

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

April 2, 2024

6:00 PM

County Council Chambers

The Edgefield County Council held its regular meeting at 6:00 P.M. Tuesday, April 2, 2024, 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
Andrew Marine, County Attorney

Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Chairman Campbell acknowledged that Reverend Keith Gordon is absent, and Clerk to Council, Aretha Eubanks, will do the invocations. Following the invocation was the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Campbell asked that we move New Business number one, a resolution honoring two SCDOT employees, to be next on the agenda before our guest speakers. Councilwoman Kennion made the motion to approve the agenda as amended, and Councilman Talbert seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution

Chairman Campbell read resolution 23-24-0008, honoring SCDOT employees Jay Grey and Shaquille Oliver for their actions to render aid to a colleague. After reading the resolution, Chairman Campbell asked the Council for a motion to approve this resolution. Councilwoman Ireland made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously. The Council presented the resolution to Jay Grey and Shaquille Oliver, and a picture was taken.

Guest Speaker

Grant Davis, Partner at Mauldin & Jenkins

I am here to present the audit process results to you all. The documents I will cover are in a box that will be presented for your viewing. The good news is we have issued a clean opinion on the County's financial statement. The term we use is unmodified, and you will note that at the beginning of our report. We have issued two other documents, the Auditors' Discussion and Analysis document. The purpose of that document is to communicate all the things that we are

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required to communicate as a part of performing the audit to you. Just briefly to summarize some of the things are:

- We are independent of the county.
- We did not encounter any significant difficulties in conducting the audit.
- We did not have any disagreements with management.

All of these things are memorialized in this document. There are also a couple of recommendations for improvement and some communication regarding certain internal control deficiencies that we identified as part of the audit. Again, all of this is communicated in the Auditor Discussion and Analysis document. I would like to give you a brief look at the financial perspective. The General Fund is of primary interest in any county government. The County ended fiscal year 23 with \$9.7 million in Total Fund Balance. The most significant portion of that is the Unassigned Fund Balance at about \$6.4 million. That is an increase in Total Fund Balance of \$2.1 million. That is up from \$7.5 million to about \$9.7 million from year 2022 to year 2023. That Fund Balance figure of \$9.7 million represents about six months of balance on hand at the end of the fiscal year. The county's primary or most significant individual revenue is property taxes. The calendar for which that is paid shows most of those receipts are made in December, January, and February on an annual basis. So, to be at June which is what we would characterize as a lean time of year in terms of cash flow and having enough to get you back to the end of the year to the new year where you begin collecting your property tax revenues is a healthy place to be. If you take your spending for fiscal year 2023 of \$1.6 million a month in the General Fund, and divide that by the number of days in a year. Then, that will give you about six months. This is demonstrating if you did not take in another dollar past June 30th, you could operate at the level you did in 2023 for six months. Again, a very healthy place to be. The other thing that is unique this year in the report is the inclusion of the Edgefield Public Facilities Corporation. All of its financial activities of course that is the entity that was created to issue bonds, to pay for the new or finance portion of the new law enforcement center. Those activities are included in these financial statements as well. The Edgefield Public Facilities Corporation meets the definition of what we call a blended component unit. It shows up in here as a fund similar to the General Fund. You will see its activities in here as well. Overall, a very positive financial perspective in the General Fund with no complaints from us performing the audit.

Chairman Campbell: Council, do you have any questions or comments. Hearing none. It sounds like we have a very healthy County financially at this moment. We are required to accept this as information. Councilman Talbert made the motion, and Councilwoman Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously to accept the audit report.

Katie Kosloski, Greenfield Development Manager, Luck Companies (prospective industry): I have been with the organization a little over 12 years and have had unique opportunity to have several roles in my time there. I am not here just for the Luck family, but for the nearly 1,000 other associates who are proud to call Luck Company as their employer. We are here tonight to introduce ourselves to the Edgefield County community and share information about an exciting opportunity within this community. As we navigate our permitting process, we ask for your feedback, input, and help in the next few months. I know time is limited tonight, so I will give a very high level of detail. I will provide my contact information for questions as we go forward so

