

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

July 11, 2023

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

The Edgefield County Council held its regular meeting at 6:00 P.M. Tuesday, July 11, 2023, 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

Others Present

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

Instrument Book Volume Page
2023-2875 OR 2064 227

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Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. He began the meeting by thanking Vice Chairman Talbert for running the June 6, 2023, Council meeting. The invocation was given by Pastor George Gardin, Antioch Baptist Church, Edgefield, SC. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Campbell: Do you have any recommendations for changes to tonight’s agenda? Hearing none, Councilman Talbert made the motion to approve the agenda as presented and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Campbell asked for approval of the June 6, 2023, Regular Meeting minutes. Councilman Moody made the motion and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Campbell asked for approval of the June 1, 2023, Joint Council and County Transportation Committee Meeting minutes. Councilwoman Ireland made the motion and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Comments from the Public

Chairman Campbell opened the public comment period. Since there were no speakers, Chairman Campbell closed this public comment period.

Reports

No comments from Council

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

July 11, 2023

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

Instrument 2023-2875 Book Volume 2064 Page OR 228

Consent Agenda

Chairman Campbell asked Council if there is any item to move or take off the agenda. There were none. Councilman Talbert made the motion to approve the consent agenda and Councilman Moody seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

1. Consideration of approval to lease the rear parking lot of St. Mary's Catholic Church for the consideration of one dollar and basic parking lot maintenance from August 1, 2023, to August 1, 2028.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell if he would like to discuss this lease.

Administrator Caddell: This is a lease that we have had in place in the past. When there are meetings in this building with large attendance, people often park in St. Mary's lot across the street. This lease simply formalizes Church approval of that reality. The county agrees to patch any potholes that may appear due to increased use and repaint the parking lines once in a five-year period.

Chairman Campbell: I will tell Council that we have done this in the past and it has never been an issue. Do we have any questions or comments from Council? Hearing none, Councilwoman Ireland made the motion and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Consideration of entering into a consulting contract with Arlene Traxler from July 15, 2023, to November 15, 2023.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell if he would like to discuss this contract.

Administrator Caddell: This is an item that I discussed with Council earlier this year. As you know, we have a new Treasurer, Jo Knight. She was able to train under Mrs. Traxler for a few weeks before she took office. This contract would allow Jo to bring Arlene in as needed, but no more than 12 hours per week for the next several months to ensure a seamless transition. Staff recommends that Council approves this contract.

Chairman Campbell: Council do you have any questions or comments? Hearing none. Councilwoman Kennion made the motion and Councilman Moody seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Consideration of approval to award the Kneece Building security contract to Carver Security for the installation of alarms, access control, and a camera system.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell if he will take us through this process and bids.

Administrator Caddell: Over the past several months we worked with the Sheriff to assess security needs for the Kneece building. After reviewing the five bids received, staff believes that

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

July 11, 2023

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

it would be best to go with Carver Security, located in Aiken, due to service and maintenance considerations as they are closer to Edgefield and service many clients in the area.

Chairman Campbell: The low bidder, although it is only low by roughly \$700, is it the maintenance reason that is the key reason or any other reasons why we would not choose the low bidder?

Hart Clark: One of the primary considerations is that the low bidder is located in Atlanta. Obviously, any kind of service or maintenance, we would need, they would have to drive a considerable distance. Whereas Carver is a local security company whose reputation is known by the Sheriff's Office and others in the CSRA. Primarily, we are paying for a service and not a product. We are making our recommendation off of the continued service over time rather than the cost of the cameras themselves.

Chairman Campbell: This contract would be for how long?

Hart Clark: What you see is the cost of the equipment and installation. The actual contract cost for the actual alarm company is between \$20 to \$48 a month depending on whether we have cellular backup systems or not. It is a monthly contract that we can cancel anytime or choose another provider. But this price is the actual physical equipment and the installation of that equipment in the structure itself. The actual monthly cost is \$50 a month at most.

Administrator Caddell: This is not an equipment installation contract. But a monthly monitoring contract.

Councilman Moody: You have already answered for me, but for the public to know, would you explain the large difference in bids? I don't want people to think we are not getting what we need when they see the vast difference in the high price versus the one we are going with.

Administrator Caddell: Oftentimes, when you publish something on the South Carolina Business Opportunities website, you have people who bid that really don't expect to win the contract, so they put out a large price hoping that they might. They just put a high enough price to cover themselves should they win. That is why you get these outlier numbers.

Councilwoman Ireland: You said this is for the installation and equipment, so if we decide maybe we do not want them for some reason. Can we change that with another company?

Administrator Caddell: That is correct. What we will is enter into a short-term renewable agreement with them. If they did not uphold their part of the bargain, then any other security monitoring company could utilize this equipment.

Chairman Campbell: Any other questions or comments from Council? Hearing none, Councilwoman Ireland made the motion and Councilman Moody seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

July 11, 2023

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

Instrument Book Volume Page
2023-2875 OR 2064 230

4. Consideration of approval to award the contract to Gore Construction to refurbish and remodel the building formerly used by the Boy Scouts, located at 312 Penn St., for use as rental space and County recreational programs.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell and Assistant Administrator Clark to take us through this one.

