focus solely on 911 emergency calls. Dialysis patients are serviced on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday through private transport.

Councilwoman Ireland: That answered my other question as to if we are dividing our time from emergency care. Correct me if I am wrong, but Aiken County has agreements with certain hospitals that when they transport patients to a certain hospital, they have priority service. And we have to wait before the patients we transport are given service.

Garrett Lynn: Correct. They have a policy in place to get them in and out the door.

Fire

Roger LeDuc: Our last item to discuss is Fire.

Councilman Moody: I attended the Fire Board Meeting last night. The idea of cooperation was in full discussion last night. I think the bridge has been mended between the fire departments. I think they are all on the same page concerning the funding process. I do believe there are some details that need to be worked out according to what they decided last night. They will discuss that at a later date just to see exactly which plan they are going to go with. They are willing to help each other.

Roger LeDuc: Some time ago I commented to Council that there was a citizen that had some concerns and issues with various fire departments. In talking with Tracy Freeman and the Fire Board, he is asking them to come in and join the meeting to be part of the solution.

Councilman Moody: Some of the things that are being said are being broadcasted as a liability and have confused some about the requirements. ISO has certain requirements but if not met, it is a liability. But the liability is not on us. Please be careful what you are reading on social media.

David Caddell: I was also at the Fire Board meeting and the change has been drastic. They are working together and at least working to come to a consensus on some issues. That is a very positive development.

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Councilman Talbert: I really appreciate you all working on this and hearing of such a positive turnaround. I remember Roger and I having conversations about the fire departments and the complications that were occurring. It is great to hear those concerns are being resolved.

Roger LeDuc: They still have a way to go. But they are not where they were, and they are moving in the right direction.

Hart Clark: Just as part of the explanation, ISO has a lot of recommendations. While the ISO does not have a lot of mandatory requirements, you get a score based on how well you are meeting their recommendations. For those of you who don't know exactly what ISO is. They set the interest rates for home, commercial, and business insurance rates. The lower the score, the higher rate for private homeowner's insurance goes. It is important for them to meet as many of those recommendations as possible to keep the insurance rates on the citizen's homes at a lower rate. It is not just the fire departments that get rated. Building and Planning gets rated by ISO. When I moved the Building and Planning Department by following their recommendation, I improved our score by one point. That made a three-and-a-half percent difference in insurance rates in Edgefield County. If you did that across the board with all the ISO branches, you could make a 10% difference by just moving them all by one point. This is something to take seriously.

Roger LeDuc: Are there any other discussions on Fire? It is your turn to start saying which ones you are going to go ahead and prioritize.

Chairman Campbell: We are not saying we are not doing something if we put it low. It just means from a priority standpoint, the Administrator is going to start with the high priority versus the low priority. But he will also work with the medium and the low priority. It is a matter of timing.

David Caddell: That is correct. Each issue whether you make it high or medium will have a short-term and long-term component to it. So, we want to engage on the high-rated issues first. But there will be components of each and we will work them out in the Strategic Plan. Council will review, consider, and comment on.

Vote of Priority List

County Buildings

1 – High
4 – Low

Residential Development

1 – High
3 - Medium

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Economic Development

- 3 – High
- 1 – Medium
- 1 – Low

County Work Force

- 3 – High
- 2 – Medium

Recreation

- 1 – High
- 4 – Medium

Leadership Academy

- 3 – Medium
- 2 – Low

Solid Waste

- 1 – High
- 2 – Medium
- 2 – Low

EMS

- 5 – High

Fire

- 3 – High
- 1 – Medium
- 1 – Low

Roger LeDuc: Obviously, EMS is a high priority. County workforce, economic development, fire, and Leadership Academy are of concern. We have three our four concerns that we will work towards with as a goal.

Chairman Campbell: Council do you have any questions or comments?

Councilman Talbert: I think we accomplished a lot this evening.

Chairman Campbell: Thank you Roger LeDuc for facilitating our retreat this evening. We truly appreciate it. If there is nothing else from Council, is there a motion to adjourn? Councilwoman Ireland made the motion and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

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Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM

Edgefield County Council



Dean Campbell, Council Chairman

ATTEST



Aretha Eubanks, Clerk to Council