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that everyone will stay informed, as well as the link for the brochure. The Luck Company was founded nearly 100 years ago. Since 1923, it has been built on caring for people. While our business is providing critical infrastructure materials to communities across the southeast. Our true mission and purpose is to create a positive impact and ignite human potential. The Luck Company is currently in its fourth generation of family leadership. Charlie Luck is our current president and CEO. The fourth generation of family leadership will succeed him, Richard Luck as he steps into the helm in the next few years. The Luck Company is the parent organization to several different business units which we hope to bring to Edgefield County in the future. The one of which our project will focus on is Luck Stone. Luck Stone is the nation's largest family-owned and operated producer of crushed stone. Crushed stone is a construction aggregate that provides the foundation of the roads that we drive on, the hospitals that we visit, schools that we send our children to, and homes that we reside in every night. We produce that material by extracting a granitic type material in a quarry type setting. Luck Stone has a history of setting the standard in the industry for our attention to detail, aesthetic, safety, and health. Our other two business units show our true commitment to our creativity as they were formed out of Luck Stone. Luck Ecosystems was founded with a focus of turning a material that most in our industry call waste or overburden to dirt. You have to remove this material to get down to the material that can create those construction aggregate materials. They use them to create environmental performance products such as stream restoration materials and another line of environmental performance products. They also have a sports line that can be found not only on little league but also on major league baseball fields across the southeast. Our Luck Real Estate venture was also formed out of Luck Stone in that our business often purchases a large amount of land with the hope that we would work with the local communities just like yourselves to find the highest and best use for that land that will work to bring more jobs, and more tax revenue to the county. While you may just be meeting us for the first time tonight, we have been in and around Edgefield County for the past two years, working to identify a site and conducting an immense amount of research to prove the viability of a quarry in Edgefield County. We have identified a site off of Woodlawn Road, five miles west of the Sportsman's Corner, on the border of McCormick County. The site will provide critical infrastructure materials to the citizens of Edgefield County and surrounding areas for over 70 years. Luck Stone has a brand for exceeding expectations. Our use requires a high level of trust not only from yourselves but the neighbors that we will be operating near. Because of that and because we know it is hard to trust someone that you just met today, the Luck Company has offered a set of voluntary conditions. If our permit is accepted, this would make these conditions legally binding. Meaning, at any time Edgefield County could remove our right to operate. These also work to meet and exceed the design criteria that Edgefield County has outlined in the ordinance. You all have a copy of all of those in your packets. We will also post these on our media and make them available to the community at large. The next steps are we have submitted our application for a conditional use permit for Edgefield County. We also have to submit an application to SCDHEC for a surface mining permit, air permit and a water discharge permit. But more importantly, the next step is to get to know the Edgefield County Community. You will see us do a phone call campaign over the next few days. All of our local neighbors should have some sort of contact from either myself or from my team of fellow associates. We will also host a community information meeting at the beginning of May. Also, you will see us in front of the Planning Commission here in the next

few weeks as we work with them to answer questions and share more details about our project. As I mentioned earlier, trust is hard to earn. We don't want to take that lightly, and we will be asking for your feedback on how we can gain that trust and engage with this community in a meaningful and positive way. The ways we have done that in the past is by partnering with conservation minded groups like the James River Association in Virginia to foster improved habitat for the sturgeon which is a threatened and endangered species. We have worked with Chester County to foster and facilitate a workforce development program for juniors and seniors who were able to have mock interviews and develop resumes, as well as have a professional headshot done as a next step as they left high school. We don't want to claim to know what is best for Edgefield, so we would love any input and feedback on the best way to make to make a positive impact as we move forward. I know I have hit very highly on our organization and our projects at large. So, I would like to provide my contact information. I am available anytime for questions as we move forward.

Katie Kosloski
Luck Companies, Greenfield Development Manager

804-400-2591

kkosloski@luckcompanies.com

A link to the application booklet that each member of the Council and the Planning Commission has received:

 [Luck EdgefieldApplicationBooklet FIN32124.pdf](#)

Chairman Campbell: Is the map behind you where it will be located?

Katie Kosloski: It will be located on Woodlawn Road off of Martintown Road, about five miles west of Hwy 230, right on the McCormick County Line.

Chairman Campbell: Does it go into McCormick County any?

Katie Kosloski: It does not. The property is located entirely in Edgefield County. The project is planned for a little over 430 acres. We also plan to develop a trail system along Stevens Creek that would allow public access.

Chairman Campbell: If everything landed butter side up, when would you start work?

Katie Kosloski: We hope to start in the next two to five years, depending on the market and the economy.

Chairman Campbell: I will open up to the Council. Do you have any questions or comments? Hearing none, thank you for being here and leaving us with this information.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Campbell asked for approval of the February 6, 2024, regular meeting minutes. Councilwoman Kennion 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 the Council if they had any questions or comments on the reports. There were none.

Consent Agenda

Chairman Campbell: Is there a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented? Councilman Moody made the motion, and Councilwoman Ireland seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

1. Consideration of approval of the second reading of ordinance number 23-24-002, to enter into a Multi-County Industrial Park (MCIP) agreement with Aiken County for Project Charge.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask Administrator Caddell is there anything new we should know about concerning this ordinance.

Administrator Caddell: Thank you. There is no new information. However, I would like to emphasize that Edgefield County will receive 1% of the Fee in Lieu of Taxes. This will not involve creating a new industrial area requiring any investment from Edgefield County. The actual name of the company would be revealed at the third reading, and the public hearing would occur during the next meeting.

Chairman Campbell: It would be nice to have two or three of these on the agenda every time because they are good for us. Any questions or comments from the Council on this ordinance. Hearing none, Councilman Talbert made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

1. Consideration of approval or resolution 23-24-0008, honoring SCDOT employees Jay Grey and Shaquille "Shaq" Oliver for their actions to render aid to a colleague was moved to earlier on the agenda.

2. Consideration of approval of resolution number 23-24-0006, "Fair Housing Resolution.

Chairman Campbell: This is a standard resolution we do every year, but I will ask the administrator if we need to know anything about this.

Administrator Caddell: This resolution is required to be run every April as a requirement of the 1989 SC Fair Housing Act. Various government funds rely on us passing this resolution.

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

3. Consideration of approval of resolution 23-24-0007, to accept roadways along with drainage easements in Trailside II pending receipt of \$2,765 for minor road repairs. Thomas E. Mixon is the owner of the roadways along with drainage easements in Trailside II and wants to dedicate these roadway and drainage easements to the County of Edgefield.

Chairman Campbell: I will ask the administrator if he will walk us through some of these details.

