

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

December 5, 2023

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

The Edgefield County Council held its regular meeting at 6:00 P.M. Tuesday, December 5, 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

Instrument Book Volume Page
2024-40 OR 2095 200

2024-40
Filed for Record in
Edgefield County, SC
Charles L. Reel, Clerk of Court
01/04/2024 01:54:51 PM
CTY MISCELL \$ 0.00
Bk OR Vol 2095 Page 200 - 218

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

Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Chairman Campbell acknowledged that Reverend Napier is absent and Councilwoman Ireland will do the invocation. Following the invocation was the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Campbell asked that we move the first item of New Business, which is a resolution for Special Recognition. Councilwoman Kennion made the motion, and Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Campbell asked the Council for the approval of the October 26, 2023, Joint Training Session minutes. Councilman Talbert made the motion, and Councilwoman Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Campbell asked the Council for the approval of the November 7, 2023, Regular Monthly Meeting minutes. Councilman Moody made the motion, and Councilwoman Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Campbell asked the Council for the approval of the November 15, 2023, Called Meeting minutes. Councilwoman Kennion made the motion, and Councilman Moody seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Special Recognition

Chairman Campbell acknowledged that we will be recognizing two individuals tonight. I will ask Administrator Caddell to start us off with Fran Forrest.

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Administrator Caddell: Fran Forest is our E911 Director. On the occasion of her retirement, Edgefield County Government would like to extend gratitude to Fran Forrest for her years of service to this county.

Fran's career began as a part time position in the Tax Collector's office just as the county made its transition from rural routes to the implementation of E911 addressing. Shortly there-after, a door opened for a fulltime position as the E-911 director which she has held throughout almost all of her 27-years with Edgefield County.

During her employment, Fran has marked each year with efficiency and dedication. Filling her shoes will not be easy, as she leaves with knowledge that only comes from years of experience.

Fran will be missed for so many reasons, and those who have worked closely with her over the years will surely feel her absence. Many staff members have additional, personal reasons for their gratitude as they have shared more than just office space, they have shared a camaraderie developed over time.

Fran will forever be part of the foundation that has provided faster, lifesaving services for the citizens of Edgefield County. On behalf of the Edgefield County's Governmental staff, council, and boards, thank you Fran Forrest for all you have contributed to serving our beautiful county and its citizens.

Fran Forrest was presented with a gift for her years of service and a picture taken with the County Council.

Chairman Campbell read resolution 21-23-1172, recognizing Edgefield County Hospital CEO Carlos Milanes for his years of dedicated service to Edgefield County. After reading the resolution, Chairman Campbell asked the Council for a motion to approve this resolution. Councilman Talbert made the motion, and Councilman Moody seconded. Motion passed unanimously. The council presented the resolution to Carlos Milanes and a picture was taken.

Comments from the Public

Chairman Campbell opened the public comment period.

John Hudson: He gave a word of spiritual wisdom and encouragement to the Council. I know you are voting tonight to get a raise. I think Scott Cooper gave you a raise two years ago. I think you will find out that you have more on your plate than raises like the new jail which I hope does not get extremely out of budget. I did not get an email to you all, but I think you have more problems coming to the water department and it will be all of your fault. We need to get our focus in line, and our priorities straight. Now, concerning Doc. He is the Administrative Assistant and over Building and Planning. You all are voting tonight to place him over the Planning Commission. This seems like politics and I know you do not want to go down that road. I can't get Doc to return my phone calls and you want to give him more responsibility. That is another one you need to do some real praying about. Vote your conscious and not because everyone is voting. I have nothing against Doc, but I think his plate is too full. I think you all need to grab this bull by the horns and do some regrouping. You put too much on him and he is

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making all the decisions with developers and contractors. I think it is too much for a man and I know he does not want to do wrong. There are a lot of people chattering out there. Please let the Spirit lead you instead of the flesh.

Chairman Campbell: Anyone who would like to speak at the Public Hearing for Ordinance 21-23-784 concerning the Council's raise increase can speak then. Ordinance 21-23-786, Land Development is not in the Public Hearing.

Administrator Caddell: Ordinance 21-23-786 will be in the January 2, 2024 meeting. In this meeting, we are doing the first reading of this ordinance.

Chairman Campbell: If you would like to talk about both of them, then you can do it now or about the one during the Public Hearing.

