

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

August 8, 2023

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

The Edgefield County Council held its regular meeting at 6:00 P.M. Tuesday, August 8, 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

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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

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Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. The invocation was given by Chairman Dean Campbell.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Campbell asked the Council if they would like to move the resolutions in New Business numbers one and two to just after reports if no objections. Councilman Moody made the motion, and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Campbell asked for approval of July 11, 2023, regular meeting minutes. Councilman Moody made the motion, and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Comments from the Public

There being no comments from the public during this comment period, Chairman Campbell closed this public comment period.

Reports

Chairman Campbell asked Council if they had any questions or comments on the reports. There were none.

Special Recognition

Chairman Campbell read resolution 21-23-1165, recognizing Edgefield County resident, John Hudson for his donation of drainage materials for the soccer field drainage project. Councilwoman Ireland made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

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Chairman Campbell read resolution 21-23-1166, recognizing Edgefield County resident, Janice Cleveland for her charitable endeavors through her charity, Loaves of Love. Councilman Moody made the motion, and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Campbell asked Administrator Caddell if would he read the 3rd and 4th Quarter Employee Recognitions.

Administrator Caddell read the recommendations for the 3rd and 4th Quarter Employee Recognition recipients Marie Goodman and Carl Culpepper.

Executive Session

Chairman Campbell: We are going into Executive Session. Is there a motion to go into an Executive Session to discuss a legal issue and fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes? Councilman Talbert made the motion, and Councilwoman Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Council entered into Executive Session at 6:15 P.M.

County Council returned from Executive Session at 6:35 P.M. Chairman Campbell: We are now back in the Public Session. No action was taken in the Executive Session.

New Business

1. Consideration of approval of Resolution 21-23-1165, recognizing Edgefield County resident John Hudson for his donation of drainage materials for the soccer field drainage project was moved to earlier on the agenda.

2. Consideration of approval of Resolution 21-23-1166, recognizing Edgefield County resident Janice Cleveland for her charitable endeavors through her charity, Loaves of Love was moved to earlier on the agenda.

3. Consideration of approval to add a \$50.00 cleaning fee for all Sweetwater Community Center rentals.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell if he will discuss this with us.

Administrator Caddell: We currently pay a cleaning service \$50 per cleaning after each Friday and Saturday rental. County staff cleans it after any Sunday and any weekday rental. Staff recommends that we add this fee to the rental agreement. We only propose to charge our actual costs for cleaning.

Chairman Campbell: Do we have any comments or questions for Council? Hearing none, Councilman Moody made the motion, and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Consideration of approval of terminating the existing lease and entering into a new lease for Bettis Park with the Mt. Canaan Association.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell to walk us through these details.

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Administrator Caddell: As Council is aware, the County has received an apportionment from the state in the amount of \$800,000 for improvements to Bettis Park. As our lease was set to expire April 2025, it is necessary that we extend the lease with the Mt. Canaan Association prior to expending public funds. This new lease agreement is for eight years with an optional 5-year extension. It lists several intended expenditures from the apportionment such as ball field renovations, a shelter, fencing, bleachers, playground equipment, etc. The new lease also adds one baseball field not included in the previous lease. Staff recommends that Council approve this lease.

Chairman Campbell: Just for clarity for people listening, the \$800,000 is from the State Budget. It is not County appropriation.

Administrator Caddell: That is correct. Our local Legislative Delegation secured that money in the State Annual Budget, and it requires no match on our behalf. Our responsibility is simply to get the bids and oversee the work.

Chairman Campbell: Questions or comments from Council? Hearing none, is there a motion to approve the new lease agreement as the Administrator has presented it. Councilwoman Kennion made the motion, and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Consideration of approval of the First Reading of Ordinance 21-23-799, to modify Sections III, IV, XIII, XIV, and XVIII of the Fire Services Contract.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell to first discuss some of the details and have Tracy Freeman to talk to us too.

Administrator Caddell: The Fire Board has been trying to make changes to the contract for a while now but have been stymied by the unanimous vote requirement. Staff has rewritten the Fire Contract to replace the unanimous vote requirement with a 5-2 majority to approve changes. We have removed the reference to a specific millage as millage is set annually by Council. We have made Board terms consistent with another ordinance that references Fire Board terms. Finally, we have made changes to the disposition of vehicle tax funds from the Merriwether Fire Department District. Currently all of the Fire portion of vehicle tax money from Merriwether goes to bring any underfunded Fire Department to the minimum funding level and all remaining funds are distributed equally to the other six departments. The only underfunded department is Northside of approximately \$19,000. Staff's proposed change would restore the remaining six-way split to Merriwether (around \$35,000). This particular item has been endorsed by all of the Fire Departments that currently receive the six-way split. So, they all are in concurrence on that issue.