Administrator Caddell: We have received multiple requests from citizens to accept these roads into the County road system. Some aspects of our county government thought this had already occurred. There is no reason why this should not have happened. We assessed these roads for suitability for acceptance into the county road system. Thomas Mixon is the owner and desires to deed the roads over to us. We recommend approval upon receipt of \$2,765 paid to the County for minor road repairs. One sunken area leads to a cul-de-sac, stop signs needing replacing, and several potholes.

Chairman Campbell: Any questions or comments from the Council?

Councilman Moody: Is the \$2,700 proposed to fix everything that is out there right now, like the potholes and the crack going up the first cul-de-sac on the left in the middle?

Administrator Caddell: It is to fix any road sunken areas, and potholes over storm drain pipes. That cost is not to hire someone to do it. It is only for materials for the Roads and Bridges staff to do. That is why the price is very affordable.

Councilman Moody: What about the crack going up the first cul-de-sac in the middle?

Administrator Caddell: I have not seen that.

Assistant Administrator Clark: We sent our engineers out there, and they did not put it on the work order sheet.

Councilman Moody: It looks like water can get in there.

Administrator Caddell: We can crack seal it.

Councilman Moody: Are we approving it tonight or just giving it the go-ahead?

Administrator Caddell: The Council will vote to approve it upon receiving payment.

Councilman Moody: We do not get a final look at it before we vote.

Administrator Caddell: We are doing the final repairs with our staff.

Councilman Moody: We are repairing the road.

Administrator Caddell: The Roads and Bridges will do the final repairs. We arrived at the estimates based on in-house repairs, not contracted with a private company.

Councilwoman Ireland: The bottom line is we get it done.

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Administrator Caddell: It will be done immediately upon receipt of the funds.

Chairman Campbell: It meets our requirements to adopt a road into the County.

Administrator Caddell: It does meet all of the requirements.

Councilwoman Ireland: We thought it had been done, but it never had, and we do not know why it was not done.

Assistant Administrator Clark: I want to give you a little history. The subdivision infrastructure was built long before anybody started building homes there. It sat empty for about a decade. Why that was done, I have no idea. The County assumed that that process would be completed long before it actually did. Several local developers, like Carbon Construction and Greystone Construction, bought all the lots. They are the ones who finished the subdivisions. They got it to the 70% occupancy required to apply to the county for maintenance purposes. That has been complete for several years. But the roads will continue to deteriorate if no maintenance is done. While the road is in relatively good shape, the County needs to go ahead and take what actions it can while the developer is alive and agreeing to provide funding. The roads are not in such bad shape that you have to rebuild them to bring them into the County system completely. It fell under the rug because those roads existed years before the first house was ever built. Again, I could not possibly answer why it was done that way.

Councilman Talbert: Are there any other subdivisions out in the county like that?

Assistant Administrator Clark: Orchard Estates is another subdivision in the County in extremely poor conditions. But there is no simple fix for the Council on that one. We are talking about half a million dollars worth of repairs to get that subdivision good enough for the County to accept. There are going to be conversations between the developer, the County, and the residents of that subdivision to devise a plan to try and repair those roads. Keystone Homes owns the remaining lots, but not many of them. Even though we are considering an impact fee, it alone will not generate enough revenue to repair the problems. Yes, there are other subdivisions with similar issues. The fix for Orchard Estates is not as simple as Trail Side because the infrastructure is different.

Chairman Campbell: Other questions or comments from the Council. Hearing none, is there a motion to approve this resolution? Councilwoman Ireland made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Consideration of Approval of the First Reading of Ordinance Number 23-24-003, an Ordinance Providing for the FY 2024-2025 General Operating Budget and Establishing Ancillary Budgets for E-911 Administration, Economic Development, Solid Waste Disposal, Victims' Bill of Rights, Emergency Medical Services, Road Maintenance, Tri-County Solicitor, assistant Solicitor, School Resource Officer #1 to School Resource Officer #8, Event Security, Sheriff Discretionary Funds, Clerk of Court Discretionary Funds, Pre Trial-Intervention and Criminal Domestic Violence.

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Chairman Council: We all know we held a Budget Workshop on March 12th. We opened it up to department heads and elected officials, and we heard from a couple of them. The administrator made changes in the draft budget that we will go through for the first reading. For people to know, we went through our budget page-by-page to look if there were any questions from the Council. What we will do now is not go page by page, but we will only take up the items that the Council wants to take up or the administrator ask us to take up. This is how we will do the budget from here forward. Since the public does not always tune in to our Budget Workshop where we discuss all of the details for a couple of hours, the administrator is going to walk us through the highlights of the budget so everyone would have an opportunity to hear that. I will turn it over to the administrator.

Administrator Caddell: I will go through the second page of the budget memo to help the Council follow this in the budget notebook. The second page of the memo essentially lists all the changes that were made in all of the highlights.

Based on the audited reserves as of June 30, 2023, the General Fund has a fund balance of \$8,543,298. In FY 2024/2925, Council will designate \$871,655 from the und balance. Our General Fund operating budget for this year without ARPA funds is \$15,816,500. After utilizing the \$871,655 from our reserves, the County will have \$7,671,643 or just over 5 months of reserves available, which is good cushion for the County.