Kim Kitts: I do want to talk about the same thing that the previous gentleman spoke about. There is a letter from the South Carolina Attorney General's Office concerning Beaufort County giving COLA raises along with county employees is illegal. Are you all planning to proceed with that? Did you ask for clarification from them? How are these proposed salaries determined? It is common knowledge that Edgefield has the smallest budget, but these proposed salaries are the largest for the chairman. So I am interested in understanding how those figures were determined. My other concern is the move to grant sole approval to one person. It sounds like you are trying to eliminate any opposition. It does not look good or pass the smell test. It looks like you are trying to satisfy developers instead of allowing the citizens to have a say. Will there ever be no issued? It kind of sounds like the planning administrator's sole purpose is to avoid lawsuits. What about checks and balances? This is my first meeting and the chatter is real. I am concerned and I want it to be clear that I am not for these issues.

Chairman Campbell: The questions you asked will be answered later in this meeting.

David Travis: I have lived in Edgefield for 28 years. I will start by asking you some questions, but I want to make some facts about Edgefield. The population of Edgefield County is about 26,000. From what I understand, you have lost about four percent of the county population over a year's time. The median income is approximately \$55,000 a year. The per capita income is \$28,000 per year. That is a big range of a few people making a lot of money and a lot more people making less. The poverty rate in Edgefield County is approximately 16%. And that is not good at all. My question to you all is how much time do you spend on County Council business? Let us know that. How does that rate in dollars? What I want you to think about is, with no objection to you being fairly compensated. I do not want you to make much more than the people who are your constituents. You need to think about that. There are a lot of poor people in this county. I read how your increase will be yearly tied to the COLA. From my understanding, you have to bring an ordinance every year to get an increase. I am going to write the Attorney General's Office to see if that is so or not as a concerned citizen. Please do not take it as an attack on you. I just want to make sure it is fair for everybody. I am also going to write about the issue with the Planning Commission. I have a hard time with one person making the decision when a whole planning committee usually makes the decision.

Chairman Campbell said with no more speakers he would close this Public Comment period.

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Reports

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

Public Hearing

Chairman Campbell opened the Public Hearing on Ordinance 21-23-784, an Ordinance to amend Chapter 2 Administration section 2-21 Compensation of the Edgefield County Code of Ordinances.

Scott Cooper: I am in the Sweetwater Community. I did not plan to address this but because my name was mentioned, I thought I would. Many may not be aware that County Council compensation had not been raised in a quarter of a century. I found in my time of service that you can put in the amount of time that you want. I am not criticizing anyone here, nor do you fit the description. However, some individuals serve only by coming to the monthly meeting. It is possible, but not preferable. If you want to make an impact on the community, that is not the investment you want to make. I think you guys make a good investment in our community. I also noted that the Bible was referenced a couple of times by a previous speaker. The Bible talks about the wages of a worker, a man is worthy of his wages. I think it is not right in our state, and the Legislature is the same way. They have not had their compensation increased in over a quarter of a century. So, if you want to move into the 21st century, then you need good people to serve. Compensation is not a bad thing. It entices good community service.

Kathy Ekre: My concerns are exactly the same as those who have stood up here to talk. But, I have a little bit more about being compliant with state law. I have been coming for three years and I know you had to do a major salary adjustment for the Law Enforcement and EMTs. And I believe at that time it was not in the budget or COLA, so it had to be refigured. So, my question is if you have to do that again, will that apply to the County Council? Will you receive an automatic cost of living raise mid-budget? That does not sound legal. The information I received from the Attorney General's Office is very legal and hard to understand. But it sounds like you have to be careful about how the Council gets to approve budget-wise. It sounds like to me that it can't be a budget line item, but you have to brought up as an ordinance separate from regular stuff. Now Sheriff Rowland is an elected official whom I know nothing about his budget. Does he come under a line item budget or is he separate because he is an elected official? It gets into a murky area in my brain. I know the year Councilwoman Ireland brought up the issue with the library and welcome center, with people wanting you to finance the welcome center staff. Councilwoman Ireland's argument at that time was that if the County Council does that, would that employee automatically be counted as an employee? If you all become a regular automated budget item, will you all be under the same argument being counted as regular county employees? To me, it sounds like everything you don't want to deal with is being jumbled up and reconfigured so that there is no discussion, no dissension, and no controversy. That is a good thing for the government to have disagreements. I know it was swept under the rug for 25 years concerning your salary. I was here that night when that information was presented and it was appalling. But, where is the check if this gets out of hand? Is there going to be a cap so it can only go so high? The county citizens should be able to have more input. If you don't like your

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income for doing your job, then you don't have to run for office. Nobody is making you sit on the Council. You are never going to get a livable wage doing government work at this level. You need to move on up. Those were my concerns.

Hearing no more comments, Chairman Campbell closed this Public Hearing

Chairman Campbell opened the Public Hearing for Ordinance, 21-23-783, an ordinance to amend Chapter 6 Animals sections 6-21 and 6-22 of the Edgefield County Code of Ordinance. No one spoke. Chairman Campbell closed this Public Hearing.