Administrator Caddell: Council voted to proceed with soliciting bids to repair the building at 312 Penn St. for use as a recreation and rental building. Gore Construction submitted the low bid, and is a local company. We ask Council to approve this bid. We have also identified two other issues that we would like the contractor to address while there relating to the foundation. We ask Council to authorize spending approximately \$100,000 of American Rescue Plan funds for this project.

Chairman Campbell: Just to remind the listeners who are watching or those who see this on the agenda, would you please explain what Local Preference means?

Administrator Caddell: Local contractors get a bid preference that allows their bid to appear lower than it actually is for consideration. Gore Construction was the lowest bid and did not need to use the Local Preference.

Chairman Campbell: That is something that Council passed earlier.

Administrator Caddell: That is correct.

Chairman Campbell: Questions or comments from Council.

Councilwoman Ireland: Are we familiar with this construction company or have we used them before?

Hart Clark: Edgefield County has not used this construction company before, but I have called around to neighboring cities to ask about their work. They have done work for the City of North Augusta and the City of Aiken. I did call my counterparts in those areas. They had no complaints. Gore Constructions did the work they agreed to do. His license is in perfect condition with no complaints against him. He meets all of our requirements for a General Contractor and he is bonded and insured correctly to work for the government. He did not receive any bad marks in his reviews.

Chairman Campbell: Have you talked about a timeline of when he would start and when he would be finished?

Administrator Caddell: We would have to delay a start date if Council approves this contract for several weeks because the Methodist Church, which has sponsored the Boy Scouts, will have to remove their materials to store for later use in case they were to start back up. Once they have removed their materials, then our crews will come in to clean the other things needing to be removed. I would suggest that we could complete that by August 1st. After that, he will be free to start the work needed. We did not discuss a deadline as this is not a rush job.

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

July 11, 2023

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

Councilwoman Ireland: So, by next year, we will be ready to start some recreational activities there?

Hart Clark: It will depend on what we find once we get to work in there. There may be some areas we need to address such as foundational issues. But if everything else goes smoothly it won't take very long.

Administrator Caddell: This will be an excellent rental building that will be of great use for county staff training and small conferences. If Council would like to utilize this as a County Recreation building such as for dance classes, we would need to construct an outside shelter for a sitting area for parents and possibly a playground. These options are not very costly. If Council would like to continue in the direction of recreation, then we would need to add those items to this project. If this is the direction you would like to go then while we have a contractor there, we could get quotes on constructing the outside shelter. We may want to get quotes on or apply for PARD Grants for the playground equipment. That is coming up in the fall.

Councilman Talbert: I have no problem with you getting a quote while the contractor is there for the outside shelter and the playground equipment. I don't think we have a problem with that.

Administrator Caddell: We will obtain quotes for your consideration.

Chairman Campbell: Other questions or comments from Council? Hearing none, Councilman Talbert made the motion and Councilwoman Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Comments from the Public

Scott Cooper: Good Evening. First of all, I want to say thank you to each of you for your service to Edgefield County. I recognize the investment of time required when you want to make a difference in the community you serve. I appreciate your commitment. I would like to recognize Mr. Joe Simpson for the great work he has done at landscaping at the Sweetwater Community Center, and with the removal of the old smoke facility removed, it looks great.

I come to you tonight as a concerned citizen about our future. I came to discuss two items this evening. I am open to speaking with each of you individually afterward about the multifaceted aspects of these two topics.

First, I have ordered each of you a book, which might help us as a county, as we think about preserving the rural feel of Edgefield County, while also preserving property rights. The title of the book is "Small Farm Republic."

In short, I would like our County Council to consider how we can support small farmers, producing food, locally, here in Edgefield County. Local food production is critically important from a resilience standpoint. As you may be aware, the average age of the American Farmer, producing food, in our country today is 60 years of age. The barriers for the next generation to enter the food production industry are substantial. These barriers also make it difficult for an aging farmer to exit the industry. In fact, due to these challenges, the suicide rate among small farmers rivals the suicide rate among veterans, which is a statistic rarely discussed.

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

July 11, 2023

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

We have 504 square miles in Edgefield County. The vast majority of which is in the timber industry. As we think about the demographic shift taking place, causing people to move into our county from other regions of our nation, which is a good thing, I would like County Council to think about how they might support small farms in the future. Small, regenerative agriculture. This gift might help in that endeavor. I will loan the one copy I have to Vice Chairman Albert Talbert until each of your copies arrive.

The second issue is a little more complicated. There are those who believe we live in the most dangerous time period in our nation's history. For a wide range of reasons. The divisions we see at the National level are being pushed down to the local level in ways where the polarization is causing neighbors to no longer speak with one another. Some believe this polarization is actually being aided by external forces dividing us from within.

As a local leader, this is a challenge. I want to suggest to you the idea that "Personnel is Policy."

When our County Council Member appoints individuals to various boards, we should ensure that they have a strong desire to build community, not division. A community that entertains differing views, from all walks of life, from long-term residents as well as those just moving here, then collaborates to bring about decisions that benefit all, for the next generation.