Administrator Caddell: I want to stop for a second because you heard Grant Davis say we had a six-month fund reserve balance. In budgeting, we have to account for the possible use of the fund balance to balance the budget. Rarely do we tap into that, but it is part of the budgeting process. We have to subtract that from the numbers that you heard him reference. So, for our budgeting purpose, we would have just over five months of reserves available. We do have an actual six month of reserves available.

Budget Memo Highlights

- No fee or tax increases.
- Approximately 5% cost of living increase. The proposed cost of living increase will be applied to individual salaries and the salary bands. County Council is limited to a 2% cost of living increase every two years which will take effect after the General Election.
- A 0.5% merit pay increase based on employee evaluations.
- Implementation of an employer match on deferred compensation (401K and 457) plans at 50% of each dollar contributed by the employee up to 3% compensation. The employer match may not exceed \$1000. The match amount will be revisited each budget cycle.
- Continuation of a 2.5% 8-year step program. The difference between the minimum of a salary band of a grade and the midpoint is 20%. By giving a 2.5% increase (calculated on the minimum point of an employee's salary band) each year over eight years, an employee hired at the minimum would reach midpoint in eight years. This is separate from cost-of-living increases which move the salary bands themselves. Step increases would cease once the employee reaches midpoint.
- Continued coverage of the individual health insurance premiums for employees.

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- Last year the County's portion of health insurance premiums increased 3.7% and retirement 1%. This year insurance is proposed to increase 11% but final numbers will not be available until August 2024.
- The creation of 11 full-time positions and two part-time positions in the general fund and the reduction of 1 full-time and 1 part-time position elsewhere in the general fund.

Chairman Campbell: Administrator, let me start. I know you put all these new things in here since the Budget Workshop. Is there any other thing that has popped up since then that we will have to amend the budget from your perspective?

Administrator Caddell: I don't anticipate any very significant increases. Several deposits of money come in from the state related to accommodation taxes and various taxes that get deposited into our accounts typically in mid-April interject new information. We do not anticipate a significant reduction. We did receive a slight decrease since our last printed budget in the real estate taxes was due to refunds being submitted to people who, for whatever reason, paid twice. Their mortgage company paid, and then they went online and paid as well. That money had to be returned to those people, so this caused our real estate taxes to drop slightly. It was not enough to affect our budget.

Chairman Campbell: I will remind the Council that as we go through this, changes will come up in April, May and early June before our third reading. So there are always amendments to be made and we all know that relative to those like that. I just wanted to check and see if there are any already lined up because sometimes they start popping in. Council, if you will indulge for a moment, the Sheriff has requested to speak on this topic. I will call on him.

Sheriff Rowland: The information I am handing you will show you the math according to the proposals. We guesstimated the amounts to match up the hours by 5%, and that is where nothing changes. We are still fourth from the bottom, and I should not say nothing has changed. If this stays the way it is proposed, we will slide backward from our neighbors by \$2500.

Chairman Campbell: May I interrupt you please to understand one thing, forth from the bottom of what?

Sheriff Rowland: Fourth from the bottom of this list. It's not my list.

Chairman Campbell: This list. (holding up a piece of paper) It is not fourth from the bottom.

Sheriff Rowland: We are mathematically fourth from the bottom.

Chairman Campbell: Okay, from the ones you showed.

Sheriff Rowland: I will let Major Ramey do most of the talking and talk about the eight-year midpoint, which I think affects us greatly. There is no competitor hours that has anything similar and that is really the three biggest points that I will call out. I will turn it over to Major Jason Ramey.

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Major Ramey: Thank you, Council, for letting us speak tonight and your continued support of our agency throughout the last few years that the Sheriff has been in office. We could not have been here without your support. But, we will continue to ask for that support as we go forward in the future. The Sheriff provided you with a document and we are going to kind of go through that step by step throughout this process. I am going to break it down piece by piece and try to explain it to the best of our ability of why it does not necessarily apply to what we are doing. At our recent budget workshop, Sheriff Rowland mentioned about wanting a 10% increase for all employees across the board. We are going to break down that document into what that document does. Sheriff Rowland also provided several examples of this need, including recruitment and retention—our competitive surrounding agencies in losing 13 employees over the last six months. Of the 13 employees, four of them were normal business, and nine of them were not. Most of those nine were for financial benefit. Our original request from the Council back in our budget workshop was for four and a half additional to what was originally proposed by Administrator Caddell. With Administrator Caddell's new improvement of the COLA to 5.5% and half a percent merit increase, we reduced that number to what we are asking for an additional two percent. I will break it down and give you that number as we move forward. Since that workshop, Administrator Caddell has met with the Sheriff and I and provided us that letter you see in front of us. I have no idea whether you all have seen that before or not. But we are going to go through it piece by piece. But, in a nutshell, it shows that a lower entry deputy would show a total increase of 10.76% with the current budget. That includes ban adjustments, COLA (cost of living), and step increases. The 10.76% number is accurate, but we have a few issues that we believe are overlooked in that number and not really applicable to the proposal. We will present the facts opposing to that.

1. The document that the Sheriff gave Council, which listed the lowest paid deputy at \$41,597, omitted that Council increased this figure last week by 3.26% to \$42,953. The only issue with that statement is we did not have an accurate number to give you. We now have an accurate number to give you after our budget workshop.
2. The current revenue snapshot supports a 5% across the board increase (the CPI, a measure of inflation, was 4.1 year ending 2023). This allows us to cover inflation and advance our wages. This is great for Edgefield County and we 100% supports this.
3. 2.5% step is the final step of which we will get into that.
4. The next port says these increases total 8.26% for a new hire and a total 10.76% for a 1-year deputy. The Sheriffs lowest paid 1 year deputy will make. A break down is provided.

