



**REGULAR MEETING OF FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2025 – 1:00 P.M.
CITY CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS
324 WEST EVANS STREET
FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Lethonia Barnes, Mayor Pro Tempore George Jebaily, Councilman Chaquez T. McCall, Councilman Bryan A. Braddock, Councilwoman LaShonda NeSmith-Jackson and Councilman J. Lawrence Smith, II

ALSO PRESENT

Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager; Mr. Ronald Scott, City Attorney; Mrs. Casey Moore, Municipal Clerk; Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager of Development; Chief Allen Heidler, Florence Police Department; Chief Shannon Tanner, Florence Fire Department; Mr. Michael Hemingway, Director of Utility Planning and Economic Development; Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Planning; Mr. Adam Swindler, Director of Public Works; Mrs. Amanda Pope, Director of Marketing/Communications and Municipal Services; Mr. Joshua Whittington, Director of Utilities; Mrs. Victoria Nash, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism; Mr. Glenn Bodenheimer, Interim Finance Director and Ms. Patrice Rankin, Administrative Coordinator

MEDIA PRESENT

Mr. Seth Taylor with the Post and Courier, Mr. Matthew Robertson with the Florence Morning News, and Mrs. Tonya Brown with WPDE News Channel 15 were 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.

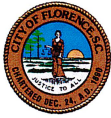
CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Barnes called the January 13, 2025 Regular meeting of Florence City Council to order at 1:02pm.

INVOCATION

Mayor Barnes gave the invocation for the meeting. The pledge of allegiance to the American Flag followed the invocation and was led by Chief Allen Heidler, Florence Police Department.

Mayor Barnes acknowledged the passing of former President Jimmy Carter and former Councilwoman Patricia Gibson-Hye Moore, as well as the tragic wildfires in California. A moment of silence was held in memory of President Carter, Councilwoman Moore, and the lives that were lost in the California wildfires.



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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman McCall made a motion to adopt the minutes of the December 9, 2024 Regular Meeting and Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously (6-0) adopted.

SERVICE RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Shannon Tanner, Fire Chief, recognized David Weatherly for 10 years of service with the Florence Fire Department.

Mr. Shannon Tanner, Fire Chief, recognized Thomas Blackmon for 10 years of service with the Florence Fire Department.

ORDINANCES IN POSITION

Bill No. 2024-22 – Second Reading

An Ordinance to amend Article I Chapter 3 of the City of Florence Code of Ordinances to add provisions related to prohibiting ownership or keeping of livestock and wild animals and other matters related thereto.

Mayor Barnes said without objection, this item will be deferred. Without objection, this item will be deferred.

Bill No. 2024-25 – Second Reading

An Ordinance to annex and zone RG-3 the property located at 2501 Alligator Road, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 00125-01-004.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2024-25 on second reading and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2024-25 was adopted.

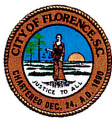
INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

Bill No. 2025-01 - First Reading

An Ordinance to annex and zone IL the property located at 1228 North Cashua Drive, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 00122-01-040.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to pass Bill No. 2025-01 on first reading and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Mr. Jerry Dudley, Planning Director, said the property is located north of the New Spring Church on Cashua Drive and is approximately forty-four acres. The proposed zoning is Light Industrial which permits office park uses but doesn't permit heavy manufacturing. The adjacent property to the south is in the city limits and a buffer would be required. The property to the right is currently zoned Commercial General; however, the property owner submitted a request for it to be rezoned to Light Industrial as well. The adjacent county properties are zoned General Commercial to the north and Light Industrial to the south. Planning Commission voted unanimously (9-0) to recommend the zoning request.



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Councilman Smith inquired about the owner's plans for the property. Mr. Dudley said planning staff is currently not aware of any specific plans for the property. Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager, clarified that he met with the property owners but is unable to share any details on the plans due to a nondisclosure agreement.

Council voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2025-01 was passed on first reading.