Chairman Campbell opened the Public Hearing for Ordinance 21-23-785, an ordinance authorizing the enlargement of the Joint County Industrial Park dated February 11, 2019, between Saluda County, South Carolina, and Edgefield County, South Carolina, so as to enlarge the Park to include certain property of PAC TELL Group, INC. d/b/a US FIBERS (Project Eagle), and other matters related thereto. No one spoke. Chairman Campbell closed this Public Hearing.

Chairman Campbell opened the Public Hearing for Ordinance 21-23-781, an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee agreement by and between Edgefield County, South Carolina, and PAC TELL Group, INC. d/b/a US FIBERS (Project Eagle) providing for payment of a fee-in-lieu of taxes, special source revenue credits and other matters related thereto. No one spoke. Chairman Campbell closed this Public Hearing.

Old Business

1. Consideration of Approval of the Third Reading of Ordinance 21-23-781 to amend Article 5, Division 2, Purchasing of the Edgefield County Code of Ordinances.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell if there is anything different between the second and third reading.

Administrator Caddell: No comments

Chairman Campbell: Council are there any questions or comments? Hearing none.

Councilwoman Ireland made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Consideration of approval of the Third Reading of Ordinance 21-23-782, authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes agreement by and between Edgefield County, South Carolina, and PAC TELL Group, INC. d/b/a US FIBERS to provide for payment of a fee-in-lieu of taxes; authorizing certain infrastructure credits; and other related matters.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell if there is anything different between the first and second reading of this ordinance.

Administrator Caddell: I have nothing to add except to point out in prior readings this project was referred to as Project Eagle. We can reveal that this is US Fibers.

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

3. Consideration of approval of the Second Reading of Ordinance 21-23-785, authorizing the enlargement of the Joint County Industrial Park dated February 11, 2019, between Saluda County, South Carolina, and Edgefield County, South Carolina, to enlarge the Park to include certain property of PAC TELL, Group, INC. d/b/a US FIBERS (Project Eagle), and other matters related thereto.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell anything new we need to understand or discuss.

Administrator Caddell: Again, this multicounty park is for the benefit of US Fibers, previously referred to as Project Eagle.

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

4. Consideration of approval of the Second Reading of Ordinance 21-23-784, to amend Chapter 2 Administration Section 2-21 Compensation of the Edgefield County Code of Ordinance.

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

Administrator Caddell: In population group four, there is an association of counties list of salaries for the County Councils. Four counties pay less, and six pay more than Edgefield County right now. We are comparing 2023 Edgefield County numbers because we know what they are. We are comparing those to 2022 from the other counties. There may have been an increase in the Council salaries to other counties, but they were not listed. So that is unknown. According to these comparisons, we are within \$10 of the average. That is very important to the discussion of this ordinance. I want to inform everyone that I am aware of this Attorney General's case. What happened in this case was they intended to go down the same path as we are but had not sought the State Law. The State Law requires that if any Cost of Living is given to the County Council they must wait until the January after a general election to receive the salary increase. That is absolutely true. The question that Beaufort County posed to the Attorney General was can we give the salary increase to the County Council of Beaufort County in July with the regular employees. That was not approved because it violates the state law. Beaufort County revised their ordinance, voted on it, passed it and now it is implemented into their law. There is no proposed increase in the County Council salary at this time. Typically, during the budget cycle, we discuss cost of living increases for staff employees. The cost-of-living increases apply to all other elected officials in the county except the County Council. The County Council is treated differently. We are in the midpoint right now, or average with the other counties. We would not like to have another situation like we did in the past with no raises for decades. Then some monstrous increase is needed to place the County Council salary where it needs to be because they had not received an increase in years. We are proposing to tie the County Council salary to

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the county employee cost of living increase. The second part of the state law says, you have to have a specific ordinance that deals with the annual increase. That is absolutely true. That would be our budget ordinance. As I am about to read our amended compensation ordinance, you will see how we will comply with that. In our budget ordinance, we have to specifically mention that we are giving a cost of living increase to the County employees including the County Council. So that would have to be voted on every single year. This ordinance does not make anything automatic. I will read the proposed parts of our ordinance. The part that was read is the part that the Beaufort County ordinance does not have. We want to ensure that specifically this would be considered by vote, and by budget each year. That is four council meetings where this will be announced to the public.

Chairman Campbell: The way this ordinance is written today, I am assuming that anytime a raise is given to employees, it is not given to us. It is only the one-time-a-year ordinance when the County Council will get a raise.