$\$41,597 + 3.26\% = \$42,953$ by the end of March

$\$42,953 + 5\% = \$45,100.65$ (1st payroll July) + 2.5% = \$46,174

This number is greater than the \$45,756 total that he wants for a 1-year deputy.

This amount is correct, but it only addressed entry level deputy pay. It does not have the effect of what we have requested at the 10% across the board to other employees. Our more tenured employees did not get that effect. It would be the 8% that Administrator Caddell proposed earlier. It would not reach that 10% threshold. Out of the 44 sworn Sheriff Office employees, how many will receive that proposed 10.76% that is in front of you. The answer

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is none. There would have been up until February 13th, there would have been one deputy that would have met that the one year service threshold to get the full 10.76%. Due to other employees leaving the agency, we had budget monies set aside. We moved him up within his pay grade to a higher level therefore he would not receive so we do not have anybody that would meet that threshold right now. Out of those same 44 sworn, the ones that which receive the 8.26%, the answer is only three. So out of 44 sworn, only three are receiving the figures you see in front of you there. That is why we say it does not address the agency as a whole. It only addresses entry-level deputy pay.

Finally, we cannot compare to North Augusta Public Safety. They fight fire too. It is a completely different role with additional duties. All of the salaries are accurate, but I want to point out a couple of things. First, before the pay band adjustments that we receive starting at the end of this month, we would have been third to last on this list with only McCormick and Saluda County being behind us in that pay threshold. During the pay band adjustment, we have moved to \$42,953 which puts us fourth from the bottom. The new deputy in July, yes, that is accurate at \$45,100 based on Administrator Caddell presentation. But, none of the other counties have an effect of what their July cost of living increases would be here either. Also, the one year in July is not really applicable here because it also doesn't say what these other counties would be making or what these other employees would be making after their one year of service to their respective agencies. In debating the North Augusta process, I believe we can compare them to us. That is because we believe they are willing to leave and absorb those additional duties for a much higher cost of living. Edgefield County looks competitive in the salary list we provided you but it also does not include the following. North Augusta is not on that list. Their starting salary is \$52,971. The South Carolina Highway Patrol is not on this list. Their starting salary is \$52,900 with a \$5,000 sign on bonus less responsibility. See the salary comparisons below for Sheriff Offices:

McCormick County	\$38,989
Saluda County	\$40,224
Greenwood County	\$42,390
Edgefield County now	\$42,953
Edgefield County new deputy in July	\$45,100
Richland County	\$46,093
Edgefield County w/ 1 year in July	\$46,174
Lexington County	\$46,934
Aiken County	\$50,290

We gave an example of Aiken County here who have received a lot of big increases over the last few years and we are expecting nothing less this year. The other agencies upcoming projector rates for Aiken County is an increase estimated at 10% which is the same we are asking for. That would increase their starting pay to \$55,319. That would move our starting gap from what is proposed to now from \$8,693 to \$10,219. Our starting pay gap would grow if we do not keep this pace. I want to reaffirm that Aiken County and North Augusta and South Carolina Highway Patrol are our competition. This is a list that I have provided and

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made for you. The only thing we could do would be to try and match what our cost-of-living increases are to give you an estimated of what this pay scale would look like coming in July. Aiken County, if you can see is listed twice, one at five percent and one at 10% based off of what just an estimation. We still at the end of this fall at fourth on this list compared to our respective surrounding agencies or fourth to the bottom below the midpoint or below the midgrade of our surrounding agencies.

One thing that Administrator Caddell mentioned that about the 401K match plan. That is also on that thing we had but before the budget workshop, we were not aware of that proposal. I think it is a great thing and we appreciate those things. But I would argue that majority of our employees live paycheck to paycheck and would not probably be able to participate in that.

It is mentioned on that form as well about the Sheriff ability to pay up for existing training experience (i.e. minimum). We find ourselves a lot of times having to start new with experienced employees either close to or at the midpoint of their pay grade in order to be competitive with their current salary that they make at another agency. We have found that sometimes even with a promotion coming here at a different or a higher rank, they are sometimes or most of the time are still taking pay cuts in order to take those positions to come to our agency for us to have experience within the county.

So, on previous slides, the Sheriff's Office employees are receiving the five percent or seven and a half percent. The difference that the Sheriff's Office is requesting is a two percent difference from what the County Administrator has proposed to what we are asking for. That total number monetary amount in salary alone is \$29,740. That is the difference that we are asking for tonight. The dollar amount represents a 10% increase, which is a five percent COLA, half a percent step or half a percent merit, and four and a half in step increase. Or seven and a half in COLA, whichever one you want to do. This covers our dispatch, records and sworn deputies that have been employed by the Sheriff's Office for a minimum of one year. Anybody employed under one year would not qualify.

