



**FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL WORK RETREAT
THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023 – 10:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.
AND FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 2023 – 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
MARINA INN AT GRANDE DUNES
8121 AMALFI PLACE, MYRTLE BEACH, SC 29572**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Teresa Myers Ervin, Mayor Pro Tempore George Jebaily, Councilwoman Lethonia Barnes, Councilman Chaquez T. McCall (via telephone on Thursday, January 26, 2023; present on Friday, January 27, 2023), Councilman Bryan A. Braddock, Councilwoman LaShonda NeSmith-Jackson and Councilman J. Lawrence Smith, II

ALSO PRESENT

Mr. Randall S. Osterman, City Manager; Mr. Scotty Davis, Deputy City Manager; Mr. James W. Peterson, Jr., City Attorney; Mrs. Casey Moore, Municipal Clerk; Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager of Development; Mr. Kevin Yokim, Assistant City Manager of Administration/Finance; Chief Allen Heidler, Florence Police Department; Chief Shannon Tanner, Florence Fire Department; Mrs. Jennifer Krawiec, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Utilities; Mr. Michael Hemingway, Director of Utility Planning and Economic Development; Mrs. Amanda Pope, Director of Marketing/Communications and Municipal Services; Mr. Chuck Pope, Director of Public Works; Mr. Glenn Bodenheimer, Controller; Mr. Charlie Barrineau, Field Services Manager – Municipal Association of SC; Mr. Stephen Benjamin, President – The Benjamin Firm and Former City of Columbia Mayor; and Ms. Rania Jamison, Chief of Staff – The Benjamin Firm.

MEDIA PRESENT

Ms. Maya Lockett of WBTW News Channel 13 was present for the meeting.

Notices of this regular meeting of City Council were provided to the media and individuals requesting a copy of the agenda informing them of the date, location and time of the meeting.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ervin called the Thursday, January 26, 2023 Work Retreat Session of Florence City Council to order at 10:00 a.m.

INVOCATION

Mayor Ervin gave the invocation for the meeting. The pledge of allegiance to the American Flag followed the invocation.



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WORKSESSION

Mr. Randy Osterman, City Manager, began the Work Session and introduced Mr. Charlie Barrineau, Field Services Manager with the Municipal Association of South Carolina. Mr. Barrineau briefly spoke of his experiences as a City Manager and as a Field Services Manager. He explained the importance of Council working as a team, building trust and working collectively to achieve accomplishments.

Mr. Barrineau explained the role of the Municipal Association of South Carolina and their local revenue programs, advocacy and communications, risk management services, and education, training and technical assistance. Florence is a member of the South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust and the South Carolina Insurance and Risk Financing Fund.

Mr. Barrineau began a presentation entitled “Leadership, Your City and How it Works” and spoke of Council’s leadership role. Florence is a seven-member Council where each member’s vote is the same, representing Florence as a team. The key to a successful Council meeting is preparedness and he urged Council to be prepared when they come to the meetings by asking necessary questions beforehand, reading the agenda packet, et cetera. He explained the Municipal Association’s civility campaign and the importance civility plays in running effective meetings, communicating thoughtfully and building relationships among Council. He gave examples of incivility and showed a video of a Council meeting that depicted “what not to do” during a Council meeting. Mr. Barrineau briefly spoke of social media and potential pitfalls to avoid. A Councilmember’s social media account may likely be considered a public forum and First Amendment considerations do apply.

[Break: 10:45 am – 10:55 am]

Mr. Barrineau resumed the meeting by discussing the forms of municipal government in South Carolina. There are three forms of government in South Carolina and the City of Florence is a Council-Manager form of government. The Council-Manager form is the third most used form of government in SC and the most utilized form nationally. In the Council-Manager form, Council has all legislative and policy making authority and must employ a manager. Council is forbidden by state law to interfere with employees in this form. As a Council-Manager form, the Mayor presides over meetings of Council by tradition rather than statute, acts and votes as a member of Council, calls special meetings and can designate a temporary judge.