Iron sharpening iron, and building consensus through the debate of qualified differing opinions is a healthy thing.

We currently have an individual serving on one of our county boards who has a history of not providing this type of consensus-building, but shouting down discussion. This individual currently moderates two local social media groups where dialogs are taking place, being viewed by outsiders who are considering investing in Edgefield County. I would simply ask County Council if you have appointed someone to represent you who behaves badly, that you remember they are a representative of you, and ultimately of the entire County.

Report By County Council Members

Councilman Moody: I would like to give an update on Convenience Center problems that some of the Councilmembers have been getting phone calls about. David has set up a meeting this Thursday with the Senior Center which provides the employees that man the convenience centers. We are going to sit down at the table and try to hash out a plan to not allow non-county residents to use our convenience centers. The biggest problem is a lot of construction materials that are being brought and not being turned away. We are working on some ideas. That is happening on Thursday, and I wanted you to know that we are moving forward and not backward.

Councilwoman Kennion: This morning I had the opportunity to attend the Three Rivers 25-Year Celebration luncheon in Jackson, SC. My attendance there was my first ever and my second time

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

July 11, 2023

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

in Jackson. I thoroughly enjoyed the tour and the luncheon was great. The tour was very informative. I never thought that trash could be stacked so high and crushed into something like dirt. I actually videoed the process because it was so exciting to me. After the tour from Mr. Scott Ribes, he said we can bring anyone back. So, when I got home, I called my family up. We are going back to Jackson for the tour. I have to take my hat off to our Chairman Dean Campbell, even though he was not there today. I wanted to let you know that I enjoyed everyone there and they spoke so highly of you. I must say that Aiken County and Orangeburg County are the largest two counties with trash. We did not make that list. It was a great trip and I recommend that everyone go there for the tour. Before today, I thought trash was trash. Today, I learned what it takes to handle trash. It was amazing.

Councilman Talbert: Councilwoman Kennion and I rode out there together. It was my second time being at Three Rivers. It was very educational to know how much trash accumulates and how much it compresses down. They also indicated that the landfill will last for 120 more years before it will be filled up. Just as Councilwoman Kennion said, it was very nice and we are glad we got a chance to go out there this morning. And yes, they spoke very highly of you Dean. They did indicate that if we would like to get a group together to come there to just let them know and they will make preparations.

Chairman Campbell: As a quick side note for viewers and those listening: The Three Rivers Landfill is made up of nine counties. With over 100 years of space left, I assure you there are places in this country that do not have two weeks of landfill space left and we have over 100 years. That is very big for a lot of reasons for homes, businesses, and industries. That is a big plus for our county and area.

County Administrator's Report

1. Fire Departments - Five more firefighters have completed their Emergency Medical Responder training. We are actively compiling a list of participants for Firefighter Level I.
2. Recreation – Edgefield County has received an appropriation for upgrades to Bettis Park. Staff is currently compiling a list of needs to obtain quotes. This will include new fencing, reworking baseball field infields, and new playground equipment. We are also preparing a revised lease to present to Council in August.
3. Employee of the Quarter – We have started an employee of the quarter program. A committee will review those recommended for employee of the quarter and select one. That person will be recognized at the August Council meeting.
4. Employee appreciation lunch – We will hold an employee appreciation lunch at Council Chambers August 3rd. This will be dine-in or take out. We look forward to seeing Councilmembers who are able to make it and our County employees to thank them for the work they do.
5. Upcoming meeting - I hold management team meetings from time to time with several Department Heads, but on August 7th at 10am, I will hold a meeting with all Department

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

July 11, 2023

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

Heads, Appointed, and Elected Officials who manage offices for the County. The purpose will be to hear their concerns and priorities so that Administration can provide assistance where possible.

- 6. Animal Shelter – The Animal Care and Control facility is complete. We are simply waiting on some backordered equipment and a Vet contract. We hope to announce a ribbon cutting very soon.

Comments by County Council Chairman

I want to take a moment to update Council and the public on some economic development news.

Each year, I go out with our Economic Developer Will Williams and his staff to visit existing industries in Edgefield County. We don't get to each industry every year, but we visit many of them. Last month, we visited several.

I'm pleased to report that none of them are planning to reduce operations. They are all maintaining what they have or plan to grow a bit over the next year or so. They also report they are pleased with County's work with them and how well our economic development team works with them. Their only concern is always hiring good employees, but they all report that they have raised wages over the past year or two and are getting more employees in the door and retaining more employees, too.

That stability is good news for our citizens and for the County.

Finally, I want to also remind everyone that our August meeting will be moved to August 8 since the Administrator and two County Council members will be attending the Association of Counties annual meeting the week before.

Adjourn

Council, that's all I have. Since we have no other business to conduct, I'd entertain a motion to adjourn. Councilwoman Ireland made the motion and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously. The County Council meeting adjourned at 6:35 P.M.

Edgefield County Council



Dean Campbell, Council Chairman

ATTEST



Aretha Eubanks, Clerk to Council