Administrator Caddell: That is correct. It would have to be specifically covered in the budget ordinance and it would not apply to the step increases that staff receives. Just the cost-of-living increase.

Chairman Campbell: If the county employees receive 10 pay increases, the County Council would only receive one. The most increase the County Council can receive is one.

Administrator Caddell: That is correct.

Chairman Campbell: You mentioned that it will be talked about four times throughout the budget process. But it will also be posted in the newspaper with the budget ad.

Administrator Caddell: Yes, it would be. First, it would be mentioned in the budget memo during the budget work session. Then, in the April, May, and June regular council meetings.

Chairman Campbell: Questions or comments from the Council.

Councilman Moody: I would like to make an amendment to put a cap of two percent on this ordinance. So, if other employees get a higher increase, the Council would be limited to a two percent increase only.

Chairman Campbell: This is a clarifying question so I know what you mean. You are saying to cap it at two percent, is that for the two years together or a year?

Councilman Moody: Two years together.

Chairman Campbell: So, does everyone understand the amendment?

Attorney Marine: You have to make a motion to accept the ordinance as is. Then make a motion to amend it.

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Chairman Campbell: Council, just to get to the amendment part, we have to move to approve the second reading of ordinance 21-23-784. Councilman Talbert made the motion. Motion dies for lack of second.

5. Consideration of approval of the Second Reading of Ordinance 21-23-783, to amend Chapter 6 Animals sections 6-21 and 6-22 of the Edgefield County Code of ordinances.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell if there is anything new since the second reading.

Administrator Caddell: I have no new information on this ordinance. This was just changing the dates from business days to calendar days. This would allow our facility to run a little more efficiently.

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

New Business

1. Consideration of approval of Resolution 21-23-1172, recognizing Edgefield County Hospital CEO Carlos Milanes for his years of dedicated service to Edgefield County, was moved to earlier on the agenda.

2. Consideration of approval of the Grant Award Agreement with the SC Department of Agriculture on behalf of Project Freezer Fresh.

Chairman Campbell: I will call Administrator Caddell to explain this item to us.

Administrator Caddell: Approval of this item will allow the County to serve as a pass-through for grant funds from the SC Department of Agriculture to a local company to construct a freezer storage facility. Our participation will allow this grant which will incentivize \$6.5 million in local investment leading to 53 jobs. There is no investment required of the County, as such staff recommends approval.

Chairman Campbell: If they don't hit these markers, there are no penalties for the county. They just don't get the grant money.

Administrator Caddell: Exactly. If they don't hit the markers, they cannot submit for reimbursement. We do not have oversight responsibilities.

Chairman Campbell: Questions or comments from the Council.

Councilwoman Ireland: Do you know who the freezer will belong to?

Administrator Caddell: A very large existing agricultural entity in Edgefield County.

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

3. Consideration of approval to increase EMA Director James Crowder's hours from 35 hours per week to 40. The additional five hours will be dedicated to website improvement and maintenance. The estimated increase in pay is \$7,000 per year funded by the Administration.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell if there is anything else we need to know about this recommendation.

Administrator Caddell: The County has long needed someone on staff to focus on website improvements and updates. Foster has the knowledge and desire to perform this work. Any requests for updates would go directly to him. He is currently a 35-hour employee, we are asking to increase his hours to 40 a week. The extra 5 hours a week would be maintaining the website.

Chairman Campbell: Questions or comments from the Council.

Councilwoman Ireland: Would we still need to use the old computer group or will he maintain it fully?

Administrator Caddell: This is done on an order-by-order basis. So, if there is something truly complex that he needs support for, then he has that assistance for help.

Councilwoman Ireland: Does he have access to the website to do the work?

Administrator Caddell: Yes, and we have staff now that have access as well.

Councilwoman Ireland: This has been a concern within ourselves and the community about the website.

Administrator Caddell: If you have a complaint, now we have someone directly to take it to.

Chairman Campbell: When Mr. Crowder retires, and a new EMA Director is hired, will these additional hours be part of their responsibilities? Or, will it come back to the 35-hour-a-week position?

Administrator Caddell: The EMA Director position be paid the additional five hours from the Administration budget. But, for the new fiscal year, we will create in the IT Department. However, the EMA Director position will always be 35 hours a week. If the future EMA Director is capable of performing the same tasks, then they would be compensated for those five hours from the Administration budget.

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

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4. Consideration of approval of the first reading of Ordinance 21-23-786, to amend Chapter 24 Land Development Sections 24-248, 251, 252, 285 and 286 of the Edgefield County Code of Ordinances including Application, Major Subdivisions, Land Development other than a subdivision, County Planning Administrator, and County Planning Commission.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell if he will explain this and answer any questions about this.

