



City Council Worksession

Meeting Minutes – Planning Conference Room – 1st Floor

March 11, 2025

I. CALL TO ORDER

5:00 PM

Philip Cromer, Mayor

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

II. EMPLOYEE NEW HIRE RECOGNITION

A. Downtown Operations.

Linda Roper, Downtown Operations Director, introduced Jennifer Pointer.

B. Fire Department.

Tim Ogden, Fire Chief, introduced Danta D'Antonio, David Ferreira, and Kaiwan Purveyor.

III. PRESENTATIONS

A. Interviews of Applicants for Boards, Commissions and Committees.

Council held a question-and-answer session with Shay Mikell, Parks and Tree Advisory Commission applicant and Pazanta Byars, Tourism Development Advisory Committee applicant.

B. Advancing Officer Well-Being through the Cummings Foundation.

Stephenie Price, Police Chief, introduced Dr. Baker who provided background information on the Cummings Foundation. He stated they are bringing their expertise in order to create an evidenced-based behavioral wellness program. We would be the second department to be awarded this grant. The first was in Arlington, Virginia. He gave an overview of the grant that has three components and went over the program's four phased implementation timeline. He mentioned that Beaufort was selected for the positive level of community engagement they provide. The launch date is scheduled for April 1, 2025, and will have a 2-year commitment. The program could possibly be extended.

IV. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Request to add two board seats to the Cultural District Advisory Board.

Bonnie Hargrove and Mitzi McClure, members of the board, addressed Council as to why the board would like to expand the seats by 2. One for the Friedmans Art District and another at-large seat. This would bring the total to 9. This would further enhance collaboration, strengthen partnerships, and support the district's ongoing and future initiatives.

Council is supportive. Staff will bring back an ordinance addressing these changes.

B. Discussion regarding the Downtown Beaufort Merchants Association.

Linda Roper, Downtown Operations, stated that several years ago, Eric and Mary Thibault reached out to other merchants and proposed that they stay open later in the evening on the First Friday of each month. They then approached Council about their idea and the city helped with establishing a non-profit called the Downtown Beaufort Merchant's Association (DBMA) in 2017.

Mr. Joe O'Brien stated that since its inception, there are now only two sitting board members. Mr. O'Brien stated that while support for First Fridays has remained high, the organization has struggled to recruit members who can serve in a leadership capacity on the board. At a recent meeting between the City and DBMA members, they all endorsed a plan to ensure the future success of the event by the organization disbanding and the event coming under the umbrella of Downtown Operations. A committee could be formed to help plan the event with other interested organizations. Not only would this give merchants the opportunity to be involved without taking on the burden of running a separate corporate entity, but it would also open the event up to other individuals and organizations who are interested.

Ms. Roper reported that she spoke with Main Street South Carolina, about this issue and what was being proposed. They suggested that the DBMA be "mothballed". Tax returns would be filed at zero and this could happen for a long period of time. This way the organization could be reenacted if desired. She stated that staff is supportive of moving this under the Main Street umbrella.

Councilman Scallate inquired about the resident agent for the organization. He asked if the DBMA would still have to legally have a Board of Directors since they are a non-profit even if the organization was "mothballed."

There was a discussion as to whether street closures downtown were helpful or hurtful to businesses. There have been discussions about putting out a survey on the matter to the merchants.

Councilman Lipsitz asked if this would affect the Tiger Team Initiative in any way.

Scott Marshall, City Manager, inquired about transfer of assets.

Council is supportive of moving forward.

C. Road Re-Naming Process Discussion.

JJ Sauv , Deputy City Manager, began by stating that after the Worksession where the renaming of Southside Loop was discussed, the city learned that there needs to be a name for the new Airport Frontage Road now that it has been completed, and the roadway has been turned over to the city. He went over the legal and best practices that municipalities must take to rename roads in South Carolina within their jurisdictions. Names can be made by either a Resolution or an Ordinance in the state. Staff recommends these name changes be done by Ordinance, as Resolutions are more for a temporary situation. All name changes are required to go through the Planning Commission and a Public Hearing must be held during their meeting. Once approved by the Commission, an Ordinance would then come before Council for First Reading and another Public Hearing would take place.

Councilman Scallate questioned why two Public Hearings would be needed.

Council is supportive of moving forward with these processes.

Council will provide their recommendations of names for the Airport Frontage Road to staff.

V. ADJOURN

6:20 PM

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 (Agenda section). Any questions, please contact the City Clerk, Traci Guldner at 843-525-7024 or by email at 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 twenty-four hours prior to the meeting. A copy of the agenda was given to the local news media and requested public on file.

Approved: April 8, 2025
Traci Guldner