Why are we different? That is one of the big arguments that comes up for the Sheriff's Office. They are the same as all other county employees. Yes, we are county employees, but we have a lot of other responsibilities that come into play. But with all due respect, the fact that a deputy and with the job they do is not a fair statement that they are the same as other county employees. First off 24/7 coverage nights, weekends, and holidays. It does not matter what the weather is doing, deputies are out there working away from their families. The only other county employees that can really compare to that would be EMS. Community events are covered on days, weekends, and off days. We do not have a big enough agency to have community policing division that sets aside time to do those things and interact with the community to build those relationships. Often times, those ae people that are off duty that we are paying overtime. Folks like myself or dispatch administrator Amanda Moore are coming in on our days off to do those things to make sure that we still build those community relationships. EMS would be the only other agency that does that in that in the

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county. We have advance training eight hours monthly and an annual requirement from the state that has to be met on a three-year basis. We are the only agency that is doing the advance training every month. We also carry the most liability in this county. Every time a car moves, every time it is driven, every decision that is made, every encounter with the public has a liability that is on the county and on the Sheriff. The public expects perfection from us. We do our best, but if we cannot keep our experience, if we can't keep employees, and we are constantly retraining employees, we are opening ourselves up for more and more and more liability. I want to reiterate that our competitive agencies are Aiken County and State Highway Patrol. What I mean by that is we have come a long way since the Sheriff came in office with our salaries from where we were to where we are now. Our other surrounding agencies have also done that because of the lack of law enforcement officers within the country that want to do this job anymore. Where they have increased 15, 18, or 20% in some places including state agencies. We have done so, but with a disadvantage. We were still 20 years behind when we started this three years ago. Eventually, they will slow down and those big increases will stop, but we have to continue to cut that threshold down as best we can. How do we accomplish this? There are two options.

- Increasing the COLA from five percent to seven and half percent. That is your most expensive option.
- We recommend increasing the step from two and a half percent to five percent. I will tell you why. Step increases in terms must decrease to be successful. Two and half percent over eight years, our turnover rate is too high. It is just too high. The law enforcement profession alone through the academy, a third of them that graduates do not see their second anniversary. They are out of the profession.

I am going to give an example of how we can compete with the North Augusta Public Safety without necessarily trying to increase our wages. They also have a pay scale that is extremely similar to ours. Ours is modeled after what they do. They have a starting pay, midpoint, and maximum. They move their employees to midpoint over a three-year period. They start them at probation at the end of six months, one year, two year and three year. Where that hurts us at is if we have a three-year deputy, that has served us for three years, on their step increase three of eight in this county. That newly proposed salary under our current five percent COLA would be \$48,482 on step three of eight. North Augusta will hire them that three-year same deputy because they reach their midpoint in three years makes \$63,565, for a difference of \$15,083. If we kept the same pace with our step increase, that gap would never break \$10,000. That is \$9,094. If we move at the same rate, our starting pay gap and midpoint gap does not differ as much as it would if we were on an eight-year system. We also propose that we do our step increases on employee anniversary dates. I will tell you why, for example, if we hire and start an employee in August of 2024. That first step increase would not be effective until July of 2026. So if we hire an employee in August of 2024, it would be almost two years before they see their first step increase. That is why we propose we do that on their anniversary dates and not wait for a new budget cycle.

In closing, I want to touch on one thing that Councilwoman Ireland mentioned at our budget workshop: law enforcement does not get into this profession to make money. We all know that,

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but they do deserve it. For most of us, it is a calling. For me personally and the Sheriff, we got into this to take care of our employees. Our job, my job is not necessarily to serve the public. It is, but what we do as a job now is take care of our own and represent our employees by training them best in order to go out and represent and take care of our citizens. I want to give one scenario in my closing and I will end.

Christmas Day 2022, we had a call concerning a suspicious vehicle that turned into a vehicle pursuit that ended in a collision. That person was on the run for the majority of that morning. Myself and other people were called in to work on Christmas day in order to try and apprehend this person who we knew had felony warrants, been trying to catch for a couple of months, and was terrorizing a domestic violence victim. We were not able to catch him and about 1:00 we decided to leave the area. A couple of hours later, a citizen saw that person. The deputy encountered that person, and got into a foot pursuit with that individual. That person turned and pointed a gun at that deputy. The deputy was not able to return fire. That person kept running so at that point, everybody came back to work. Our entire agency was called out along with the North Augusta Department of Public Safety and the Aiken County Sheriff's Office and the South Carolina Highway Patrol, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and SLED. Just before dark, he was apprehended. There are not any other county employees that are missing Christmas day other than EMS to be away from their families to take care of our community. We cannot argue that so just know that we have great apprehension in that aspect and we had a wonderful turnout of proud people who sacrificed being away from their families to make sure this community was safe that day. Including our neighboring agencies that we compete with. There is always going to be more that is required of them, and we deserve as a team, as a county government to put our heads together and make sure that we do our absolute best to take care of our own. Thank you, I will answer questions.