Administrator Caddell: The Edgefield County Planning Commission considered proposed changes to the Land Development Ordinance related to application and administration. These changes were proposed by staff. The Planning Commission voted to advance these changes to the County Council. It is important to note that the Planning Commission did vote on this decision to have these changes put in place. The changes primarily relate to granting the Planning Administrator final decision-making authority after staff review on issues of land development and major subdivisions. Right now, if the Planning Commission approves or disapproves something, appeals go to court. Now, if the Planning Administrator denies an application, there is an appeals process before going to court. This does add another form of recourse for the developer because they could appeal to the Planning Commission. Staff recommends approval of these changes because we do have a professional planning staff. Many counties of our size do have professional planning staff do administer the program in this way.

Chairman Campbell: One of the things I want to point out that came up in the conversations was that this is a reaction to the lawsuit against the Planning Commission. The answer to that is no, this is not what this is. We have been working on this for a long time trying to see if there is a better way to do this because a lot of counties are doing the way we are proposing. The timing is coincidental. I want people to understand that staff is accountable for this. Meaning, whether or not a development is approved or not by the professional staff, it is still reported to the Planning Commission.

Administrator Caddell: Correct.

Chairman Campbell: The next step would be that the Planning Commission would hear it in the public. Also, the staff has a boss who is you the Administrator.

Administrator Caddell: Correct.

Chairman Campbell: They also have the Council as bosses too in a sense. The Planning Commission does not have that. They get to do what they want to do because they are an appointed body. So, there is accountability here. The other thing I want to point out is when a developer comes into the planning office and says I want to go to that piece of land and put in a new subdivision. At that time, can you walk through the steps of what happens so people will know these several steps?

Administrator Caddell: When a developer comes into the planning office, with a specific proposal for the development of a piece of property that they want to develop, the Planning

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Administrator would first take their application and evaluate it on completeness, and not advance it to the Planning Commission unless it was a complete application. If this application had issues, then the Planning Administrator would notify them of these issues. Once there is a complete application, it would go through the Planning Commission to hold a Public Hearing. That would allow advertising and public comments. Then the Planning Commission could make a recommendation to the Planning Administrator. The Planning Administrator will also review the application for any deficiencies and items out of compliance with the ordinance. Then the Planning Administrator will make the final decision using the information from the public comments, Planning Commission recommendation, and the application.

Chairman Campbell: Let me make sure not to say this wrong. The developer comes in, then after the application is reviewed and deemed to go forward, the property that is involved will be posted with a posting stating that a development is being considered for this property. It is also posted in the newspaper and receives a Public Hearing just as it is all done today. Then it will go to the Planning Commission just like it is done today. And the Planning Commission will get to hear from the developers just like today. The only thing that changes is at the very end where the Planning Administrator gets to make the final decision based on the public comments and Planning Commission recommendations. Did I say anything incorrect?

Administrator Caddell: That is all correct with the addition that if declined there is a local appeals process. It is important to note that no proposed changes to the Public Hearing requirements or planned development and subdivisions.

Chairman Campbell: So, when I read from citizens that I won't know about developments until the bulldozer pulls up to my back door is incorrect. But it is correct if you never keep up with local things. The land is posted, it is in the paper, and discussions are occurring about this because it is all public. So, there is nothing behind closed doors being discussed. The public is involved. I want to make sure that the public understands and that some of these questions are being answered. Questions or comments from the Council?

Councilwoman Ireland: I want to ask a hypothetical question. If this system was in place for our last development, of which it was recommended by staff that it was to be passed, but the Planning Commission voted against it, how would it have looked differently for the developer?

Administrator Caddell: It would have followed a very similar process with the Public Hearing. The ultimate decision-making would not have been through the Planning Commission vote to approve or deny. The Planning Commission would have made the recommendation. But in this particular case, the Planning Administrator and County Attorney advised that this development complied with the regulations. So, it would have been approved.

Councilwoman Ireland: How would that work if the Planning Commission and the public are speaking out about it, but we do not have ordinances in place that we believe would prevent it? So, how does that look?

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Administrator Caddell: The Planning Commission could propose changes to the ordinance.

Councilwoman Ireland: We do not have a recourse for a developer if it is approved.

Administrator Caddell: That is correct. A developer is not going to appeal if they are approved.

Councilwoman Ireland: This has happened a couple of times since I have been serving and covering the Council. Sometimes the outcome has worked in the public favor and sometimes in the Council's favor. Is there a way we can with such opposition have a balance between the two sides?