Mr. Barrineau then went over the basics of effective meetings. Preparation is the key to a successful meeting. Members should arrive on time, put away/silence phones, avoid side conversations during the meeting and be mindful of their body language. A written agenda is required under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for all meetings and must be published twenty-four hours in advance. There is a procedure that must be followed to add items to the agenda. The City of Florence has adopted Robert’s Rules of Order to govern the proceedings of meetings.

Ordinances, resolutions and public engagement were discussed next. An Ordinance is a law made by Council and requires two readings on two separate days with at least six days between each reading. A Resolution is a motion and is a formal expression of opinion, will or intent and only requires a single vote. While public engagement is encouraged at meetings, it is not mandated for all meetings. The City of Florence has rules for public participation adopted by ordinance. Council’s are prescribed by state law to enter into Executive Session for the following reasons: Personnel Matters; Contractual, Real Estate and Legal Matters; Security Matters; Investigative Matters; and Economic Development Matters. No minutes and no votes are to be taken in Executive Session.



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Critical compliance issues for Municipal Finance and Administration were discussed next. The annual budget must be adopted by ordinance following a public hearing. It is required that the newspaper publish notice of the public hearing at least fifteen days in advance to the hearing. Municipalities are also required to complete an independent financial audit and submit it to the state. There are limitations on a municipality's ability to raise property taxes. The increase in millage rate is limited to the Consumer Price Index + population growth. There are also several funds that are held in trust to include state fines fees and assessments, employee payroll deductions and insurance premiums. Mr. Barrineau discussed some general restrictions on public funds. Public funds may only be used for public purposes and violations may trigger criminal or state ethics enforcement action.

Mr. Barrineau discussed the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the SC Ethics Act. A meeting is considered a public meeting whenever a quorum is present on Council. Members should be familiar with agenda items prior to a meeting. If a conflict of interest is identified, members are able to recuse themselves from the vote. A recusal is not the same as an abstention from voting.

[Break: 12:00pm – 1:00pm]

Mr. Osterman began the afternoon session with a discussion on the budget and the Comprehensive Plan. These two documents are extremely important to the City. The Comprehensive Plan is the City's guiding document and is updated every ten years. The budget indicates how the City is going to operate and where monies will be expended over the fiscal year. In South Carolina, a balanced budget must be adopted and this balanced budget is based on the needs of the city and expectations of Council. Council and Staff both have wants and needs that impact the budget. Mr. Osterman asked Mr. Kevin Yokim, Assistant City Manager of Finance/Administration, to discuss the budget development process. Mr. Yokim said once the budget process opens, department staff will submit their budget requests to the Finance Department. While that process is happening, Human Resources is compiling the personnel budget and the Finance Department is estimating City revenues. Finance compiles all the information and presents it to the City Manager. Budget requests tend to always come in higher than estimated revenues and Randy meets with each Director to reduce budget requests in order to balance the budget. Budget workshops are typically held with Council throughout this process to gather input. First reading of the budget and the public hearing typically occur in May, with the second reading and adoption occurring in June.

Mr. Osterman passed out the current fiscal year's budget book, saying it accounts for every penny the City expects to spend. While there are small contingencies, whenever something new or different is requested and revenues aren't high enough to cover the cost, the money will have to be taken from somewhere. The majority of the money in the budget is allocated to personnel costs; however, this is a difficult part of the budget to reduce because without people the City would not be able to offer any services. A large portion of money is also allocated to operations with the largest contributors being the Police, Fire and Public Works Departments. Operations include uniforms, fuel, maintenance, equipment, et cetera. The next area where money is being expended is Capital Investments, which are sanitation and fire trucks, police cars, heavy equipment, et cetera. In summary, Mr. Osterman said that there's not many places in the budget to come up with money that won't have a negative effect, which leaves the City in a dilemma. Mr. Osterman said the City is currently struggling with hiring and retaining good, quality employees and told Council he would like to see pay increases for city employees. He further mentioned that this session is discussion only and he is not making any recommendations. Discussion was then opened to Council.