Bill No. 2025-02 - First Reading

An Ordinance to rezone from CG to IL a portion of Florence County Tax Map Number 00147-01-023.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to pass Bill No. 2025-02 on first reading and Councilman Braddock seconded the motion.

Mr. Jerry Dudley, Planning Director, explained that this request is in congruence with the previous zoning request. The property in question is the adjacent parcel that is currently within the city limits. There are currently two zoning designations for this parcel: the larger portion, approximately 103 acres, is zoned General Commercial, while the smaller portion is zoned Destination Services, a commercial use. Once approved, these parcels will combine into a large parcel designated for Light Industrial use. Planning Commission voted unanimously (9-0) to recommend the rezoning request.

Pro Tem Jebaily asked for clarification on whether all the parcels are currently within the city limits or if this request involves annexation and zoning. Mr. Dudley clarified that all parcels in this request are already within the city limits and the request pertains to rezoning a portion of one large parcel.

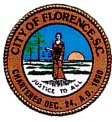
Council voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2025-02 was passed on first reading.

Bill No. 2025-03 - First Reading

An Ordinance to amend Chapter 4 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Florence entitled "Buildings, Construction and Related Activities", to establish Article XV "Vacant and Abandoned Residential, Commercial and Industrial Building Registration.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Bill No. 2025-03 on first reading and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager of Development, explained that this ordinance will require all vacant and abandoned residential and commercial properties to be registered with the city. The ordinance outlines three categories to determine if a property qualifies as vacant or abandoned. There are several exceptions to the registry, including: properties actively being marketed for sale or lease, government-owned properties, properties actively being pursued for demolition to address code enforcement issues, and vacant or abandoned properties that have no code enforcement violations and are not contributing to blight. Under this ordinance, property owners must provide their contact information, and city staff will conduct inspections to determine the property's classification. Owners are also required to place a "No Trespassing" placard on the property, allowing action to be taken against unauthorized individuals. The ordinance introduces an escalating fee structure for the registry, with additional fees for inspections and penalties for noncompliance if a property is not registered. City staff reviewed similar ordinances from various municipalities across the state and took portions that are applicable to the City of Florence's needs. The ordinance aligns with the city's Comprehensive Plan, the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, and initiatives for improving commercial areas.



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Pro tem Jebaily asked for examples of the challenges the city faces with vacant and abandoned properties and why current ordinances are insufficient. Mr. Moore explained this ordinance will enable city staff to assess and address the habitability of residences. Vacant and abandoned buildings have been a significant source of blight in the community, undermining revitalization efforts. The city's strategic plan emphasizes leveraging ordinances like this one to tackle these issues and further neighborhood and commercial revitalization.

Councilman McCall made a motion to move this ordinance to Executive Session to seek legal advice and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Without objection, this matter will be discussed in Executive Session. There being no objection, this matter will be discussed in Executive Session.

Bill No. 2025-04 - First Reading

An Ordinance finding certain dwellings exist that are unfit for human habitation due to dilapidation; defects increasing the hazards of fire, accidents, or other calamities; lack of ventilation, light, or sanitary facilities; or other conditions rendering such dwellings unsafe, unsanitary, or dangerous, and other matters relating thereto including, without limitation, the enforcement of proceedings pertaining dwellings deemed unfit.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to pass Bill No. 2025-04 on first reading and Councilman McCall seconded the motion.

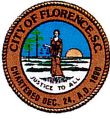
Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager, explained this ordinance authorizes the city's Building Official to determine whether a building is habitable. The determination will be based on a set of guidelines, which include requirements for proper ingress and egress from the building and bedrooms, access to fresh water and sanitary waste disposal, functioning electricity, a heat source from October 1st through May 1st, locks on all exterior doors, and any habitability violation with International Property Maintenance Code. The ordinance establishes clear regulations for the Building Official to follow when making these determinations and outlines the process for enforcing code compliance as needed.