Administrator Caddell: As you know our Planning Administrator is absent tonight. But we will explore the legalities and have an answer for the Council.

Councilwoman Ireland: I would like to explore that. I do not want to negate representatives but allow them to have a voice.

Chairman Campbell: Part of what has come up in the past going back years is a developer comes to the Planning Commission. There is a series of boxes that have to be checked. Some are state laws and some are ordinances that are passed by us through the years. Put yourself in the Planning Commission's shoes, you are sitting there and a developer comes and for some reason, you do not like the developer. The Planning Commission still has to check every box because it is the law and it is legal. And you come to that and think to yourself why am I here approving this? It is because the state law and local ordinances require you to approve this. This is where the Planning Commission has to follow the local ordinances and state law. They do not have the allowance to pick and choose who they like or dislike. It is not a free-for-all with the Planning Commission. It is not a free-for-all with the Council. It is not what some people think, or read on social media. It is about you going to the Planning Commission and finding out what is being discussed. If you have concerns, ask. It is not the straight path you may think. It is different. When not followed properly, it causes the Planning Commission all kinds of concerns. Some developers will work to correct the concerns of which is a choice. Some developers won't. These are negotiations between the developer and Planning Commission in public and can still take place. I am not sure what we will lose by doing this but I know do we will gain the ability to do better work for the citizens of the county.

Councilman Moody: First of all, I want to say at this present time, we have professional staff. Twenty years from now, we may not. We need to set something in place today that will cover us down the years. I was involved with some things, a developer is here, and the Public Hearing allowed people to have their say, and get facts. True they could have already gone ahead and started. But instead, they went back to the drawing board and made the changes. Now we have a nice development of 33 houses right now. But what I keep hearing is that people do not want to lose that right. They think they are going to be left out of the decision. What I think the Planning Commission needs to do in their work session is get back to planning, instead of reacting to

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fights that have come up about developers. They need to get with the developers, sit down, and work this out before it gets to where it is now.

Councilwoman Ireland: Or, put the ordinances in place.

Councilman Moody: We need to have a check and balance system. Maybe the County Council is the final check mark.

Councilman Talbert: I would like to say thank you to the Administrator, and the Council because we have a job to do. As indicated earlier, we have a professional staff in place of whom I am proud of what they are doing. Now if we continue to go the way we are going, then we will do much better for the county. With all said and done, I am in favor of this.

Councilman Moody: The Planning Commission is mandated by the state law in certain things. One of those is approving or disapproving submitted plans. That is state law.

Councilwoman Ireland: So, what you are saying is if we do this, we are taking the power away from them.

Councilman Moody: No, that is not what I am saying.

Attorney Marine: The ordinance here is patterned after a Charleston ordinance. They are still hearing matters related but not checking the boxes.

Councilwoman Ireland: But are we taking the power away from them?

Attorney Marine: No, we are not. But I will get back to you.

Councilwoman Ireland: Is that what I am hearing you questioning Councilman Moody?

Councilman Moody: I am only stating the facts. If they don't have the right to approve or disapprove, then what are they here for?

Chairman Campbell: They can approve some of the subdivisions. Major versus minor.

Councilman Moody: My point is all subdivisions whether major or minor, need to be done the old way. Anything else such as the dog kennel, Planning Administrator can approve. We do not need a public hearing for that. Subdivisions where people are going to be affected, I think we do need a public hearing the old way.

Attorney Marine: Minor subdivisions are not subject to public hearings and we have to abide by our ordinances.

Chairman Campbell: Any other questions or comments from the Council? Hearing none.

Councilman Talbert made the motion, and Chairman Campbell seconded. The motion passed four to one. Councilman Moody voted to oppose this ordinance.

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Councilwoman Ireland: I would like some clarification on the other point, Attorney Marine as I know you will.

5. Consideration of approval to award the contract to Gore Construction to construct a press box (used for scorekeeping) at the Bettis Park football field.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell to review this with us.

Administrator Caddell: This would be an actual enclosed scorekeeper box to replace the current elevated deck for the football field at Bettis Park. We did receive a late bid for \$28,000 for a total of three bids, but Gore Construction remains the low bidder. Gore is a local contractor and has done excellent work on the Scout Park project. This project will be funded by the Bettis Park state appropriation.

Chairman Campbell: Questions or comments from the Council. Hearing none. Councilwoman Kennion made a motion, and Councilman Moody seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Consideration of approval to convert one of the Animal Care and Control Facility part-time positions to full-time at an increased cost of approximately \$22,000.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell to explain this recommendation.