Councilwoman Barnes asked what the options are to increase revenues. Mr. Osterman said municipalities are limited by state law, as Mr. Barrineau discussed earlier. Due to these limitations, city property taxes



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can only be increased a maximum of seven mills right now, which is equivalent to \$1.225 million dollars. Mr. Yokim briefly went over the City's various revenue sources: licenses and fees, property taxes, interfund transfers, governmental reimbursements, permits and fees, fines and forfeitures and miscellaneous revenues.

Councilman Braddock mentioned other municipalities that have begun to utilize public safety cameras and asked if there has been any measurable decrease in criminal activity with the use of these cameras. Mr. Allen Heidler, Police Chief, responded these are fairly new but some of these municipalities have seen reductions in the ability to investigate crime and bring people to justice. Councilman Braddock inquired on pricing of these cameras. Chief Heidler said it would be approximately \$400,000 over a five-year term for thirty cameras.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson inquired on high crime downtown prior to its revitalization. Chief Heidler said downtown had the perception of high crime, but that wasn't necessarily the case. Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson asked if cameras were installed downtown. Chief Heidler responded there were cameras downtown from a grant the City received, but they have since expired.

Councilman McCall asked if it made sense to do an automatic tax increase, similar to how the City did water increases. Mr. Osterman said there is the ability to pass an Ordinance to automatically increase taxes each year by a certain percentage or amount. Councilman McCall also asked how the City's taxes compare to other municipalities. Mr. Osterman distributed a study conducted by Rock Hill that compares various rates, cost of living, property taxes, et cetera in municipalities across the state. According to the study, Florence ranks next to the lowest in the state in property taxes.

Mr. Yokim took the opportunity to speak on the local options sales tax. In 1994, Florence County voters approved of a 1% Local Options Sales Tax. As a result, residents receive a property tax credit against their property taxes. Mr. Yokim passed out examples of property tax bills in the City. The City's property taxes account for approximately 10-20% of the total tax bill depending on what type of property it is.

Councilman Smith asked when the City last raised property taxes. Mr. Yokim replied it has been approximately five or six years. Pro tem Jebaily pointed out that as people move into the City, the population increase would allow for a higher cap on milage increases. A larger population also leads to an increase in services. Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager of Development, spoke on the census and population numbers. The last census was not reflective of the growth the City is currently experiencing.

Mr. Chuck Pope, Public Works Director, spoke to Pro tem Jebaily's comment. Public Works is already behind because of deferring the purchase of heavy equipment and garbage trucks for a number of years, especially in sanitation. Although, the increase in the roll cart maintenance fee several years ago has helped generate funding for residential trucks. Inflation costs have greatly impacted the cost of heavy equipment and parts. There are approximately 14,500 residential units collected by sanitation trucks which really requires seven routes. Currently, the City is only running five to six routes. The increase in online shopping has created additional garbage and cardboard boxes that need to be collected. This has become a problem across the state and many municipalities are having to tighten their regulations on what is allowed. Councilman NeSmith-Jackson suggested fining residents for excessive trash. Mr. Osterman said an education campaign may be a good way to start to show our residential customers how to use the service. Mayor Ervin suggested researching the topic and how other municipalities are handling this issue.



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Mr. Osterman said as the City expands geographically, we need to start looking at expanding services. Last year, Council approved several new positions; unfortunately, these positions have not been able to be filled because they are not lucrative enough. Mr. Osterman reiterated that the City is in competition with every other business and organization in Florence for employees.

Councilman Braddock asked how Envision will impact the City's budget. Mr. Yokim responded the City will collect approximately \$15 million in water and sewer revenues over the first five years. Envision is not located in the City; therefore, the City will not collect property taxes or business licenses fees. Mayor Ervin pointed out that this economic development project will lead to other potential projects located in the City.

[Break: 3:00pm – 3:30pm]

Mr. Osterman conducted an exercise for Council in order to have a better understanding of Council's desires moving forward. He posed the following questions – If the City had an extra \$100,000, what would you like to see done with it? If the City had an extra \$1,000,000, what would you like seen done with it? Below are Council's responses.

