



City Council Worksession  
Meeting Minutes – Planning Conference Room – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

January 14, 2025

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**5:00 PM**

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Philip Cromer, Mayor

Members of Council in attendance - Philip Cromer, Neil Lipsitz, Michael McFee, Mitch Mitchell, Josh Scallate.

**II. EMPLOYEE NEW HIRE RECOGNITION**

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A. Capital Improvements Program Coordinator.

**Raul Dominguez, Capital Improvements Program Director**, introduced Zarah Sodergren.

B. Community Development Department.

**Curt Freese, Community Development Director**, introduced Christopher Klement.

C. Geographic Information System (GIS) Technician.

**JJ Sauv , Deputy City Manager**, introduced Kat Kirkland.

D. Police Department.

**Stephanie Price, Police Chief**, introduced Dwight Bryant, Allison Peachey, and Trevor Poulin.

**III. PRESENTATIONS**

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A. Update on Mural for Marina Restroom Building.

**Linda Roper, Downtown Operations and Community Services Director**, stated that an initiative of the Cultural District Advisory Board was to incorporate art throughout downtown. They started with Art Benches and wanted to have a mural. **Ashley Brandon, Public Information Officer**, gave background information on how the mural idea came to be. 35 artists participated in a contest. The field was narrowed down to 3 individuals. Julia Alexis was chosen as the winner. Her design encompassed the history, beauty and a welcome to Beaufort. The mural will be placed on the restroom building in the marina parking lot. Council is supportive of moving forward.

B. Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report.

**David Irwin, an Audit Partner with Mauldin and Jenkins**, gave a summary of the Financial and Compliance Audit as this is required communication by the external auditors. He stated they are independent from the City as required by Government Auditing Standards. The City received a clean opinion and no audit findings. A clean opinion has been received consistently for the past 17 years.

**Alan Eisenman, Finance Director**, went over the City's financial position for Fiscal Year 2024 as compared to Fiscal Year 2023. This report will be available for public viewing on the City's website, [www.cityofbeaufort.org](http://www.cityofbeaufort.org) using Opengov.com, our financial transparency portal.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

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A. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Beaufort Jasper Housing Trust (BJHT) for administration of a Housing Repair Program.

**JJ Sauv , Deputy City Manager**, gave some background information. Entering into this agreement the Beaufort Jasper Housing Trust will be able to provide us with technical guidance on this type of program. He emphasized that most of these conversations were focused on the Old Commons and Northwest Quadrant neighborhoods. The program being primarily focused on this evening is providing housing repair assistance for critical needs in homes currently resided in by the homeowner.

**Claude Hicks, Executive Director of the Beaufort Jasper Housing Trust**, started off by saying that his board has approved a commitment of an additional \$100,000.00 in funds to assist the City for a total of \$250,000.00. The City has already set aside \$150,000.00 for this program. He mentioned that this program is open to all citizens that reside within the City Limits, the home must be owner occupied. This would not be available to a homeowner that is renting out their property. They are keeping it this way to follow state guidelines. He mentioned that the Housing Trust has received sponsor status for the State Housing Repair Fund. They are working on their environmental accreditation to be able to look at houses that were built prior to 1978. He proceeded to go over the areas of the memorandum that included purpose and scope, responsibilities and obligations, along with the qualifications, terms and conditions of funding.

There was a discussion about heirs' property and how the critical needs of those properties might be addressed as well.

**Mayor Cromer** inquired if they were going to have an interest-bearing account.

**Councilman Scallate** inquired about the use of funds for demolition. This was clarified that the funds would not be used to demolish a house completely, but for portions of the home if needed.

**Mr. Hicks** stated that there will be a rolling application process. It will not close after a certain period of time.

Dan Blackmon, 1010 Duke Street, addressed Council.

B. Request for Memorialization and Renaming Southside Loop.

**Councilman Lipsitz** stated he would like to have the name changed of Southside Loop in Southside Park to Clayton Cooler Loop. Mr. Cooler was the former Public Works Director and served the City of Beaufort for 45 years. A resolution to adopt the name change will be drafted and voted on at an upcoming regular meeting.

Warren Parker, 21 Division Street and Edie Rogers, 7A Rising Tide Drive addressed Council.

Disclaimer: This document is a summary. All City Council Worksessions and Regular Meetings are recorded. Live stream can be found on the City's website at [www.cityofbeaufort.org](http://www.cityofbeaufort.org) (Agenda section). Any questions, please contact the City Clerk, Traci Guldner at 843-525-7024 or by email at [tguldner@cityofbeaufort.org](mailto:tguldner@cityofbeaufort.org).

In accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80 (a)(d)(e), as amended, notification of regular meetings was given at the beginning of the calendar year. A copy of the agenda was posted on the City's bulletin board and website [www.cityofbeaufort.org](http://www.cityofbeaufort.org) twenty-four hours prior to the meeting. A copy of the agenda was given to the local news media and requested public on file.