Administrator Caddell: Our ACCF facility is running very well, staff is doing an excellent job, but we need to increase staffing hours to keep up. We propose to make one of our excellent part-time employees a full-time employee. We have unused salary funding elsewhere in the general fund to support this change.

Chairman Campbell: Questions or comments from the Council?

Councilman Moody: I went out there last week to deliver some horse blankets. Jessica who has named all of the dogs is the full-time employee there and is fabulous. Sheriff Rowland introduced me to the part-time employee who is going to be the new full-time employee over the weekend at the parade. The place is being run very well and the dogs are taken care of.

Councilwoman Ireland: We had said going into this that it was new to us and we are learning. Then as we went along, we would figure it out and make those needed changes.

Sheriff Rowland: We are overwhelmed.

Councilwoman Ireland: We can only imagine. But on the better end, we are still better than what we were paying to Aiken to take our animals. Now they are being adopted out.

Chairman Campbell: I will point out that on the way to this meeting, I received a phone call from the Saluda County Chairman whom we have partnered with for the Animal Care and Control Facility. He said it is really running well. He said he is pleased and I only hear good comments about the facility. Any further comments or questions from the Council? Hearing none.

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Councilwoman Ireland made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Consideration of approval to contract with Moseley Architects to conduct an EMS/Sheriff's substation Needs Study and Concept Plan at a cost of \$16,500.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell to review this recommendation with us.

Administrator Caddell: A priority of our Strategic Plan was to address the needs of Emergency Medical Services in terms of facilities, staffing, and equipment. This Needs study will answer these questions and facilitate both short and long term planning. This is also recommendation one of our recently formed User Fee Committee. We have funds available for professional services in the general fund. We need hard data to make these decisions, as such staff recommends approval.

Chairman Campbell: This is just the study for hard facts?

Administrator Caddell: Correct. It will address staffing and the cost to pay for all the needs of this facility.

Councilman Talbert: Is there a time frame for this study?

Administrator Caddell: Three months.

Councilwoman Ireland: I just want to point out that studies are always done first so we may have the facts before we decide on a big project. This is typical of how government works.

Administrator Caddell: That is correct so we will have the data to show the public.

Chairman Campbell: Where will the \$16,500 come from?

Administrator Caddell: We have a county-wide services line item in the General Funds budget that we will use the funds from.

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

8. Consideration of approval to allow staff to produce a capital improvement plan.

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

Administrator Caddell: This capital improvement plan is a study that can be conducted by existing staff. This is recommendation two of the User Fee Committee. It is required before conducting an impact fee study. An impact fee is a fee assessed on new construction to help offset the costs of services that must increase as a result of the new construction.

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

9. Consideration of approval for staff to assemble a stakeholder meeting between the residents of Orchard Estates, developers, and staff to collaborate on a path forward on failing infrastructure within the subdivision.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell if he will explain this to us.

Administrator Caddell: This is recommendation three of the User Fee Committee. The roads in Orchard Estates likely began construction with the intent that they be turned over to the County. This never happened and the original developer went bankrupt. The roads were never completed to County standards. It is only a matter of time until sections completely fall apart. We are asking the Council to authorize staff to assemble a stakeholder meeting with residents and current builders in Orchard Estates to discuss a path forward.

Chairman Campbell: Questions or comments from the Council? Hearing none. Councilwoman Ireland made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

10. Consideration of approval of rental rates for the County Recreation building at Scout Park.

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

Administrator Caddell: We wanted to proactively set rental rates for this facility as we have already had inquiries. The only remaining work on the building is gutter installation. We will hold off on rentals until the shelter and playground are complete. Of note, the cleaning fee is exactly what we will pay to have it cleaned and the security deposit is refundable.

Chairman Campbell: Questions or comments from the Council?

Councilwoman Ireland: How long for the opening of the shelter?

Administrator Caddell: I feel the shelter will be ready the first week of January. The playground equipment had to be ordered so I am waiting on word of the delivery for setup. But, if it is going to be a while, we may go ahead and open this facility. I am hoping we can do this all at one time.

Councilwoman Ireland: I am super excited about this.

Councilman Moody: Are the rates the same as Sweetwater Community Center?

Administrator Caddell: No.

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

Comments from the Public

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Chairman Campbell opened the second public comment period.

Connie Bright: I have come to speak with you specifically about concerns that I have. My questions are, what is going up next to Mt. Caanan Baptist Church Garden? We have a small fire station behind a house on Bettis Academy, who are the volunteers? Who do I call? We have all of the new structures going up, where is the infrastructure, grocery stores. What can I count on as infrastructure? How is it going to benefit me as a tax payer?

Chairman Campbell: If your house is on fire, call 911.