Extra \$100,000

- To be directed by Council for community projects
- Citibot
- Beautification project/corridor enhancement
- Enhance quality of life in areas that have been oppressed

Extra \$1,000,000

- Camera system
- Staff pay increase
- Sanitation trucks
- Police cars
- Developer's incentive to develop in certain areas
- Community center enhancements

ADJOURN

Without objection, the January 26, 2023 Retreat Work Session of City Council was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ervin called the Friday, January 27, 2023 Work Retreat Session of Florence City Council to order at 9:00 a.m.

INVOCATION

Mayor Ervin gave the invocation for the meeting. The pledge of allegiance to the American Flag followed the invocation.



WORKSESSION

Mr. Osterman asked Mr. Moore to provide an update on the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Moore said they have finally reached a final draft of the Comprehensive Plan, as it was delayed mainly due to COVID as well as some health issues with the consultant. Mr. Moore said the plan is the guiding document for the City and provides Council with the support and rationale for the policy decisions they make. The City will begin the process of public meetings for public input in the next month. It will then go before Planning Commission for recommendation to Council and then to Council for adoption by June 2023.

Mr. Scotty Davis, Deputy City Manager, introduced former City of Columbia Mayor, Steven Benjamin, today's meeting facilitator. He spoke of the impacts of COVID and how the world changed dramatically as a result. The way people live and work have fundamentally changed and Councils are tasked with how to adapt. Mr. Benjamin briefly spoke of the role of an elected official and spoke of successes he had with the City of Columbia, one being that he increased the Police Department's budget by 90%.

Councilman Braddock asked how he grew Columbia's Police Department budget. Mr. Benjamin said he started by reading the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. He said it took aggressive creativity. One of the things he looked at were ways to reduce costs of medical expenses (physicals), and he accomplished this by opening a health center for employees. He briefly elaborated on how they also redirected funding from other sources. Councilman Braddock asked what the impact was of the budget increase in the Police Department in terms of crime reduction. Mr. Benjamin said many municipalities have seen a spike in violent crimes recently. He said it is important to hire, train and hold accountable those that wear a badge and advised Council to invest in all technologies that make the City transparent and engages the community. Mayor Ervin said much of the City's crime issues arise with the criminal system and broken bond and parole system. Many offenders of violent crimes are out on parole for other crimes they have committed.

Councilman McCall asked how Columbia articulated to the community the need to raise taxes. Mr. Benjamin said the best way to prepare your community is to be transparent and let them know exactly what you're going to do, how you're going to do it and why the millage increase needs to be done. People will then become more engaged, informed, and willing to accept the increase.

Pro tem Jebaily asked how difficult it was to establish the Business Improvement District in Columbia. Mr. Benjamin explained the Business Improvement District and said those located in this district pay a little more in return for the additional services they receive. He said they did receive some push back at first, but ultimately the additional services received in this district helped to create a welcoming environment.

[Break: 10:30am – 11:00am]

Mr. Benjamin spoke of the importance of investing in and taking care of the community and its innovators and small businesses. He advised Council to take time to keep their priorities in order and to not focus on what they're doing, but why they're doing it.

Councilman McCall asked what type of creative funding Columbia used for capital improvements. Mr. Benjamin said they utilized philanthropic funds, built strong public-private partnerships, and they chased federal dollars.



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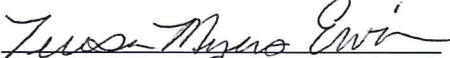
Councilman Braddock asked what Columbia’s approach was to affordable housing. Mr. Benjamin said he listened to community concerns. There was a brief conversation on inhabitable housing. Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson expressed concerns with the City’s rental registry process and said uninhabitable housing is a major problem. She voiced her desire for the City to be more proactive with these properties and the rental registry process.

ADJOURN

Without objection, the January 27, 2023 Retreat Work Session of City Council was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Dated this 13th day of February 2023.


Casey C. Moore, Municipal Clerk


Teresa Myers Ervin, Mayor