Tracy Freeman: First and foremost, as a firefighter here in Edgefield County, remember we are here to save life first, and property second. I would like to thank Mr. David Caddell because we have been battling trying to get this contract changed for about a year and a half, but with his help and with the guidance of Mr. Moody, it has been done. This was brought on due to the rising cost of diesel fuel and the increased demand on Merriwether Fire Department. Something

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needed to be done. We started out meeting quarterly and now monthly. As we started digging into the contract, I found the last time it was changed was in 2007. I would love for you to take this contract into consideration and revise this contract. Two things people look at when moving into a new area are public safety and fire departments. Again, I thank Mr. Caddell and Mr. Moody.

Chairman Cambell: Council do you have comments or questions?

Councilman Moody: As Mr. Freeman mentioned, this has been a 13-month project of mine. It started with Mr. LeDuc and then when Mr. Caddell got hired, he put it at the top of his list. Mr. Clark has been on board and very instrumental in getting this contract together and also in providing the numbers as far as rooftops. I want to thank Mr. Freeman and the other seven fire departments for hanging in there with us to see this completed. This ended a 16-year injustice for Merriwether Fire Department. We won't get all the money back, but, I promise the taxpayers of Merriwether that I will not stop until we do. So, I support this 100%.

Councilwoman Ireland: How in the world did they think they were going to get seven people to agree on anything? This is a lot of things to agree on. It is a no-brainer that it needed to be righted.

Hart Clark: I can't speak for the past, but I think it was intentional.

Chairman Campbell: I will say toward what Councilman Moody was saying too is that while this contract is probably not perfect, it is a lot better, and we can improve on it later. But this is much better. I appreciate everybody not letting perfect get in the way of good. Any other questions or comments from Council? Hearing none, is there a motion to give the first reading to ordinance 21-23-799? Councilman Moody made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Consideration of approval of Resolution 21-23-1167, committing to negotiate a fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes agreement between Edgefield County and Project Fastball; identifying the project; and other matters related thereto.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell to discuss this because items six and seven go together. If you would like to take them both together and talk about them. Then, Council will vote on them separately.

Administrator Caddell: This resolution authorizes the County to negotiate the fee in lieu of taxes agreement with project fastball. And the next item is the first reading of the ordinance for project fastball by title only. We will have more information on this project during the September meeting.

Chairman Campbell: Any questions or comments from Council? Hearing none, then on item six, is there a motion to approve resolution 21-23-1167? Councilman Talbert made the motion, and Councilwoman Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Consideration of approval of the First Reading of Ordinance 221-23-780, authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes agreement by and between Edgefield

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County, South Carolina, and Project Fastball to provide for payment of a fee-in-lieu of taxes; authorizing certain infrastructure credits; and other related matters.

Chairman Campbell: We have heard the explanation from Administrator Caddell. Any questions or comments from Council? Hearing none, is there a motion to give the first reading to ordinance 21-23-780? Councilwoman Ireland made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Comments from the Public

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

Report By County Council Members

Councilwoman Kennion: I just wanted you to know that last weekend two Councilmembers attended the South Carolina Association of Counties Conference. It was very informative. I attended three classes there that were very much educational on legal issues and types of government. I was able to share a class with our Administrator Caddell in which we learned a lot about building effective governmental relations. We discussed members as an individuals, ethics, conflicts of interest, South Carolina Code Sections, and how certain issues must have public hearings. I have been on the Council since 2018, and I have learned you can never learn enough. I get so much out of these classes, and it is almost a relaxation to go into class and sit instead of being the teacher. Now, I am a student. I really enjoyed it and am looking forward to going back next year. I hope I can get more Councilmembers on board.

Councilman Moody: I just want to give my monthly Convenience Center report. I believe next month we are bringing an ordinance forward to deal with it. We will have new signage and we are trying to put an ordinance together that will give our Code Enforcement Officer support when he catches somebody. Administrator Caddell has met with the staff at the Convenience Centers and they are in agreement with trying to stop the bad stuff from coming in. So, we are moving forward.