Councilman Braddock inquired about an appeal process. Mr. Moore confirmed that an appeal process is in place for all city actions. Property owners can first appeal to city staff, and if dissatisfied, they can escalate the appeal to the Construction and Maintenance Board of Adjustments and Appeals. If still unsatisfied, they can appeal to Circuit Court. Councilman Braddock also asked if property owners can rehabilitate their homes and bring them into compliance, to which Mr. Moore responded yes.

Pro tem Jebaily asked for clarification on whether the ordinances work in conjunction to enhance the city's ability to enforce property owners to rehabilitate properties or allow the city to obtain the property. Mr. Moore responded yes.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson thanked city staff for this ordinance and said this ordinance will address the issue with dilapidated homes in the city's target areas.

Council voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2025-04 was passed on first reading.



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INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 2025-01

A Resolution to rename South Park to Jebaily Park.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2025-01 and Councilman Braddock seconded the motion.

Pro tem Jebaily said he would recuse himself from voting on this item. The recusal statement is attached to and made a part of the minutes.

Mayor Barnes presented the Resolution to the Jebaily family. Mr. Ron Jebaily spoke on behalf of the Jebaily family and thanked Council for honoring his family with this recognition.

Council voted unanimously (5-0) to pass Resolution No. 2025-01, with Pro tem Jebaily recusing himself. Resolution No. 2025-01 was passed.

Resolution No. 2025-02

A Resolution to rename Northwest Park to Mordecai C. Johnson Park.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2025-02 and Councilman McCall seconded the motion.

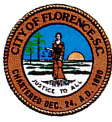
Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson raised a point of information, questioning how this item was added to the agenda after being deferred by the Planning Commission at its last meeting. She referred to the minutes from that meeting where it was noted that the Northwest Community had expressed a desire to provide input in the naming of Northwest Park. She emphasized that neither the neighborhood association nor she, as the representative of the district where the park is located, was informed about the proposed renaming. She added that a called community meeting was held on December 30, 2024, for the Northwest Community to discuss and express their concerns with the renaming process.

Mr. Davis explained the matter was brought to city staff by Mayor Barnes and subsequently presented to the Planning Commission by Mr. Dudley. The Planning Commission deferred the matter and a community meeting was called, which both he and Mayor Barnes attended, to discuss the park renaming process. He clarified that naming facilities after living individuals is guided by an internal city policy, which was explained during the meeting. He further noted that the Planning Commission serves as an advisory board to Council, and Council retains the discretion to move forward with renaming the park.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson asked if it is standard procedure to bypass the Planning Commission's recommendations, particularly when a matter has been deferred. She shared feedback from the community, stating they were not necessarily opposed to renaming the park after Mordecai C. Johnson but felt excluded from the process.

Pro Tem Jebaily spoke in support of the Resolution and requested Mr. Davis read the Resolution to highlight Mr. Johnson's contributions to the city. Mr. Davis read Resolution No. 2025-02. Pro Tem Jebaily also asked for confirmation that the park is in District 1, which Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson represents. Mr. Davis responded yes.

Councilman McCall also spoke in favor of the Resolution and shared additional achievements of Mordecai C. Johnson.



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Councilman Smith also spoke in favor of the Resolution.

Mayor Barnes explained the reasons for choosing to honor Mordecai C. Johnson, stating that he is highly deserving of this recognition. She noted that she had consulted with community leaders and others about the matter. However, she expressed disapproval of the miscommunication with the community and emphasized that this recognition is something the entire community should be proud of.

Mayor Barnes presented the Resolution to the Johnson family. Mr. Johnson's son spoke on behalf of the Johnson family and thanked Council for honoring his father with this recognition.

Rev. Dr. Ralph W. Canty also spoke in favor of the Resolution.

Council voted (5-1) to pass Resolution No. 2025-02, with Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson voting against the Resolution. Resolution No. 2025-02 was passed.