Chairman Campbell: All of us appreciate what the law enforcement does for the community. This is not about what you do is important. Of course it is. We rely on you; the citizens rely on you and what you do for the county. This is what you do. We agree with you 100% on those things. I don't envy you; I don't want to be a police officer because it is way harder work than what I want to do in my life. But when it comes to some of those numbers, I am not quite with you on some of these and I will tell you why. First, the comparisons you are making are not apples and apples. To compare yourselves to Lexington County, Aiken County, Richland County, and even North Augusta. You are comparing yourself to places that either have lot more rooftops, and industries with more tax base revenue than we have, and they have a whole lot more money from other streams we don't have. My point is we are never going to catch up. We could give you a 12% pay raise every year, and you won't catch these people. They are still going to pull away from you. It is an arms race that we can't win. Given what you do, that is why you are in a higher pay band. Higher pay bands compensate you for that. That is why the pay bands in the Treasurer's Office or Clerk of Court Office is lower than your pay band. That is how we recognize that your jobs are critical to what we have to do and for our citizens. That automatically places you above other employees. With that said, you are already there. Second, I think every elected official and department head could come here and compare my salaries to my people who work just as hard as those in Richland County, Aiken County, Lexington County,

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and North Augusta. Then look at the pay difference because there is a pay difference there too. It is across the board. They don't work less hard, they work hard at what they do and they are compensated at what they do as your deputies are compensated at what they do. There is not equity here, but from a County Council standpoint for me, we are obligated to look at the whole county. You are obligated to represent the Sheriff's Office, and you should fight hard for them every day. I think you should just like all the other departments, elected officials and all those who are passionate about where tax money should. But ultimately, it our job to as elected officials with this statutory responsibility to make sure we are balancing the budget. We asked the administrator to bring us a balanced budget. And in doing so, including salaries which is probably 80% of our budget or more for labor. But, as I look at the list and things we have done, not disputing you, but at minimum everyone is getting between a 5.5 to 8% pay increase at a minimum. No industry is giving 8%. I work in an industry, and we are lucky to get 3%. Look at the government and what they give teachers and state workers. They get maybe 2 or 3%. Any industry at all, which may have great money such as Aiken County can give 10, 12 or 15% raises. But we can't, we don't have that. And before someone may think that the County Council is very unfair, or not treating the Sheriff's Department fair, I want to tell the Council that I have looked at the budget for the past 10 years for the Sheriff's Department. When I see a 10-year snapshot, and I look at a percentage of the budget that the Sheriff's Department has and four years ago, it was just over 40% not counting the animal shelter. With this budget before us now, it is 46% now. A year ago, it was 42%. My point is first, this is the largest gain in 10 years. We are supporting the Sheriff's Department. We are giving you money like we have never given you money before. Second, I think it the biggest one-time gain in a year. I just went back 10 years. I think it is the biggest gain in 10 years with a four-year differential. For example, I could go back to 2015, and it was 39%. Four years ago, it was 40%. We don't jump. The County Council does not have a history of jumping. Then all of a sudden, in the past two years like a hockey stick, it leveled and then went up. We have been giving raises and other things to the Sheriff's Department. We have done a good job in my opinion of making sure you got what you need. While I think in between these two years and in this budget, as a Council, we have done monumental things in the Sheriff's Department by bringing proposals that we agree with, including pay raises. But between the bands and the merits 5% and other increases to be done, I think there is a point where we have to say I don't think we can afford it in this budget because you will come back next year and tell us the same thing. I will make one more point. You say only \$29,000 is not much, but that does not include benefits and FICA. It is much higher than that. And this is not a one-time thing you put in, it is every year. I wanted everyone to hear my research on this and what I thought.

Councilman Moody: I have some comments and points to bring up. Everybody keeps saying they are not different and different salary is compensated based on their job already. Well, shift work is not being compensated. I have worked it for 42 years. It is rough on your family and it is rough on your body and a lot of other things. We have never included a shift differential for the EMS or the Sheriff's Department. They are the only two people that work 24/7. Like you said,

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you are working midnights. You are working your off days. You are working holidays away from your families. I think that is a difference when it comes to the County employee that comes to work Monday through Friday and shift work. I am talking about shift work. It is a wear and tear on you. I worked it for 42 years. I have done you all's job for 10 years, plus EMS and fire. There is a difference and it is not being fully compensated. To me, it is not being fully compensated. \$29,000 yeah, that is a drop in the bucket. But when I just hear the guy say we got six months reserve, I think \$29,000 is one day out of the reserve. That is my opinion and I support that request.

Sheriff Rowland: Again Mr. Chairman, that is not my list, but Mr. Caddell's. My point being in those lists is it doesn't change we are fourth from the bottom. I could bring you another list.

Chairman Campbell: This list is your list.

Major Ramey: The top list is a copy of the original list that the Sheriff gave you on that first form and the second one is an additional of adding North Augusta and the highway patrol.

Chairman Campbell: Okay.

Sheriff Rowland: Yes sir we do compete with highway patrol and DNR. I guarantee there is 40 Sheriff's tonight doing exactly what I am doing suppose because we got to be competitive. I am asking you for that two percent. I am asking you for that \$29,000 to keep me from backsliding again. Three years ago, we were real close to \$5,000. We slipped to \$7,500. If you have seen, we are going towards \$9,000. If you don't give me that two percent, we are going to continue to not be competitive and lose applicants. This is great for a new applicant. But it does not do a thing in the world to help me from losing it. If you remember last month, that is what my problem is. My problem is I am losing my veteran officer's. You got to help me plug that dike just a little bit so I can keep them.

Chairman Campbell: I think we are doing that in my opinion.

Councilman Talbert: I would like to say Chairman Campbell made a valid point, and I am quite sure most of the Council feels the same way. You all are doing an outstanding job. We definitely appreciate that. If we had the money to give, it would be no problem, but we have other county employees. I serve on this committee along with Administrator Caddell. When we had our workshop, you asked and I think Councilman Moody said see if we can find you some money. Administrator Caddell did that. Trying to balance the budget is not easy. Administrator Caddell has done an excellent job. We hired him to and for this position to do this work. I am just being honest, if we hire a man to do a job and I go behind him to fight against it is not my character. I feel that we done the best we could to support you all and still support you. But I cannot. I will go with Administrator Caddell's proposal at this time.