Councilman Talbert: I also attend the South Carolina Association of Counties Conference with Councilwoman Kennion and Administrator Caddell, and I was glad we were able to attend.

Councilwoman Ireland: We had a little storm come through the west side of the county last night. Due to the storm, we had some power outages. I want to thank the County Roads and Bridges, especially those who worked hard with downed trees and road blockages due to them. I know there were First Responders and Volunteer Fire Departments that helped to clear the roads. I want to thank everybody who worked to make it safe again to travel. The storm brought hail and straight-line winds, but it was over in 10 intense minutes. So, I want to thank them all. Also, we have on Highway 23 a reclamation of the pavement. It is kind of rough out there for right now. You can detour around it which is probably a good idea. We have had some constituents here tonight sharing with us their woe of trying to travel the road. It is a little bit of a mess right now, but the road workers are working extremely hard to get the new pavement down. Then,

from my understanding, they will simply resurface from the fire department back to the bridge in Modoc. So, it is going to take a little bit of time, so just bear with us on Highway 23.

County Administrator's Report

1. All downtown County Office buildings will be switching from ATT to Vyve. Most of our lines are on old copper and the sound quality is horrible especially after rains with complete loss of use occasionally. The Courthouse switched to Vyve months ago and staff there have been pleased with the quality and service. All phones will be VOIP. We will soon have a much better product at a lower cost.
2. The Animal Care and Control Facility ribbon cutting will be August 14th at 4:30. The facility is located at 76 Rabbit Trail. We are now fully staffed and ready to open.
3. The Law Enforcement Center is now 30% complete and back on schedule.
4. The Boy Scout Hut has now been cleaned out and the contractor authorized to start work. The Roads and Bridges Department has cleared the brush from around it. We are currently soliciting bids for the shelter and playground.
5. We have begun obtaining bids for the renovations to Bettis Park. We anticipate work beginning within two months.

I'll ask Assistant Administrator Hart Clark to give us an update on the Emergency Radio System.

Assistant Administrator Clark: Some time ago, Council authorized us to redo the County emergency radio system. Since it has been some time, I want to give you and the public a brief update. A good portion of the time that has passed was in design phases, acquiring equipment, and things of that nature. Within the last three months, no activity has taken place. We have had a few people inquiring about information on the status of this project. I have been negotiating lease contracts on four towers throughout the county to put this system on. As of today, I have signed those leases and they are headed back to the lease company. American Towers has to dispatch somebody, and a structural engineer has to do an analysis of each site. Once those approvals are done, then Augusta Communications can continue the project, start mounting the hardware, and begin bringing the actual radio system online. That process will likely still take quite a while due to them having to schedule each department affiliated with it such as Fire Department, Sheriff's Office, and each Town Police Department for radio installation. They will issue and program these radios person by person, car by car. There is still a process that we must go through to complete our radio system. Just so Council knows, all of the equipment has been ordered but not delivered because of storage concerns on the part of Augusta Communications. All they are waiting on is to get those lease agreements, and structural analysis so they can move forward. This should happen pretty quickly once they have the agreements.

Chairman Campbell: Questions or comments from Council? One thing I would like to point out is the three things that I heard. One is that we talked about an animal shelter for a long time. It

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will open a week from today officially. The Council put in last year more than two million dollars for a new countywide communications system. We are on the cusp of getting that accomplished, and a \$40,000,000 Law Enforcement Center that is back on track and 30% complete. So, things are moving and we appreciate that because I know that takes a lot of hard work.

Comments by County Council Chairman

I just have one item: I like to periodically remind people that while they see County Council members once a month at these meetings, this meeting may represent 10% of the Council's work. I appreciate the time and effort that Council is doing behind the scenes between meetings. You meet with constituents and staff and others to research and gain knowledge, to help solve problems, to take training, and to work to make Edgefield County better.

I don't think it would surprise anyone that our Staff does the same thing. They work not only with us, but a wide variety of employees and others to make our County perform well each day.

I want Council and Staff to know your diligence is appreciated, and I thank you for taking the time to do more than is required in these roles.

Adjourn

Council, that's all I have. Since we have no other business to conduct, I'd entertain a motion to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:02 P.M.

Edgefield County Council



Dean Campbell, Council Chairman

ATTEST



Aretha Eubanks, Clerk to Council