Resolution No. 2025-03

A Resolution to approve a Conditional Grant and Development Agreement located within the Downtown Redevelopment District for a development located at 189 Warley Street.

Mayor Barnes said without objection, this item will be discussed in Executive Session. Without objection, this item will be discussed in Executive Session.

REPORT TO COUNCIL

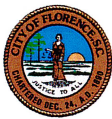
Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Mayor Barnes said this item may be discussed in Executive Session. Without objection, this item will be discussed in Executive Session.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager, thanked city staff and Council for a productive work retreat. Mr. Davis referenced Bill No. 2025-04, which addresses dilapidated homes, noting that if the proposed bill is adopted on second reading, it will have budgetary impacts. Budgetary impacts will be outlined for Council in the upcoming budget discussions.

Mayor Barnes inquired on the availability of funds for demolitions. Mr. Davis confirmed that there are available funds, which are currently being utilized for voluntary demolitions. He mentioned that the city is also dealing with several involuntary demolitions, and the proposed bill would enable the city to proceed with demolishing unsafe and uninhabitable homes where property owners have resisted demolition efforts. When the city demolishes a home, a lien is placed on the property for five years. However, if the owner redevelops the property during that time, the lien is removed. The city also considers income guidelines in which no lien is placed on properties owned by individuals whose income falls below a certain threshold. Mr. Davis noted that the city's efforts have not been as successful as hoped, given the significant number of vacant and dilapidated structures in the community. He stressed that the focus is on removing homes that are literally falling and pose significant safety hazards.



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MAYORAL REPORT

Mayor Barnes thanked city staff and Council for a successful work retreat. She also announced, “Fireside Chat with the Mayor,” an open house to learn more about the city’s community centers and hear and/or share ideas on how to improve neighborhoods. The first open house will be held at the Northwest Community Center on January 27, 2025 at 6pm.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Business Development Committee, Chaired by Pro tem Jebaily

Pro tem Jebaily said the committee received a presentation from AECOM at the last meeting. He announced the completion of the Executive Summary for the city’s Stormwater Master Plan, a project three years in the making. AECOM is scheduled to present the full plan to Council at the February 10th meeting. The master plan includes a total of 51 projects, with an estimated cost of \$72 million.

Community Development Committee, Chaired by Councilwoman Barnes

Mayor Barnes said the committee did not meet due to the holiday season. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 29, 2025 at 3:00pm.

Finance, Audit and Budget Committee, Chaired by Councilman McCall

Councilman McCall said the committee did not meet due to the Christmas holiday. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 29, 2025 at 4:00pm.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Barnes said Council will be entering into Executive Session for a discussion of matters related to an Economic Development Project, a discussion regarding appointments to Boards and Commissions, to receive legal advice for Bill No. 2025-03 and for a discussion on a personnel matter regarding the City Manager’s contract.

Council made a motion to enter into Executive Session and Council seconded the motion. Council voted unanimously (6-0) to enter into Executive Session at 2:19pm.

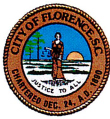
Council resumed open session at 4:08pm and took action on the following items:

Bill No. 2025-03 - First Reading

An Ordinance to amend Chapter 4 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Florence entitled “Buildings, Construction and Related Activities”, to establish Article XV “Vacant and Abandoned Residential, Commercial and Industrial Building Registration.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Bill No. 2025-03 on first reading and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Councilmen McCall made a motion to amend the ordinance to create separate fees for residential and commercial structures and to change the effective date of the registry from July 1, 2025 to January 1, 2026. The fees for residential structures will be amended to read as follows: Initial registration – \$250; first annual renewal – \$500; second annual renewal – \$750; third annual renewal \$1,000; and the annual



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renewal each year thereafter – \$1,250. The fees for commercial structures will be amended to read as follows: Initial registration – \$500, first annual renewal – \$1,000, second annual renewal – \$2,000, third annual renewal – \$3,000, and the annual renewal each year thereafter – \$4,000. Pro tem Jebailly seconded the motion. Council voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of the motion to amend the ordinance.