Chairman Campbell: Any other comments or questions form the Council at this time. That said Council, we have heard that, is there any other item in the budget that the Council wants to discuss tonight. What I will do Council is if there is nothing else, then let me ask is there a

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motion to give first reading to ordinance number 23-24-003. Councilman Talbert made the motion, and Chairman Campbell seconded. Now we are open for discussion.

Councilman Moody: I would like to follow up on Councilman Talbert. I have nothing against what Administrator Caddell proposed to us. He did a great job and I was in there. Like you said, he worked his tail off putting this budget together. He has paper spread everywhere, and four calculators going, and everything. But I just think in this particular situation, and I talked with the Sheriff yesterday. I told him to his face, I said one reason I want to give you \$29,000 because it is in your court. Correct? You have to make it work. We don't have to make it work, he does. Not necessarily saying he comes back next year because if it fails it is on him. It is not on us. That is why I am supporting him. It is one of the top things on our list, Public Safety, EMS and Fire is right behind the employees. If we were in dire straights for money, I might not be talking about this. But I am making an amendment to give them the \$29,000.

Councilwoman Ireland: Under the advice of the attorney, I need to recuse myself now from this motion.

Chairman Campbell: There is a motion to amend as Councilman Moody indicated. Is there a second? If there is no second, this amendment will fail. I will ask one more time, is there a second? Hearing none, the motion to amend fails for lack of a second. No amendment was made. Councilwoman Ireland returned. No further discussion. The motion passed to give first reading of budget ordinance 23-24-003 four to one with Councilman Moody opposing.

Comments from the Public

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

Report By County Council Members

Councilman Moody: I would like to give an update on the Sweetwater Community Center. Another accolade to Administrator Caddell as he is the one that got this going. He came to me about six months ago asking to do something down there. He gave me two options. One was to try to put some money into North Augusta County Club to make pickleball courts. The other option was to do something at Sweetwater. He came up with the idea of the park as you can see the trees coming down. We presented some pictures at the last meeting of the park, and I think we are going to have a beautiful thing down there. I think Administrator Caddell tremendously. I don't know if you have noticed it or not, but you can hear us. Hopefully, the people at home can hear us. The sound system is in; thank you, Assistant Administrator Clark.

Councilwoman Kennion: I would like to say that Bettis Academy is looking very good. I was down there on last Sunday. Also, just a reminder, on April 20th is the annual March for Parks. We have a representative here tonight that comes before the Council every year to invite us to the festivities that includes food, and a parade. We invite everyone to come to March for Parks at the Bettis Academy Park on April 20, 2024.

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Assistant Administrator Clark: You mentioned the Sweetwater Community Center Park, I would like to give a shout out and thank Mr. Reg Williams for taking those trees down. Sheriff Rowland controlled the traffic for him as he removed those trees at zero cost to the County. If you see Reg, give him a nod and a thank you for sending his people and equipment down there to remove those trees for free. That is a significant savings for the County.

County Administrator's Report

1. The Sheriff and I met with the McCormick County Sheriff and Administrator at our ACCF facility. They are exploring the possibility of partnering with us. I have run the numbers and it would be an approximate \$45,000 per kennel buy-in with \$12,000 - \$15,000 per year recurring costs. They were impressed with the facility. Of course, if they are ultimately interested, Council can consider a Memorandum of Understanding just as was done with Saluda. This would require the addition of new kennels.
2. Parks – The picnic shelters have been installed at both Bettis and Scout parks. They look great. Tables are being ordered next week. Log Creek Timber felled the trees from the playground area at Sweetwater Park free of charge, saving the County a lot of money. We should have a final design for Council to consider during the May meeting. Hopefully this park will be up and running mid to late summer.
3. Council audio equipment – Has been installed, tested, and we are using it right now! Hopefully those listening online will notice substantial improvement.

Comments by County Council Chairman

I appreciate everyone coming out tonight and those who are watching by You Tube. I'd like to ask those who are watching online to give us feedback on the new sound system. In test runs, it worked really well. I appreciate our staff pursuing this important part of communicating with citizens.

Also, thank you to staff and Council for working though the first reading of the budget tonight, which to me is the most important ordinance we take up each year because it impacts what level of service our branches of county government can do and, therefore, impacts services to citizens and what they pay for those services.

Last month, I attended the Edgefield County African American Heritage Commission public reception. This group has really gotten a lot done, and as they get the final pieces of their administrative structure in place, they are beginning to take on projects. I encourage them to continue, and I urge each of us to talk to this group of citizens so we can understand their work and support them.

I hope everyone enjoys spring break next week, and if you are so inclined, I hope you also enjoy the golf tournament nearby that I hear they'll be having again this year.

Adjourn

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Council, there being no other business to conduct tonight, I'd entertain a motion to adjourn. Councilman Moody made the motion, and Councilwoman Kennion seconded. Motion passed unanimously. The Edgefield County Council regularly scheduled meeting adjourned at 7:23 PM.

Edgefield County Council



Dean Campbell, Council Chairman

ATTEST



Aretha Eubanks, Clerk to Council