Connie Bright: I called 911 this morning. It took them a half hour to get to my house.

Chairman Campbell: You can speak with Garrett Lynn, EMS Director after the meeting.

Connie Bright: I live in a community of elderly sick people. My husband is one of them.

Councilwoman Ireland: You have the County Line Fire Department that is nearest to you. They do have first responders in your area that will respond to you.

Connie Bright: Where do I find the numbers?

Councilwoman Kennion: You have six volunteers who will respond to you. I have the contact information, and I will get it to you.

Chairman Campbell: You have your phone number on the sheet, is it alright with you, I would like to share it with our Assistant County Administrator who is not in attendance due to being under the weather. He will call you to answer the questions concerning infrastructure. I do not think Administrator Caddell has all the answers you are requesting.

Administrator Caddell: I do not, but someone on our staff will be calling you to answer those concerns. I have been petitioning for a grocery store on Highway 25 and the Bettis Academy area with our Economic Development. That is a need in that area.

Connie Bright: You don't need another Walmart, or KJ's. We need a local store so we don't have to drive 15 miles either way to get our staples and medicine.

Scott Cooper: I reside in the Sweetwater portion of the county. I am coming to you tonight as a concerned citizen with three things. First, Merry Christmas to you for all the work you have done and do for our community. Second, I want to congratulate you on tonight's agenda and preparing it for the long-range capital improvement plan. I think that is phenomenal. I am excited about that and discussing the potential of executing the impact fees. Third, in 2020, Edgefield County executed its first capital project sales tax. As we all know, 100% of the proceeds are to go to support the new Law Enforcement Center which was direly needed. I thank you for your efforts towards that. My understanding is that we could execute a second capital project sales tax. I would like for you to consider that if you are not looking into that already in 2024 because there are other things we may need. I have two things I would put on that list if they were to pass. One is to partner with North Augusta for the redevelopment of the North Augusta Country Club. I know that is going to come to fruition regardless in our county. It is a municipality resource and a county resource. I think it would benefit the lower end of the county. The second thing is to

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continue to support the Rails to Trails program and probably fund that. That would be an economic boom for the economy for the entire county. Possibly to expand that from the Greenway into Edgefield.

Hearing no other comments, Chairman Campbell closed the public comment period.

Report By County Council Members

Councilman Moody: I think I am correct in saying that we are going into the 21st century with our Facebook and that we are going to put something out there.

Administrator Caddell: We do have a staff member who is now maintaining the Facebook page.

County Administrator's Report

1. Ginny Wall has been hired to fill the E911 position. She will continue with her CTC duties as well. She is currently a 40-hour employee. The E911 position is a 35-hour-per-week position. As Ginny will be based in Building and Planning and has an inspector's license, we have asked her to maintain that license and use her remaining 5 hours per week assisting in inspections and related tasks.
2. Our employee Christmas lunch will be held here on Thursday 12/7 from 11:30-1:30. We look forward to seeing as many as can come for some great food. I know some on Council may have a conflict with their day jobs, but we hope you can come.
3. We recently received a \$25,000 grant to construct a playground at the Sweetwater Community Center. We will start on that project very soon. County employee Joe Simpson just painted the entire interior of this facility and did a great job. He is on to paint the activities room at the library next.
4. We will hold a Called Council meeting on Dec. 19 at 5 pm to consider an Economic Development issue.

Comments by County Council Chairman

I have just a few items.

2023 has been a very productive year for County Council. I discussed some of these accomplishments last month at the Legislative Delegation meeting, and I'll also highlight our successes at our Intergovernmental Meeting next month.

But let me summarize it all to say that we are moving Edgefield County forward in a smart and strategic way. We're protecting our citizens, and we're ensuring that we are a County Council that listens and responds to people.

I appreciate both Council members and our staff for the hard work each person has done this year to ensure we have the best County in which to live, work, and play.

Finally, I wish for everyone a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

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Council, that's all we have as far as business to conduct. I would like to move that we go into executive session for a legal briefing, followed by annual performance evaluations of our Clerk and Administrator.

Chairman Campbell made the motion to move into an Executive Session for a legal briefing, followed by our annual performance evaluation of our Clerk and Administrator, Councilman Talbert seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

The County Council entered into Executive Session at 6:37 PM

The County Council returned from Executive Session to Regular Session at 8:00 PM. No actions were taken.

Adjourn

Chairman Campbell: Since we have no other business to conduct, I'd ask a motion to adjourn. Councilman Talbert made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously. The County Council meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Edgefield County Council



Dean Campbell, Council Chairman

ATTEST



Aretha Eubanks, Clerk to Council