Council voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of the motion to pass Bill No. 2025-03, as amended. Bill No. 2025-03 was passed on first reading, as amended.

Resolution No. 2025-03

A Resolution to approve a Conditional Grant and Development Agreement located within the Downtown Redevelopment District for a development located at 189 Warley Street.

Pro tem Jebailly made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2025-03 and Councilman McCall seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2025-03 was passed.

Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Mr. Davis presented the packet of appointments to Boards and Commissions to Council.

Civic Center Commission

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson deferred her nomination to the Board.

Councilman Smith clarified that the appointment of Clara Brockington made at the December 9, 2024 Council meeting will replace the seat currently held by Allen Griffin on the Civic Center Commission.

Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee

Councilman Smith made a motion to reappoint Jacquelyn Campbell to the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee and the motion carried unanimously. Jacquelyn Campbell was reappointed to the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee for a term to begin immediately and expire on June 30, 2027.

Design Review Board

Councilman McCall deferred his nomination to the Board.

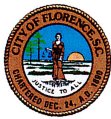
Construction & Maintenance Board of Adjustments and Appeals

Mayor Barnes deferred all nominations to the Board.

Parks and Beautification Commission

Pro tem Jebailly deferred his nomination to the Board.

Councilman Smith made a motion to appoint Kiana Brown to the Parks and Beautification Commission and the motion carried unanimously. Kiana Brown was appointed to the Parks and Beautification Commission for a term to begin immediately and expire on June 30, 2029.



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Councilman Smith made a motion to appoint Terrance Legette to the Parks and Beautification Commission and the motion carried unanimously. Terrence Legette was appointed to the Parks and Beautification Commission for a term to begin immediately and expire on June 30, 2029.

Veterans Park Committee

Mayor Barnes deferred her nomination to the Board.

Resilience & Sustainability Advisory Committee

The two nominations to the Board were deferred.

Personnel Matter

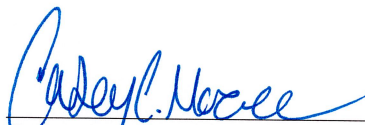
Councilman Smith made a motion to approve the City Manager's contract as discussed in Executive Session with such changes to be advised by legal counsel and executed by the Mayor. Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion.

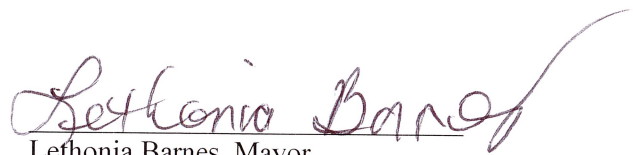
Council voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of the motion. The motion was passed.

ADJOURN

Without objection, the January 13, 2025 Regular meeting of City Council was adjourned at 4:15pm.

Dated this 10th day of February 2025.


Casey C. Moore, Municipal Clerk


Lethonia Barnes, Mayor

RECUSAL STATEMENT

Member Name: George Jebaily

Meeting Date: 1.13.2025

Agenda Item: Resolution Section Number: 2025-01

Topic: A Resolution to rename Sater Park to
Jebaily Park.

The Ethics Act, SC Code §8-13-700, provides that no public official may knowingly use his office to obtain an economic interest for himself, a family member of his immediate family, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated. No public official may make, participate in making, or influence a governmental decision in which he or any such person or business has an economic interest. Failure to recuse oneself from an issue in which there is or may be conflict of interest is the sole responsibility of the council member (1991 Op. Atty. Gen. No. 91-37.) A written statement describing the matter requiring action and the nature of the potential conflict of interest is required.

Justification to Recuse:

 Professionally employed by or under contract with principal

 Owns or has vested interest in principal or property

✓ Other: Related to recipient of Resolution.

Date: 1/13/25

Member

Approved by Parliamentarian: